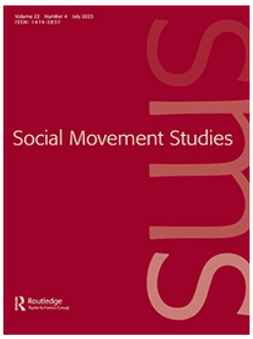

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Intersectionality and social movements: a comparison of environmentalist and disability rights movements

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ABSTRACT

Demands for intersectional organising have long been a priority for Black feminists, and in recent years it has also been taken up by a wide variety of social movement actors operating across different contexts. Analysing and actualising intersectionality as a strategic and generative tool presents a series of theoretical and empirical challenges and opportunities. In this article, we think through and about intersectionality in relation to two different social movements in the UK: the environmentalist movement and the disability rights movement. Discourse analysis undertaken of a range of groups' websites indicate that intersectional frameworks undergird some aspects of the ways that these two movements organise. We reflect on the ways that intersectional discourse is taken up by some groups within both movements to situate their politics. We also examine how intersectional frameworks shape some groups' framing of the issues under their ownership, and who the labour of intersectional organising falls to: (more often than not) women of colour.

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Introduction

The roots of intersectionality lie in US Black feminism (Alexander, 1930, Beal, 1970; Collins, 1990; Combahee River Collective, 1977; Cooper, [1892] 1988; Crenshaw, 1991; McDougald, 1925; Truth, 1851). Intersectionality describes how some groups are caught at the interstices of multiple structures of oppression. It takes African-American women's experiences as a starting point to examine the cultural, political, and material implications of being simultaneously racialised as Black and gendered as women. Intersectionality offers a way of articulating the complex ways in which ostensibly discrete technologies of domination such as race, gender, class, *collude and overlap* to produce and silence subaltern groups. Intersectionality has been used to describe the everyday material experiences of Black women under 'imperialist white supremacist capitalist patriarchy' (Hooks, 1994, p. 248), but it has also been used to reflect on the discourses and practices that social movements embrace (Lépinard, 2014; Daniel, 2021; Roth, 2021). Within the field of social

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movement studies, it has proved a useful tool for helping us to understand the relationships between representation, action, and organisation (Roth, 2021, p. 3).

Should social movement actors be expected to engage with the 'discourse' of intersectionality, sometimes presented as being too academic or simply as jargon (Gordon, 2016)? We believe that they should because intersectionality originates from concrete practices of community organising for social justice. That is, taking action to animate the material, social, and cultural redistributions necessary to combat structural inequalities. Indeed, Patricia Hill Collins emphasises the real-world implications of intersectionality for undertaking social justice work (2005, p. 16).

This study explores how intersectional discourses manifest in two UK-based social movements which have hitherto attracted limited attention within intersectional scholarship: the environmentalist and disability rights movements. The findings of this paper indicate that intersectionality undergirds part of the discursive practices of *some* disability rights and environmentalist actors in the UK – particularly amongst young people and women of colour. These actors make use of intersectional discourses to situate their politics and frame the issues that groups 'own' (Van der Brug, 2004). However, a majority of the groups we studied did not adopt intersectional discourses at all – an observation which is particularly pertinent in light of exclusionary practices identified in both movements (Erevelles & Minear, 2010; Evans, 2022; Jampel, 2018; Berglund and Schmidt, 2020).

Intersectional approaches to the study of social movements

Social movement studies grapple with the emergence, growth, and failure of social movements as well as the very concept of social movement itself (McGee, 1980; Diani, 1992; Johnston, 2014). Social movements have been interpreted in a wide variety of ways, and, furthermore, the ways in which they manifest and how they are studied, shift across time and space (Della Porta & Diani, 2012; Tarrow, 1996). Social movements tend to refer to large collections of organised groups and individuals trying to bring about social change, through collective demands on targeted authorities, using a range of tactical repertoires including, inter alia: creating associations and coalitions; marches; petitions; and public awareness campaigns (Tilly et al., 2020, p. 24).

For our research, we work with the definition of social movements as pluralistic, heterogeneous networks of actors informally bound by common goals and beliefs (Diani, 1992). Our analysis includes grassroots activist groups, activist networks, non-governmental organisations, and charities in our sample (see Table A1 and Table A2 in Appendix A). We recognise that whether charities and NGOs constitute a 'movement' is debatable. Moreover, the long and problematic history of disability charities being run by non-disabled people, and often pursuing policies contra to the interests of disabled people, raises obvious problems (Slorach, 2016). Nevertheless, changes brought about within many disability charities – many of which are now led by disabled people with a commitment to co-production – as well as the unifying resistance to austerity politics, have meant that they are important players within the contemporary disability rights movement (Vanhala, 2010). The same is also true for environmental issues (Hoffmann & Bertels, 2010), where charities shape the public discourses of the movement and are often considered the movements' most visible constituents (Rootes, 2009).

Scholars have increasingly adopted an intersectional lens to examine social movements (Doetsch-Kidder, 2012; Laperrière & Lépinard, 2016, Luna, 2020; Roberts & Jesudason, 2013; Strolovitch, 2007; Tormos, 2017; Weldon, 2011). This has principally involved using the idea of political intersectionality – the extent to which women of colour, their issues and interests are marginalised within both feminist and anti-racist movements. Political intersectionality raises important questions about how social movements design and frame their political agendas. Studies have identified ways that privilege can inform strategies and discourses which may reinforce the intersectional oppression of specific groups (Evans, 2020; Laperrière & Lépinard, 2016), as well as highlighting the various external barriers facing third sector organisations who try or want to organise intersectionally (Christoffersen, 2020). Scholars have highlighted successful instances of coalition building and collective identity forged in and through social movements and have provided reflections on opportunities for social movements to address the places in which privilege is exercised at intersections of power and identity (Tormos, 2017).

As it has diffused beyond conversations amongst Black feminists, intersectionality has undergone processes of transformation and rescripting as it has 'travelled' (Said, 1983) across multiple contexts (Carbado et al., 2013; K. Davis, 2020; Salem, 2016). But if ideas travel, they also have the potential to unravel. In some places, the unravelling of intersectionality has seen it transformed into a sanitised, apolitical shell of itself, especially as it has enjoyed increased popularity (Bilge, 2020; Carbado et al., 2013; Salem, 2018). Intersectional discourse is used by a range of actors, including state and institutional bodies whose actions can often create, exacerbate, and perpetuate the oppression of marginalised communities (Christoffersen, 2021). Intersectional discourse, then, is not necessarily an indication of a commitment to Black feminist principles – and we should be conscious of the ways in which citing intersectionality can work as an 'insurance policy' (Bhandar and Ziadah 2020) simply used to guard against criticism (Lewis 2022).

Disability rights and environmentalist movements

This study reflects on how intersectionality manifests in social movements which might *include* Black feminists but are not necessarily Black feminist in name. Many have already called for the need to embrace intersectionality within movements, arguing that single-variable approaches are insufficient for forging inclusive and equitable politics (Ducre, 2018; Erevelles & Minear, 2010; Jampel, 2018; Kaijser & Kronsell, 2014; Mandell et al., 2019). The groups included in this study range from different parts of the selected movements and should be understood as coming together to form a case study, rather than a representative national sample of the two movements as homogenous bodies. The two movements are heterogenous and certainly, we do not claim to achieve a generalisable, comprehensive view of the two movements. Rather, by examining some of the discursive and tactical choices that different actors are making, we seek to contribute to an understanding of the generative connections that can be, and currently are being, made between a Black feminist politics of intersectionality and movements other than Black feminism.

The movements we selected are different but both warrant intersectional attention for three key reasons. First, they allow us to consider whether an issue- (environmentalist) or identity- (disability rights) based focus might impact upon their engagement with

intersectionality. Second, the movements are also different in terms of their media coverage and wider awareness. The environmentalist movement regularly features as a lead story in the national media. Notably, schoolchildren in the UK have taken up Greta Thunberg's call for climate strikes thus raising awareness and engagement across a wide range of British society. Conversely, the disability rights movement tends to receive little by way of media coverage, despite the devastating effects of the austerity agenda on disabled people (Slorach, 2016; Ryan, 2019). Third, and importantly, the two movements have been subject to critique for disproportionately accounting for the needs and interests of a limited, privileged substrata of society – namely, the white middle (and upper) class – even within disability rights activism where the stereotypical disabled person is often presented as a white man (Begum, 1992; Bell & Bell, 2020; Erevelles & Minear, 2010; Evans, 2022; Frederick & Shifrer, 2019; Gayle, 2019; Goodley et al., 2019; Kale, 2020; Schalk, 2022; Vernon, 1996; Wretched of the Earth, 2020).

Movement discourses and strategies rooted in privilege – not necessarily material – preclude the inclusion of marginalised groups within organising (Bell & Bell, 2020) and can also feed into policies which reinscribe unequal relations of power (Newman, 2011). The two movements thus provide important and interesting spaces to reflect on how the Black feminist politics of intersectionality shapes discursive practices within environmentalist and disability rights organising.

Methods

To examine intersectionality within our two movements, we undertook a discourse analysis of the websites and materials produced by actors within both social movements. Discourse analysis is helpful to researchers who want to understand the use of language in context, as it allows us to draw meaning from the language presented as well as focusing on how the language is used (Johnstone, 2017). There are different theoretical and methodological approaches to discourse analysis, and we draw from the ideas more closely associated with critical discourse analysis – that is, we are interested in the influence that language has in social contexts rather than the technical or formalistic approaches to sound or grammar (Weiss & Wodak, 2007). In our study, we used discourse analysis to help us understand whether, how, by whom and in what contexts intersectionality, and its related ideas, are being expressed.

Between December 2020 and February 2021, we undertook an initial mapping exercise in which we created a database of all current and existing groups active in our two social movements – we created the database by consulting existing literature, resource websites and government lists. We excluded groups whose sole purpose was service provision (more common amongst disability organisations) because we were interested in groups which organised campaigns and protests, lobbied the government, raised awareness and/or engaged in trying to shape the public discourse surrounding either environmentalism or disability. We also excluded any groups which did not operate at the national level. This mapping exercise revealed a list of 20 groups for environmentalism (Table A1) and 21 for disability rights (Table A2). Some were larger professional organisations, e.g., Disability Rights UK and Greenpeace UK, while others were grassroots groups of activists, e.g., Disabled People Against the Cuts and Reclaim the Power. Most

directly employed at least one member of staff. We do not discount the possibility that we missed any small or informal groups which may have emerged (and we excluded any groups which were no longer active).

All the groups we included have an online presence, including websites and social media accounts. Given the growing importance of the digital sphere within social movement organising (Clark, 2019; Mattoni, 2017; Yuen & Tang, 2021), the online activity of social movements provides rich insights into the dynamics, strategies, and goals of groups (Bhatia, 2021). Frequently, a group's website or social media pages provide an entry point to potential new group members, media actors, and to the wider public.

Once our mapping exercise was completed, we examined the groups' websites, advocacy material, campaign literature, public statements, and events with a view to searching the material for mentions of intersectionality. We do not quantify how frequently references were made to intersectionality in terms of percentage of materials. Using discourse analysis, we were interested in how and when groups explicitly engaged with intersectionality or with discussions of difference. First, this involved capturing all references to intersectional vocabularies (or some variant of them) in any of their materials. This process involved conducting searches on each website using the following terms: intersectionality; intersectional; intersect; difference; and diversity. To capture engagement with the ideas of intersectionality – without the use of the term itself – we also searched for the following: gender; race; ethnicity; women; LGBTQ; class; and disability. Following an initial review, we also added Black Lives Matter and BLM to our list of search terms. Second, we analysed the ways in which the groups' materials acknowledged or talked about difference, paying close attention to both the groups' framing processes (Benford & Snow, 2000), and the practical strategies which they use and refer to as organising tools. We examined each reference to understand how they were deployed, in what context they were used, and whether they shaped the overall aims and objectives of the group. Following our initial mapping and analysis, several broader themes emerged which we use to structure our discussion below: intersectionality and structural analysis; voice and visibility; and labour.

Environmentalism

Despite the political differences amongst environmentalists (Hess & Brown, 2017; Hoffarth & Hodson, 2016), the groups share a collective identity as environmentalists: their agendas prioritise protecting the environment and/or combatting climate change. However, the UK environmentalist movement has been criticised for forging an exclusionary collective identity dominated by white, middle-class people (Bell & Bell, 2020). Inglehart's theory of Post-Materialism (Inglehart, 1981) seeks to explain the movement's demographic composition, arguing that mobilising around environmental issues is only made possible by achieving a comfortable level of material wealth. Others point to the ways in which environmentalist spaces (unwittingly or not) perpetuate ageism (Bowman, Bell, and Alexis-Martin, 2021; Haq, 2021), racism (Griffith and Bevan, 2021), ableism (Larrington-Spencer et al., 2021), and heterosexism (Foster, 2021; Greed, 2021) in their organising practices and discourses.

Of the 21 environmentalist groups studied, 10 groups explicitly used the term intersectionality. The ways groups mobilised the language varied greatly, with a minority

placing repeated emphasis on intersectionality as a key component of their organising, whilst most featured the term in passing news items or social media posts.

In 2018, People and Planet, a network hub of grassroots campaigns led by students, published 'Introduction to collective liberation'. The guide features a page titled 'How can we organise more intersectionally?' and talks about concrete action and strategies informed by intersectionality, such as 'notic[ing] which voices are heard most often in meetings' and 'ask[ing] people who have spoken a lot to "step back" and create space for others' (People and Planet, 2018). Unlike most of the mentions of intersectionality we observed amongst other groups in our sample, People and Planet provided an explicit definition of intersectionality, which they describe as 'a process rather than a definable goal [. . .] a framework to think about how we can organise with the intention of not replicating and deepening oppressions that exist in society.'[1] The group thus mobilise intersectionality as a way to frame their own politics as multi-pronged, systemic, and inclusive whilst activating it as a concrete organising tool for working towards environmental and social justice (Collins, 1990).

For most of the other groups studied, intersectionality was mentioned less frequently and in less depth. Amongst the major professionalised environmentalist NGOs such as the National Trust, Woodland Trust, and WWF-UK, explicit references to intersectionality were non-existent. Our analysis indicated that larger, professionalised groups were far less likely to talk about intersectionality at all – let alone meaningfully – than the smaller, grassroots groups that we studied. Amongst the major NGOs (Woodland Trust, RSPB, WWF-UK, Greenpeace UK, Friends of the Earth UK (FoE), National Trust), only two explicitly referenced intersectionality (Greenpeace UK[2] and FoE[3]). Thus, it appears that intersectional language has not penetrated the professionalised sphere of environmentalist discourse.

To be certain, analysis of the official website for FoE reveals only one reference to intersectionality on the website[4] in a call for applications to a youth mentorship programme. But at the European level the youth wing of FoE, has published a full in-depth guide to intersectional environmentalist organising, not dissimilar to the guide published by People and Planet. Again, the European Young FoE group uses intersectionality to recommend and outline concrete actions and strategies for movement building, arguing that this is important because '[intersectionality] helps us to analyse how systemic oppression affects groups differently, so that we can better understand its mechanisms,' and, 'can help us to see how many different struggles for justice are interconnected and require solidarity between movement' (Young Friends of the Earth, 2018). As a European-level group, Young FoE is not included in the sample for this study. But the difference between the European Young FoE group and FoE UK might indicate the growing importance of intersectionality for youth and student activists in particular (Elsen & Ord, 2022; Evans, 2016; Sharma, 2021).

Structural analysis: intersectionality as interlocking oppressions

Some groups we studied emphasised the multiplicate and structural nature of inequality and oppression and linked this to environmental problematics – in some instances without using intersectional language. For example, though they never use the term 'intersectionality,' Reclaim the Power, a grassroots organisation, frame one of their

group's aims as 'to challenge oppression both inside and outside of our organisation,' because they, 'recognise that the same systems of domination, unearned privilege, exclusion and institutional violence underpin many different forms of oppression' (Reclaim the Power, n.d.). Similarly, UK Student Climate Network (UKSCN), a large grassroots network founded in 2018, does not mobilise intersectional vocabulary explicitly. But the group's accountability agreement acknowledges the structural inequalities and privileges that shape both the society we live in and the ways individuals navigate this society. They emphasise that 'some people have more power than others based on their privileges,' and thus position themselves as 'anti-hierarchy: we oppose and break down power structures when we see them building up within our groups' (UKSCN, n.d.). These analyses offered an acknowledgement of the multiple, imbricated nature of structural oppressions that intersectional analysis demands.

Concomitantly, half of the environmentalist groups we studied did not engage with intersectionality or provide any structural analysis relating to intersectionality. This was especially true for conversationist groups which focus almost exclusively on the wellbeing and protection of non-human animals and their habitats. One such group, WWF-UK, acknowledges the importance of indigenous knowledge and communities in contributing to their work and describes the land that these communities live on as 'degraded' (WWF-UK, n.d.) but provides no explanation or structural analysis which speaks to the historical and ongoing social inequalities which undergirds this degradation.

Voice and visibility: who is visible in the movement?

Several groups within the sample engaged with intersectionality in direct response to Black Lives Matter (BLM) in the summer of 2020. For example, the UK Youth Climate Coalition (UKYCC), a grassroots student-led campaign founded in 2010, mention intersectionality as one of seven key provisions in their group code of conduct (UKYCC, n.d.a), emphasising the importance of intersectionality in their statement on anti-racism which responds very directly to the concerns raised by BLM in 2020 (UKYCC, n.d.b). The growing attention to anti-racism amongst the groups in our sample appears to have provided an opportunity to engage with intersectional discourse which can directly inform strategy and practice.

Conversely, some groups demonstrated attention to anti-racism (both pre- and post-2020) *without* using intersectional language or drawing on an intersectional frame. In 2020, the National Trust, a large-scale conservationist charity founded in 1895, published a report detailing the charity's historical connections to British colonialism and the transatlantic slave trade (National Trust, 2020) as part of its anti-racist initiatives. Extinction Rebellion (2020), Greenpeace UK (2020), and FoE UK (2020) all published statements/videos on anti-racism in 2020, but these statements did not engage with the intersections between race/racism and other axes of oppression.

Labour

It was also important to reflect on whom the responsibility of bringing the issue of intersectionality to the table within the movement fell. Where we saw a thorough engagement with intersectionality (i.e., explaining how they understood the term and

how their specific actions and strategies were informed by this), we also noticed the presence of many young people and/or women of colour pushing these conversations forward (such as within UKSCN[5] and Fridays for Future[6]). For example, the Women's Environmental Network, a feminist network founded in 1988, has published two interviews since 2020 in which Dominique Palmer (2021) and Zarina Ahmad (2020), two women of colour, talk about the importance of intersectionality in their organising. Indeed, Dominique Palmer, who is a young Black woman, makes use of her role as a prominent figure within Fridays for Future in the UK to publicly call for a more intersectional approach to environmentalism, including online and at conferences.

Why has intersectionality not been consistently adopted by environmentalists in the UK? Certainly, the more established parts of the environmentalist movement grew out of a conservative conservationist tradition dominated by white upper- and middle-class communities (Grove, 2017). In this tradition, humans are grouped as a singular category that exist in relation to a separate 'nature' or 'environment' which needs to be protected. This hampers meaningful recognition of how social inequality is braided into how different communities are impacted by environmental problems and politics. Accordingly, engaging with intersectionality in environmentalist contexts challenges the historical remit of the movement in the UK.

Disability rights[7]

In their 1996 study of disability rights organising in the UK, Campbell and Oliver noted that the historic attempts to divide disabled people based on individual medical impairment has resulted in a 'reluctance' to splinter the movement into smaller groups according to race or gender (p.132); a trend which to some extent has remained (Evans, 2022; Schalk, 2022). Such a desire for unity is mirrored in other identity-based movements, for instance feminism does not always take account of disability or ableism (Evans, 2020), while feminist disability studies does not always view race as integral (Schalk & Kim, 2020). It is, however, unsurprising that we should find a yearning for a unified or common identity amongst disabled people; after all, they constitute a group which has been traditionally marginalised, intentionally divided and who constitute an 'unstable category' (L. T. Davis, 2013). Our discourse analysis reinforces this idea of a unified, and somewhat homogenous community. Where difference in relation to identity *is* acknowledged, it tends to be in relation to different impairments, a point to which we return in our discussion below, rather than in relation to how disability intersects with other forms of social oppression.

Analysis of the 20 groups in our sample revealed that 6 of them used the term intersectionality, but we could find evidence of intersectional themes in a total of 9 organisations. That is to say, there was awareness of difference in relation to gender, race, class, LGBTQI+ (or some combination thereof). Although there was a great deal of variety in terms of the extent to which intersectional discourse translated into intersectional organising. For instance, disabled women's collective Sisters of Frida was founded in 2014 by a group of grassroots organisers keen to establish new communities and ways of organising in order to 'explore intersectional possibilities' (Sisters of Frida, 2016); thus, and reflecting their own description, we can understand them to be an intersectional disability group. Conversely, other groups – especially the larger, more established

charities – had across all their material and on their websites only one or two references to intersectionality. For example, Scope, which campaigns for equality for disabled people, do not engage with intersectionality at the organisational level, rather intersectionality is discussed via an interview with an individual who identifies as a fat queer disabled activist (Scope, 2020). Similarly, Leonard Cheshire, which engages in research, policy advocacy, and campaigning against discrimination, ran a profile of artist and former intern, Mimi Butlin, with whom they had a launched a campaign on International Women's Day 2020 to 'highlight the intersectionality between discrimination of both disabled people and women' (Reilly, 2020). Thus, at the discursive level, the concept does not appear to have been widely taken up.

Structural analysis: intersectionality as interlocking oppressions

Historically, coalitional organising between anti-racist campaigners, feminists, disability and LGBTQI rights advocates – with overlapping personnel – has played an important role in social justice campaigning (Barnartt & Richard, 2001; Schalk, 2022). For example, regional protests against the English Defence League (a now largely defunct far-right extremist group) were jointly organised and attended by anti-racist organisers, disability campaigners and LGBT advocates.[8] Analysing the activities and events that the organisations ran, we found evidence of those whose activities reflected an awareness of the structural inequalities that shaped disabled people's lives. For instance, Wish, an organisation focused on women's mental health, ran a one-day gender training seminar during which they focus on 'The interplay between gender and other inequality issues such as race, culture, ethnicity and age' (Women at Wish, n.d..); while at a national Disabled People's Summit, organised by Inclusion London and held on 4th November 2017, there was an organising session on intersectionality to help participants better understand its importance for disability rights. More recently, a Zoom discussion entitled 'Imagining Black disabled futures within the disability movement' was organised by Inclusion London and ALLFIE to explore Black disabled people's experiences and expectations, and though intersectionality was not a topic for discussion, Katouche Goll, a Black disabled woman, discussed important intersections and has written about the importance of the concept for understanding identity and Black liberation (Goll, 2020). Finally, Regard, an organisation for LGBTQI people, partially framed their response to the Government's Coronavirus Bill in terms of intersectionality, questioning the disproportionately negative impact that new measures would have on women and people of colour (Regard, n.d..).

Voice and visibility: who is visible in the movement?

Some organisations – both large charities and smaller grassroots groups – engaged with intersectionality in the wake of the high-profile organising of BLM in the summer of 2020. These campaigns are important because they demonstrate an interest in reframing which disabled people are rendered visible. For instance, Inclusion London, an organisation which helps support 70 DDPOs (Deaf and Disabled People's Organisations), launched a campaign to challenge the exclusion and marginalisation of the 'multiply marginalised' from the disability movement and the policy-making process; emphasising

the importance of 'intersectional experiences' and the co-production of knowledge, the campaign seeks to explore strategies for 'embedding' intersectionality within the movement (Inclusion London, 2020). Similarly, ALLFIE, a group dedicated to inclusive education for disabled children and young people, also launched a new group in association with the BLM movement called Disabled Black Lives Matter, in which they highlight the overarching aim to address 'intersectional inequality' (ALLFIE, 2020)

Labour

The organising undertaken by disabled women of colour highlights that they are undertaking much of the labour related to intersectionality. Ayesha Vernon, for instance, talks about being 'a stranger in many camps' (Vernon, 1996, p. 48), an idea reflected in the discourse used by Sisters of Frida who were set up explicitly to provide a space for organising which centres intersectionality; while Kym Oliver and Jumoke Abdullahi, disappointed by the failure to address the lack of representation and discrimination faced by disabled women, femmes, and non-binary people of colour, launched the Triple Cripples in 2018 to campaign and raise awareness, through online, social, and mainstream media activity. Thus, the work of intersectionality and the job of awareness raising and visibility appears to be largely being undertaken by women of colour often within grassroots spaces specifically designed to be intersectional.

Reflecting on why intersectional discourse is not more in evidence, we can in part point to the historic desire to maintain a unified disabled community in the face of political systems and medical establishments designed to individualise (Campbell & Oliver, 1996). Difference has therefore been understood in terms of difference of impairment rather than in terms of class, race, gender, or sexuality; indeed, if the emphasis on difference is already at the heart of disability discourse perhaps the calls to stress other forms of difference are perceived to be beyond the scope of a movement struggling to maintain its sense of unity. However, we are also alive to the very real and explicit presence of sexism, racism and homophobia that exist within the disability rights movement (Evans, 2022; Schalk, 2022).

Conclusions

Thinking about intersectional discourse in social movements which, for the most part, would not identify as feminist proved challenging. We reflected upon the dangers of labelling groups as intersectional or otherwise, as well as the relationship between intersectionality and anti-racist organising. Analysing intersectional discourse raises many questions about power relations and agenda setting within social movement building. Interestingly, our study finds that professional charities and NGOs did not engage much with intersectionality while many of the grassroots movements did. This indicates that the *type* of social movement organisations has an impact both on the extent to which intersectionality is taken up but also the types of people who are involved. Within both movements, where we could identify explicit engagement with intersectional discourse, much of it tended to be in relation to the organising of women of colour and of smaller groups or groups formed by younger people. That the labour of raising and leading action on the concerns of intersectionality falls to these marginalised actors

forces us to reflect on the real consequences for the wellbeing of these social movement actors with the potential, for example, for burnout (Gorski, 2019).

We are cautious about claiming that absence of intersectional discourse necessarily reflects a *resistance* to intersectionality. This distinction gave us pause for thought as we considered how the politics of difference operates in different spaces. This was particularly true for disability rights organising where the emphasis on difference is either used to reject the presentation of disabled people as 'different' in a negative way or is used to think through the differences in terms of impairment type amongst the disabled community.

Where we did identify groups embracing intersectionality, we also noticed that this labour of intersectional organising was often largely undertaken by women of colour, and/or younger people, who organise specifically and explicitly feminist, anti-racist, and/or LGBTQI± friendly spaces, often within smaller grassroots groups. This raises questions about the burdens of organising labour, with important consequences for their personal wellbeing and the potential for burnout (Gorski, 2019). Despite women of colour in both movements providing critiques using intersectionality, these do not (as yet) appear to have seeped through to the wider movements. We routinely reflected on these critiques made within the movements and returned to them, especially when we felt concerned that we were somehow holding these movements to an unfair standard. By thinking about how social movements might operationalise intersectionality in social movement organising, we can examine how movements can create spaces which are not positioned in opposition to other emancipatory groups, whilst potentially forging spaces for cross-movement coalitions along the way.

Additionally, our analysis finds a trend towards addressing/acknowledging issues around racism specifically. It is difficult to say definitively whether this is a direct result of the increased visibility that the BLM movement has attracted in recent years. But the connection is not implausible. What does this sudden turn towards race (as a response to the killing of George Floyd) within the movements studied mean in relation to intersectionality – a framework which understands race and racism as an important axis of oppression within a wider matrix of inequalities? Attending to issues around racialisation is necessary for intersectional analysis (Jibrin & Salem, 2015, p. 9). But we should be cautious about confounding discussions formed exclusively around race with those that seek to address the structural *simultaneity* of violence in the 'matrix of domination' (Collins & Bilge, 2016).

Indeed, the impact of BLM was noticeable. In the period following the summer of 2020, many groups releasing statements and setting up committees in response to BLM. We have sought to distinguish the 2020 turn towards anti-racist statements from an interpretation of these acts as intersectional. And yet, we remain uncertain about even this closing down of organising in such a categorical way. Despite these reservations, we return to Crenshaw and the importance of centring the experiences and voices of women of colour in social movement organising. Adopting an anti-racist stance, while obviously necessary, does not always mean that there is also a sensitivity to other social axes such as gender. Our study contributes to the growing literature on intersectionality and social movements, highlighting the ways in which discourse analysis can be used to examine the ways in which intersectionality, and ideas related to intersectionality, are taken up; as well as thinking about which actors and in which spaces intersectional discourse emerges.

Notes

1. People and Planet. (n.d.) *Introduction to Collective Liberation*. Retrieved February 12, 2022, from https://peopleandplanet.org/system/files/resources/Collective%20Liberation%20Guide%20for%20upload.pdf
2. Greenpeace UK. (2022) *The environment connects to everything, so our environmentalism should too*. Retrieved 2022, February 12, 2022 from https://www.greenpeace.org.uk/news/intersectional-environmentalism-crosses-everything/
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Appendix

Appendix A

Table A1. Environmental groups whose websites were analysed.

Group name	Explicit substantive use of intersectional vocabulary	Intersectional themes identifiable
Woodland Trust	No	No
Reclaim the Power	No	Yes
People and Planet	Yes	Yes
Population Matters	No	Yes
Plan B Earth	No	No
Extinction Rebellion	No	No
Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB)	No	No
World Wildlife Fund UK (WWF-UK)	No	No
Greenpeace UK	Yes	Yes
Earth Strike	Yes	Yes
Friends of the Earth UK	Yes	Yes
Wretched of the Earth	Yes	Yes
Fridays for Future	Yes	Yes
UK Student Climate Network (UKSCN)	No	Yes
350.org UK	Yes	Yes
Global Justice Now	Yes	Yes
Faith for the Climate	No	No
National Trust	No	No
UK Youth Climate Coalition	Yes	Yes
A Rocha UK	No	No
Women's Environmental Network	Yes	Yes

Table A2. Disability groups whose websites were analysed.

Group name	Explicit use of intersectional vocabulary	Intersectional themes identifiable
Disability Rights UK	Yes	Yes
Leonard Cheshire	Yes	Yes
SCOPE	Yes	Yes
British Deaf Association	No	Yes
In Control	No	No
Mencap	No	No
Wish	No	Yes
Sense	No	No
Breakthrough UK	No	No
Bipolar UK	No	No
National People First	No	No
Inclusion Scotland	No	No
CHANGE	No	No
Spinal Injuries Association	No	No
Disabled People Against the Cuts (DPAC)	No	Yes
RNIB	No	No
Regard	Yes	Yes
Sisters of Frida	Yes	Yes
National Autistic Society	No	No
ALLFIE	Yes	Yes