Building a Better World. But for Whom?

Why Are Ethnically Minoritised, Environmentally Concerned People Underrepresented in British Climate Protest?

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Ethics Approval Confirmation

I declare that the research contained herein was granted approval by the SPAIS Ethics Working Group.

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Abstract

Ethnically minoritised people are problematically underrepresented in British climate protest (BCP). The grounding of BCP in the identities and related experiences of ethnically white people, and the intersection between protest and exposure to policing, are identified in academia as important reasons for this. The qualitative interviews upon which this dissertation revolves augment and expand upon prior research, as does the analytical framework I develop and deploy. Utilising transformative climate justice and prefiguration as analytical tools takes my research beyond existing findings by placing protest underrepresentation in the context of overarching social structures of oppression and inequality. This analytical framework acknowledges the contribution of climate protest to existing paradigms of social injustice and questions why and how BCP is more empowering for and applicable to some people than others. I thus critique BCP in a manner largely absent from existing scholarship.

My analytical framework is applied to eight semi-structured interviews conducted with ethnically minoritised, environmentally concerned participants, in recognition of the need for more extensive research with underrepresented communities (Griffith and Bevan, 2021, p.110). These interviews produced rich and nuanced data based in the subjective interpretations of lived participant experience. Additionally, necessitating 'environmental concern' as participation criteria means that, unlike research to date, this dissertation explicitly identifies climate protest underrepresentation *despite* environmental concern amongst ethnically minoritised communities.

Ultimately, I argue that structures and systems of oppression and marginalisation operating external to, and internally within BCP make it a restrictive and disempowering space for ethnically minoritised people. Relatedly, age-old patterns of white supremacy and privilege remain with no signs of progress towards liberation for ethnically minoritised people offered by BCP, to the detriment of participation. An analysis of class is incorporated into my findings in recognition of the way intersecting identities exacerbate ethnically minoritised exclusion from, and thus underrepresentation in, BCP.

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List of Abbreviations

BCP British climate protest

SES socioeconomic status

TCJ transformative climate justice

XR Extinction Rebellion

1. Introduction

Despite the urgency of the climate crisis (IPCC, 2023; Kerr, 2007; Stern, 2015) the British government's reaction to climate change continues to be characterised by inaction (Somerville, 2020; Wilson, 2021, p.5), giving rise to diverse manifestations of protest. In June 2023, then Prime Minister Rishi Sunak permitted new North Sea oil and gas licences (Walker, 2023), while the incumbent Labour Party has postponed and reduced its climate investment pledge (Mason and Allegretti, 2023; Stacey and Harvey, 2024). In response to assaults on environmental preservation such as these, protest has become a prominent feature of British politics (Kennedy and Wright, 2024; Scheuch *et al.*, 2024), seeking to grab the attention of the public and media, influence opinion, and ultimately pressure the government into action (Barrie, Fleming and Rowan, 2023; Kennedy and Wright, 2024, pp.99-100; Scheuch *et al.*, 2024).

Climate protest is defined broadly in this research. It is the collective, normative (consistent with dominant social norms) and non-normative (outside the accepted social order) (Tausch *et al.*, 2011, p.130; Zlobina and Vazquez, 2017, p.236), highly visible, non-violent, 'on the streets' mobilisation synonymous with protest groups such as Extinction Rebellion (XR). However, 'climate protest' also refers to more intimate, local group organisation and behind-the-scenes work that precedes these actions. British climate protest (BCP) takes and has taken many forms, including youth school strikes, mass marches and demonstrations, civil disobedience, and direct action. Although these approaches to protest have different aims, they all advance a universal goal of climate crisis mitigation and are effective in unique ways.

Climate protest is an essential retaliation against government failure to address the climate crisis. Protest can influence governmental engagement with climate issues by providing a political narrative for policy change (Nisbett *et al*., 2024) and increase public support for the climate movement (Bugden, 2020). The British government's heavy-handed legal crackdown on non-violent protest, despite low public demand for protester criminalisation, evidences the threat protest poses to the political status quo (Berglund, 2024, pp.12-13; Loach, 2023, p.140). Examples such as the ban on fracking in England (Ambrose, 2019; Woolley, 2019) and the British government's declaration of climate emergency following demonstrations by XR (BBC

News, 2019; Farand, 2019) further exemplify the efficacy of climate protest in Britain. While protest is an essential means of expressing concern for climate crisis inaction and a vision for a sustainable future, to fulfil its radical potential it must fully represent the diversity of the British population and those threatened by climate change.

Despite their disproportionate exposure to the harmful causes and consequences of climate change (Fielding, 2017; Meer, 2025; Ogunbode *et al.*, 2023), ethnically minoritised people are underrepresented in BCP (Bawden, 2015). DiGrazia (2013, p.125) finds that whiteness increases the likelihood of participation in normative environmental activism, while Hayes, Doherty and Saunders (2020) report a dominance of ethnically white people in XR's non-normative protests. Furthermore, protest groups including XR (2019) and Earth First! (2024) explicitly recognise the need for social liberation *within* activist spaces and demonstrate an awareness that ethnically minoritised people are marginalised from BCP. It is vital that those most impacted by climate change, such as ethnically minoritised people, are central in responding to it directly through protest (Schlosberg and Collins, 2014, p.369). Diversity leads to better decision making, more effective strategy, and greater urgency in climate protest (Johnson, 2020; Pearson and Schuldt, 2018, p.97; Tsai and Pearson, 2022), enhancing its efficacy. Additionally, failing to facilitate ethnically minoritised representation and counsel makes climate protest ineffective, given that ethnically white environmentalism maintains the status quo and produces unjust solutions to climate change (Loach, 2023, p.72).

Although ethnically minoritised people exhibit significant awareness of and concern for the impacts of climate change, (Ogunbode *et al.*, 2023, p.21; Pearson *et al.*, 2017) they are problematically underreprepresented in BCP, giving rise to my research question: *why are ethnically minoritised, environmentally concerned people underrepresented in British climate protest?* This question speaks to the greater environmental concern demonstrated by ethnically minoritised people than ethnically white people (Ballew *et al.*, 2020; Macias, 2015; Speiser and Krygsman, 2014) and thus dispels misconceptions to the contrary (Lewis *et al.*, 2021, p.61; Medina *et al.*, 2019). It also specifically considers the discrepancy between significant environmental concern amongst ethnically minoritised communities in Britain and action through protest, a link that existing literature fails to make.

Before progressing, a brief word on terminology. Most importantly, I appreciate that the term 'ethnically minoritised' is inherently flawed and contentious. However, I employ it as a conscious rejection of acronyms such as BAME (Black, Asian, Minority Ethnic) and POC (People of Colour) which are simultaneously homogenising and ostracising (Adebisi, 2019; Aspinall, 2020a; Aspinall, 2020b; Khunti *et al.*, 2020). In contrast, 'ethnically minoritised' recognises the unnatural and racist social structures of power that enable some people to intentionally and oppressively 'minoritise' others (Selvarajah *et al*., 2020, p.3; The Law Society, 2025). 'Ethnically minoritised' in this context includes long- and short-term migrants as well as British nationals, in acknowledgement of possible variations (as well as overlap) in rationale for protest non-participation depending on national status. I also refer to 'ethnically white' people in recognition that whiteness is not the norm or above ethnicity (Guess, 2006, p.650; Lindner, 2018, pp.44).

In answer to my research question, I argue that insufficient recognition of and response to structures and systems of oppression operating external to, and internally within BCP make it a restrictive and disempowering space for ethnically minoritised people. Relatedly, age-old patterns of white supremacy and privilege remain with no signs of progress towards liberation for ethnically minoritised people offered by BCP, which discourages participation. Following this introduction, I outline my analytical framework which combines prefiguration and transformative climate justice (TCJ). Chapter three reviews existing literature on patterns of underrepresentation in BCP, while chapter four sets out the methodological approach behind my study. Chapters five and six provide an in-depth analysis of the eight semi-structured interviews I conducted and build a narrative to support my emphasis on the structural nature of underrepresentation in climate protest. Chapter five centres on the dearth of pull factors to BCP which fails to offer an approach that is engaging for or relevant to ethnically minoritised people. Chapter six details the exclusionary push factors that shun ethnically minoritised people from climate protest despite environmental concern and enthusiasm towards protest participation. Finally, I acknowledge limitations and suggest implications of my research in conclusion.

2. Analytical Framework

This chapter sets out the concepts that comprise my analytical framework, namely TCJ and prefiguration. I outline the substance of these concepts and explain how they will be used analytically in this research to provide a detailed and unique understanding of why ethnically minoritised, environmentally concerned people are underrepresented in BCP.

2.1 – Transformative Climate Justice

I deploy TCJ as an analytical tool to question and reveal the root causes of ethnically minoritised underrepresentation in BCP. Conceptually, TCJ builds on the intersection between social and environmental injustice (Newell *et al.*, 2021, pp.4-6; Porter *et al.*, 2020, p.293) to offer a radical and nuanced response to the climate crisis. Analytically, TCJ addresses the structural causes of climate change, namely capitalism and colonialism (Dawson, 2010; Natarajan, 2024, p.241; Sultana, 2022), and speaks to the disproportionality of climate vulnerability (Krause, 2018, p.509; Schlosberg and Collins, 2014, p.362). The structural focus of TCJ is extended to climate protest in this research to assess how systems of power shape protest manifestation. In this way, TCJ responds to the possibility that BCP is based in structures of inequality and marginalisation and is used to identify what this means for the representation of ethnically minoritised people.

TCJ adopts a systemic understanding of the climate crisis and seeks to address structural oppressions and inequalities as part of its response to climate change. Non-transformative approaches such as green economy initiatives or international negotiation in the context of existing socio-economic hierarchies play out along lines of inequality, protecting the interests of the elite at the further expense of oppressed communities (Harlan *et al.*, 2015, pp.143-144; Krause, 2018, p.513). In contrast, by reframing climate change as a justice and human rights issue (Dawson, 2010, p.327), TCJ offers responses that challenge existing structural hierarchies and thus deconstruct rather than exacerbate systemic inequalities (Newell *et al.*, 2021, p.8). This research utilises TCJ to analyse protest with the understanding that environmental destruction and social injustice and oppression are inextricable (Loach, 2023, pp.20-22).

Anti-racism is a central tenet of TCJ's structural analysis of the climate crisis, and this is translated to protest in my research. TCJ recognises that climate change is racist in that its

impacts are disproportionately felt along racialised lines (Holthaus, 2020). Moreover, the destructive neoliberal economic system responsible for the climate crisis was founded upon and is perpetuated by racism and exploitation such that race, racism, and climate change are inseparable (Ergene, Banerjee and Ergene, 2024; Hewett, 2020). Ergo, according to a TCJ analysis fighting racism *is* environmentalism. TCJ unequivocally establishes the relationship between racism and climate change and can therefore be used to ascertain how BCP interacts with and responds (or fails to respond) to this harmful interplay, and the implications of this for ethnically minoritised people.

Enacting solidarity amongst and between the more and less privileged in society is a crucial component of TCJ. Solidarity actively manifests TCJ's transformative and liberatory principles by offering solutions to the climate crisis grounded in radical care, acceptance of difference, and critical self-reflection (Collins and Watson, 2024, p.305; Mayorga and Picower, 2018, p.220). Crucially, TCJ differentiates between solidarity as a buzzword and as a "doing word" (Olufemi, 2020, p.99). Solidarity as praxis in the context of climate protest includes platforming marginalised voices (Lajarthe and Laigle, 2024, p.6) and learning from Global South activists and Indigenous peoples (Chaplain, 2024; Natarajan, 2024, p.245). Distinguishing between solidarity as a mere phrase and as a practice is useful to assess how different conceptualisations of solidarity interact with participation by ethnically minoritised people in BCP. Furthermore, by determining the importance of solidarity TCJ can be used to identify the implications of its absence.

TCJ offers value as an analytical tool in the context of my research. By viewing the climate crisis through a structural lens, acknowledging the intersection between climate change and social oppression, and conceptualising solidarity as an active and intentional practice, TCJ provides a clear framework against which climate protest can be evaluated. I implement this framework to analyse and assess whether and, if so, how, an (un)alignment with TCJ impacts the representation of ethnically minoritised people in BCP. Crucially, employing TCJ ensures that the reasons for ethnically minoritised underrepresentation in BCP are not considered in isolation and are instead connected to structural injustices that exist beyond the confines of climate protest.

2.2 – *Prefiguration*

Building on TCJ, prefiguration responds to the structural causes of the climate crisis by articulating and enacting ways of living that oppose and reject them (van de Sande, 2015, p.178) in a sustainable and life-affirming manner. Prefiguration is the "deliberate experimental implementation of desired future social relations and practices in the here-and-now" (Raekstad and Gradin, 2020, p.10) and it confronts the roots of injustice by experimenting with alternatives (Evans, 2021, p.4; van de Sande, 2015, p.189). Given that prefiguration is a means of system change (Monticelli, 2021), adopting it as an analytical tool necessitates that my research delves into the deep-seated, structural causes of ethnically minoritised underrepresentation in BCP.

A key principle of prefiguration is that the means and ends of resistance are intimately related. Prefigurative politics emphasise the need for social movements to embody their goals in their actions (Asara and Kallis, 2022, pp.59-60; Swain, 2017; van de Sande, 2015, p.189). Doing so ensures that political resistance is just, not only in its projected aims, but also in its actions and praxis (Franks, 2018, p.37). Conceptualising the process of resistance as of equal importance to its (achieved or intended) outcomes reinforces the importance of scrutinising BCP in its existing form and critiquing its shortcomings regardless of its aims. Moreover, relating means and ends in this way enables prefiguration to locate where the principles and actions of climate protest do not align and consider whether this is problematic for the representation of ethnically minoritised people.

The introspective nature of prefiguration has seen scepticism raised against its preoccupation with internal politics and ability to produce radical social change. For example, scholars have questioned whether prefiguration's devotion to means can ever offer a strategy capable of producing its desired ends (du Plessis and Husted, 2022, pp.219-220; Parker, 2021, pp.906-908). Although this critique is worthy of consideration, it can be reconciled in the context of this research. Firstly, it is crucial to emphasise that prefiguration is *itself* a material practice, rather than a mere principle or strategy that may or may not be applied to action (Franks, 2018, pp.34-35; Maeckelbergh, 2011; Swain, 2017). Secondly, by synergistically employing TCJ and prefiguration as analytical tools, the distinction between the transformative *principles* of climate protest, and prefiguring these in *action* is elucidated.

Prefigurative politics challenge traditional notions of time by deconstructing the distinction between present and future. Prefigurative organisation establishes its own temporalities through enactment of desired aims and a utopian future in the now, such that the real and ideal become one (Maeckelbergh, 2011, p.4; van de Sande, 2015, pp.188-189). Present action and future consequences are intrinsically linked. By framing time in this way, a prefigurative framework takes the organisational practices and manifestations of BCP as if they were the ideal 'finished product' of an ecologically secure and liberated society. Furthermore, prefiguration essentialises certain practices such as inclusion, demarginalization, and accountability in present action, rather than as principles for the future (Lajarthe and Laigle, 2024, p.6). Prefiguration thus reveals deficiencies of climate protest in this regard, which I relate to the (under)representation of ethnically minoritised people.

Prefiguration asks how political resistance can build a radically better future in the present (Jeffrey and Dyson, 2020, p.643). However, the underrepresentation of ethnically minoritised people in BCP serves as a reminder that this must be a better future for *everyone*. My research uses prefiguration analytically to identify what about BCP is prefigurative for some but not all by taking resistance itself to be as important as its aims and considering how a failure to consciously oppose oppressions in practice might exclude certain people.

3. Literature Review

Building on the context set out in my introduction, this chapter provides coverage of existing research into the engagement of ethnically minoritised people with BCP and outlines how my work builds on and adds to this. It also includes discussion of class as an important intersecting determinant of protest participation.

3.1 – The Underrepresentation of Ethnically Minoritised People in British Climate Protest

Adam Pearson and Jonathon Schuldt engage extensively with the issue of ethnically minoritised underrepresentation in mainstream environmental organisations such as businesses and non-governmental organisations (Pearson *et al.*, 2017; Pearson and Schuldt, 2018; Schuldt and Pearson, 2016; Tsai and Pearson, 2022). Their findings highlight the way social identities shape engagement with environmental spaces (Pearson et al., 2017, p.2; Pearson and Schuldt, 2018, p.98) and emphasise the societal tendency to associate an 'environmentalist' identity with ethnically white people (Pearson and Schuldt, 2018, p.108; Schuldt and Pearson, 2016, p.495). Consequently, non-identification with an environmentalist label makes environmental spaces inaccessible for ethnically minoritised people (Pearson and Schuldt, 2018, p.109; Schuldt and Pearson, 2016, p.503). Expanding on Pearson and Schuldt's mainstream focus, social identities offer an interesting avenue for analysis that my research applies to non-mainstream BCP. Moreover, I look beyond the environmentalist label to consider what other identity expectations exclude ethnically minoritised people.

Building on the role of identity, academics have identified minimal feelings of belonging and membership to BCP groups as a reason for the underrepresentation of ethnically minoritised people (Pearson *et al.*, 2017, p.13; Wong, Singh and Brumby, 2024). The predominantly ethnically white makeup of BCP (Griffith and Bevan, 2021, p.99) prevents ethnically minoritised people from identifying with climate protest groups, which creates a self-reinforcing cycle of exclusion and perpetuates underrepresentation (Wong, Singh and Brumby, 2024, p.5). This research recognises the demographic makeup of BCP as a useful starting point for explaining ethnically minoritised underrepresentation and considers how white

dominated protest manifests as an actively exclusionary space for ethnically minoritised people.

Existing literature identifies exposure to police and risk of arrest as particularly off-putting aspects of climate protest for ethnically minoritised people. The tactical use of mass arrest by British protest groups such as XR and Just Stop Oil, and the oft accompanying naïve approach to police violence is highly problematic for protest inclusivity (Bell and Bevan, 2021, pp.1212-1213; Drayton, 2021, p.111) given that ethnically minoritised people are disproportionately targeted by the police (Bowling and Phillips, 2003; Shankley and Williams, 2020; Vomfell and Stewart, 2021). Thöresson (2020, pp.18 and 21) critiques the glorification and trivialisation of arrest by climate protest groups as an erasure of the experiences of those without 'privileged identities'. Basing climate protest in privileged experience reproduces and embeds oppressive power hierarchies within protest groups, thus alienating and excluding ethnically minoritised people (Josette, 2019). Building on this important work, my research asks what else about the praxis and tactics of BCP exclude ethnically minoritised people and places disproportionate policing and exclusionary tactics in the context of structural marginalisation.

Research finds that framing of the climate crisis by BCP deters participation by ethnically minoritised people. Protest groups overemphasise the responsibility of individuals to be more 'environmentally friendly' (Thöresson, 2020, p.32) while insufficiently addressing capitalism as the root cause of the climate crisis and its adjacent oppressions such as imperialism, classism, and racism (Bell and Bevan, 2021, pp.1214 and 1217; Griffith and Bevan, 2021, p.103; Josette, 2019). An anti-political approach to climate protest (as adopted by XR (Hayes, Doherty and Saunders, 2020, p.22-24)) discourages participation by ethnically minoritised people for whom addressing the systemic injustices they experience continuously is a priority (Johnson, 2020; Loach, 2023, p.68). While recognising the value of these contributions, my research avoids the academic tendency to single out XR in relation to this issue (Bell and Bevan, 2021; Hayes, Doherty and Saunders, 2020; The Wretched of the Earth, 2019; Thöresson, 2020) and I recognise that the exclusion of ethnically minoritised people from BCP is a universal problem, not limited to any single group or organisation.

Scholarship shows that relevancy of messaging is critical for ethnically minoritised participation in BCP (Griffith and Bevan, 2021, p.104). It is important that climate protest speaks to experiences outside of an ethnically white bubble (Bawden, 2015). A tendency to overemphasise the inter-generational nature and future impacts of climate change by protest groups is ineffective messaging for engaging ethnically minoritised communities who are disproportionately experiencing its consequences at present (Josette, 2019; Schim van der Loeff, 2022, p.20). Additionally, protest groups may dispiritingly assert knowledge without incorporating diverse perspectives and experiences (Thöresson, 2020, p.19) and thus alienate those to whom certain truths do not apply. My research augments and advances these contributions by examining how else BCP fails to relate to the lives of ethnically minoritised people and with what implications for representation.

3.2 – Introducing Class

The unequal distribution of climate change vulnerability is driven partly by class inequalities. The terms class and socioeconomic status (SES) in this context encompass both socioeconomic factors such as occupation and living conditions, and sociocultural identity, including primary socialisation and education level (American Psychological Association, 2025; Deutsch, 2017; Rubin *et al.*, 2014, p.196). Ethnically minoritised people are more likely to be of lower SES than ethnically white people in Britain (Francis-Devine, 2020; GOV.UK, 2023; Institute of Race Relations, 2024) and thus inhabit localities exposed to environmental hazards such as inner-cities or around sites of industrial production (Hansen *et al.*, 2013, pp.2-3; Lewis *et al.*, 2021, p.60). The intimate relationship between vulnerability to the climate crisis, class, and ethnically minoritised identities (Islam and Winkel, 2017, p.17; Meer, 2025, p.9) underpins the need for an analytical framework, such as TCJ, that confronts the structural foundations of these co-constitutive experiences.

Scholarship highlights the relevance of social class to climate protest participation in the UK which is pertinent to my research given that ethnically minoritised people are overrepresented in lower socio-economic classes (Francis-Devine, 2020; GOV.UK, 2023; Institute of Race Relations, 2024). Research has established that BCP is dominated by highly educated, middle-class people while working-class people are severely underrepresented

(Hayes, Doherty and Saunders, 2020, p.3; Wennerhag and Hylmö, 2022, p.365), notwithstanding the greater concern and risk perception exhibited by working-class communities (Pearson *et al.*, 2017, p.14). By incorporating class into my analysis, I consider whether and how it compounds the underrepresentation of ethnically minoritised, environmentally concerned people in BCP.

Academic contributions to date offer a comprehensive explanation of how class influences participation in BCP, resulting in an underrepresentation of working-class people. For example, the middle-class approach to environmentalism that BCP takes is not relatable to the experiences and socio-cultural identity of working-class people (Bawden, 2015). Additionally, working-class people are uninterested in climate protest that individualises responsibility for the climate crisis (Bell, 2021, pp.69-70) rather than challenging the socio-political structures responsible for both environmental destruction and inequalities in SES (Bell and Bevan, 2021, p.1217; della Porta and Portos, 2021, p.36; Naseif, Haddad and Almeida, 2025, p.3). Moreover, differences in socio-economic circumstance, or 'biographical availability' (Wennerhag and Hylmö, 2022, p.360), dictate opportunity to engage with protest. Unflexible working hours and financial instability make finding the time and resources needed for protest more difficult for low SES people than those with the financial security to concentrate their energy on political pursuits (Bell and Bevan, 2021, pp.1213-1214). Building on this, my research examines what biographical availability means for the priorities of ethnically minoritised people from different social classes and looks to availabilities beyond biography, such as emotional capacity.

With few exceptions (see Bell and Bevan, 2021) there has been little attempt to consider how class intersects with other identities to influence climate protest participation. Pearson *et al.* (2017) go so far as to separate oppressed identities into neat, non-intersecting categories. I dispel any notion that any single identity is exclusively responsible for determining protest participation by incorporating class into my analysis of ethnic underrepresentation and considering whether the intersection between ethnic minoritisation and low SES exacerbates climate protest inaccessibility in Britain.

4. Methodology

My research aligns broadly with a constructionist epistemology and emphasises the importance of individually constructed social understandings (King, Horrocks and Brooks, 2019, p.23) and the lived experiences of research participants (Andrews, 2012, p.40; Blaikie and Priest, 2019, p.93). I therefore conducted in-person and online, semi-structured interviews with eight ethnically minoritised participants, lasting between 42 and 66 minutes. These personal interviews enabled me to collect rich and nuanced data (Mason, 2002, p.65) based on subjective interpretations of lived experiences. Loose interview structure granted participants freedom to express their personal thoughts and opinions (Brinkmann, 2020, p.436) and I emphasised to each participant my hope for participant-led conversation and my role as facilitator more so than interviewer. This gave participants confidence and "freedom to digress" (Berg and Lune, 2014, p.112), meaning that the information gleaned offers an account based as far as possible in participant perspectives (Mason, 2002, p.66). Semi-structured interviews were useful for obtaining comprehensive data, but they suffer from temporal limitation. The interviews do not capture the inevitable evolution of participant viewpoints on BCP with time and experience.

As with most intensive qualitative studies, research participants were assembled using non-probability sampling (Wildemuth and Cao, 2017, p.136), specifically purposive and convenience sampling. This enabled me to engage people with highly relevant and detailed perspectives (Wildemuth and Cao, 2017, p.137). Participants were sourced predominantly from Bristol, an ethnically diverse and environmentally conscious city (Billington, 2024; Bullock, 2024; Office for National Statistics, 2023, p.2). This enhances the generalisability of participant perspectives to less progressive pockets of the United Kingdom, although the intensive nature of this study does hinder its wider applicability (Carminati, 2018, p.2096).

Participants were required to self-identify as ethnically minoritised and environmentally concerned and were accessed primarily by promoting the study in environmental organisations around Bristol and through relevant channels of the University of Bristol. Identification with environmental concern incorporates knowledge of environmental issues, support for solutions to these issues, and willingness to contribute to these solutions (Hateftabar and Hall, 2023, p.3). Importantly, environmental concern does not in this context

necessitate behaviour change (Bamberg, 2003, p.21) in recognition of the importance of risk perception, not individual action, in determining environmental concern (Pearson *et al.*, 2017, p.6; Pearson and Schuldt, 2018, pp.99-100). Although this broad definition of environmental concern hinders the validity and reliability of my research, its subjective nature enabled participants to autonomously assert their own self-identity in hope of minimising exclusion from the study. These participation requirements ensured that perspectives came from people directly impacted by the lack of diversity in BCP and facilitated my aim of investigating the non-translation of climate change awareness and concern into protest participation by ethnically minoritised people, a connection that has not been made in existing literature.

Given that data saturation may in some instances become apparent after six qualitative interviews (Boddy, 2016, p.429), my sample size of eight participants captured a thorough representation of sample group perspectives. Nevertheless, a larger sample would have better reflected the diversity amongst environmentally concerned, ethnically minoritised people. Relatedly, by dichotomising ethnically white and minoritised people this study obscures nuances to climate protest underrepresentation amongst demographics within 'ethnically minoritised people' (Pearson *et al.*, 2017, p.11). This was combatted somewhat by having participants with a range of ethnic identities, and a smaller sample size allowed for extended engagement with participants and data and thus facilitated a detailed exploration of participant perceptions (Gill, 2024, p.12; Subedi, 2021, pp.6-7).

To maintain a methodology that elevates knowledge and truth production by participants I conducted thematic analysis as delineated by Braun and Clarke (2006). Interview transcripts were coded according to salient issues for participants before refinement and categorisation into broader empirical themes. Despite an inevitable degree of researcher influence, thematic analysis allows data to 'speak' independently and centres the feelings and perspectives of and meaning constructed by individuals (Clarke and Braun, 2016, p.297; Gill, 2024, p.12; Joffe, 2011, p.211). Additionally, by analysing inductively I ensured that the experiences of each participant were foregrounded in the research narrative (Dawadi, 2021, p.63). Inductive analysis that platforms participant contribution helps to combat the research bias inherent in purposive and convenience sampling (Bullard, 2024; Rai and Thapa, 2015, p.10; Stratton, 2021), and qualitative research more generally (Chenail, 2011; Noble and Smith, 2015), which

is important as an ethnically white person researching the experiences of ethnically minoritised people.

4.1 – Positionality and Reflexivity

With this research I hope to, in a small way, reveal and push back against white supremacy and the systemic silencing of historically marginalised peoples. However, I recognise the significance of my inevitable influence upon and intimacy with the research process (Mason, 2002; Ward, Hoare and Gott, 2015, pp.456-457) given my positionality as an ethnically white researcher. The analysis, interpretation, and representation of data are inherently subjective processes (Chadderton, 2012, pp.373-374; Marker, 2003) and thus shaped by my ethnic whiteness. There is therefore an extent to which I must be considered an unreliable narrator of ethnically minoritised perspectives, and despite my intention to platform these voices, my ethnically white voice is ultimately the dominant one. Throughout the analysis and writing process I was careful to uphold the intended meaning of participant contributions (as far as my subjective interpretation allowed) to avoid misrepresentation as perpetuation of oppression (Chadderton, 2012, p.366). However, it is possible that my positionality inhibited the willingness of participants to divulge the full extent of their thoughts to me.

I must also acknowledge my positionality as a researcher with personal experience of climate protest (Evans, 2021, p.11). My involvement in climate activism made it difficult at times to maintain relative objectivity and inevitably shaped how I received the judgements and experiences of participants (Gill, 2024, p.12). Simultaneously, my insight into and understanding of climate protest made it easier to engage with participants who also have protest experience, and my wider knowledge of the British climate movement allowed me to engage with participants rigorously.

5. British Climate Protest Has Failed to Engage Ethnically Minoritised People

This chapter argues that BCP is unrelatable to the diverse experiences and identities of ethnically minoritised, environmentally concerned people, driving underrepresentation. Crucially, the interplay between social oppression and BCP disengages ethnically minoritised people. A failure to accommodate a variety of identities, and discrepancies in interpretations of effective climate protest and action are also of critical importance.

5.1 – Messaging and Framing

The messaging proclaimed by BCP and its framing of the climate crisis fails to relate to the lives and needs of ethnically minoritised people, discouraging protest engagement. For example, framing the climate crisis abstractly and intangibly creates a disconnect between climate protest and immediate, unaddressed material needs and concerns (Craig, 2025; Participant C, 2025; Romaine, 2025). Additionally, the tendency of BCP to fixate on the future implications of climate change ignores ethnically minoritised people's disproportionate exposure to its current impacts (Ogunbode *et al.*, 2023; Participant A, 2025). Protest that does not establish relevancy to people's lives and experiences will not seem worthwhile and thus deter engagement (van Stekelenburg, 2013; Wong et al., 2020).

It is also important that the messaging of climate protest relates to the lived experiences of ethnically minoritised people (Craig, 2025; Participant C, 2025). BCP fails to encapsulate a diversity of lived experiences such as "[rising global] food prices, drought in the Caribbean and Africa and Asia, and [issues] on a global scale" (Participant C, 2025). This is problematic given that demographic differences shape experiences of climate change (Kaijser and Kronsell, 2014, p.420; Lutz and Striessnig, 2015) and messaging that resonates will differ accordingly. Framing the climate crisis in a way that is unrelatable to those outside an ethnically white bubble perpetuates the underrepresentation of ethnically minoritised people in BCP.

Framing of the climate crisis that does not confront the overlapping systemic oppressions responsible for its unequal consequences, such as racial capitalism (Gonzalez, 2021; Sultana, 2022), makes BCP a non-liberatory space for ethnically minoritised people. For example, distinguishing between climate protest and resistance against systemic marginalisation makes

climate protest unrelatable to ethnically minoritised people for whom the consequences of economic inequality, colonial legacies, and the climate crisis are experienced inextricably (Craig, 2025; Participant A, 2025). Neatly separating climate protest "puts ethnically minoritised people off because it's all the same fight" (Participant A, 2025). Furthermore, BCP has failed to sufficiently centralise anti-racism in its messaging (Participant A, 2025) which hinders participation by ethnically minoritised people for whom racism is a constant feature of and threat to life (Butler, 1993; Combs, 2018), and therefore a priority to dismantle. Although BCP groups such as Greenpeace (Sauven and Rajput, 2020), XR (2018) and Friends of the Earth (2020) reference their commitments to anti-racism, Participant A (2025) highlights the insufficient visibility of this message: "I'm not even aware [climate protest groups] say they care about [anti-racism] at all." When racial justice is not incorporated as a fundamental dimension of solutions to the climate crisis ethnically minoritised people may disengage (Johnson, 2020; Loach, 2023, pp.79-80).

BCP does not offer a universally worthwhile and relatable framing of the climate crisis or rationale for its actions. It proffers a vision for the future that does not account for diverse needs and positionalities, hindering relevancy. Applying prefiguration, there is seemingly a discontinuity between the inclusivity purported by BCP and the universality of its accessibility in practice, which impedes ethnically minoritised representation. Moreover, a disengagement with TCJ by separating environmentalism from intersecting social injustices means that while climate protest can be experienced as empowering and progressive for some (Elsen and Ord, 2021; Steinberg, 2024), it is a politically regressive and thus unattractive space for ethnically minoritised people.

Notably, not all participants considered framing solutions to the climate crisis around radical system change to be helpful. For example, Romaine (2025) emphasised the need for system reform through the likes of green pension funds and environmentally sustainable individual practices. Participant C (2025) commented that situating climate protest within an anti-capitalist framework would be "too political" for ethnically minoritised communities, which contradicts conclusions made by Bell and Bevan (2021) and Loach (2023). Contradictory perspectives are an important reminder that the reasons for underrepresentation in BCP are never universal amongst the highly diverse and nuanced demographic of environmentally concerned, ethnically minoritised people.

5.2 – Ethnically Minoritised Identities

Individual cultural identities impact protest engagement by ethnically minoritised communities and contribute to underrepresentation in BCP. Jordan (2025) suggested that some cultures may be disinclined towards protest participation due to the violent suppression that protest is met with in certain Global Majority countries, meaning protest generally is considered exceptionally dangerous. It is worth acknowledging that responses to protest in Britain are increasingly repressive (Amnesty International UK, 2025; Home Office and Cleverly, 2024; Mortimer, 2025): violations of democratic freedoms are by no means limited to Global Majority countries. Additionally, the perception of needing to come from a particularly environmentally conscious family or background inhibits the perceived accessibility of BCP for ethnically minoritised people (Jordan, 2025) whose families may have historically had more pressing material concerns.

Exemplifying the nuanced and complex ways in which identities interact, de Mel (2025) outlined why *high SES*, ethnically minoritised immigrants may be unlikely to engage with climate protest. Economic privilege can mitigate exposure to the effects of climate change in Global Majority countries, while the changing British climate may seem comparatively tame, tempering potential concern for the climate crisis (de Mel, 2025). Therefore, environmentalism might not be part of high SES, ethnically minoritised immigrant identities, making climate protest an irrational pursuit. Adding depth to this analysis, Craig (2025) rejected any notion that disengagement with climate change is culturally inherent amongst ethnically minoritised immigrants. Rather, she emphasised the urbanised nature of ethnically minoritised communities generally (GOV.UK, 2021) and resultant lack of access to nature and the outdoors (Hayes, 2020, p.156; Roe, Aspinall and Ward Thompson, 2016, p.2; Snaith and Odedun, 2023) as hindering the extent to which ethnically minoritised people consider themselves environmentalists. Experiences in countries of origin and the SES of ethnically minoritised people shape engagement with and concern for climate change and may in some instances inhibit feelings of urgency and thus discourage participation in BCP.

Ethnically minoritised people might fear that participation in BCP will further threaten their already marginalised identities and consequently avoid engaging in protest. Ethnically minoritised immigrants may feel particular pressure to conform to social norms and

expectations in pursuit of presenting 'model minority' behaviour (Craig, 2025). Participation in the disruption and anti-establishment sentiment associated with protest is counterproductive in this sense and exposes ethnically minoritised immigrants to abuse, in addition to the racism they are subject to regardless of protest involvement (Benson and Lewis, 2019; Craig, 2025; Jordan, 2025; Lilleker and Pérez-Escolar, 2023). Participation in protest can exacerbate feelings of unsafety and unwelcomeness for ethnically minoritised immigrants to Britain, deterring participation in climate protest.

The underrepresentation of ethnically minoritised people and exclusion of ethnically minoritised immigrants suggests that BCP is not prefiguring notions of environmentalism and of being an environmental*ist* that accommodates a variety of cultural and socioeconomic identities. Additionally, in line with a TCJ analysis, the structural marginalisation and othering of ethnically minoritised immigrants (Ryan, 2022) limits access to climate protest. Anti-immigrant sentiments from across the political spectrum (Culbertson, 2025; Gentleman, 2024) and the rise of the fascist Reform Party (Choonara, 2024, p.12) exacerbate the vulnerability and danger associated with protest for ethnically minoritised immigrants and illustrate how state fuelled racism plays into obstructing participation in BCP.

5.3 – Conceptualisations of Effective Protest

Some participants expressed reservations over the oft disruptive nature of non-normative climate protest or rejected the value of protest altogether. While the visible nature of protest was lauded by de Mel (2025), he questioned whether disruption counterproductively disengages the wider public from its demands and articulated the need for protest to target politicians, not disrupt the public. Similarly, Jordan (2025) expressed concern over the impact of disruptive protest on working-class people and considered whether "exploring a different kind of [non-disruptive] protest could be more effective." The greater intersectional awareness of ethnically minoritised people (Harnois, 2016) makes the disruptive approach to protest taken by ethnically white people unappealing. Romaine (2025) was disparaging towards protest and critiqued the confrontational nature of disruption as inducing aggression and turning the public against the aims of climate activists. They cited this as their reason for non-participation in climate protest, exemplifying the way different conceptualisations of effective climate action determine protest participation.

Participant A (2025) expressed distaste towards the theory of Roger Hallam, founder of Britain's most prominent climate protest organisations such as XR and Just Stop Oil, which inaccurately extrapolates Chenoweth and Stephan's (2011) conclusion that mobilising 3.5% of a given population to protest is sufficient to induce political transformation (Ahmed, 2019; Williams and Rudd, 2024, p.314). The participant critiqued this approach as invalidating the daily resistance through survival performed by ethnically minoritised people (Hartman, 2021, pp.227-228) and pointed out that more than 3.5% of the British population are ethnically minoritised (Office for National Statistics, 2022) making the approach of Hallam and adjacent protest groups inherently exclusionary (Participant A). The perspectives of de Mel (2025), Jordan (2025), Participant A (2025), and Romaine (2025) indicate that the tactics employed by BCP can be off-putting for ethnically minoritised communities (Drayton, 2021, p.113) who may conceptualise protest efficacy differently to ethnically white-dominated protest spaces, leading to underrepresentation.

Community building was emphasised by participants (Craig, 2025; Participant A; Participant B, 2025) as a necessary and overlooked aspect of BCP, or even an alternative to it (Romaine, 2025):

> [Community power building is] where I get my belonging and where I feel most hopeful, because when we're doing that work it feels like we've already won. The win is us being here and taking care of each other… you know regardless of what happens you have each other's backs. You don't really get that in protests. (Participant B).

This contribution frames community building *as protest*, suggesting that ethnically minoritised people may consider alternative forms of protest effective in addition to the visible, on the streets action that is synonymous with BCP. It also exemplifies how building community strength prefiguratively enacts the collective regeneration and rejuvenation needed to establish protest sustainability and longevity (Participant B) despite ongoing oppression and a future marked by climate disaster (Cooper et al., 2025). Incorporating community as and alongside protest is necessary for ethnically minoritised people whose structural marginalisation necessitates community strength to provide political power (Participant B) and emotional regeneration. Therefore, BCP that fails to intentionally prioritise community

and provide a space in which affinity can be built regardless of ethnicity will naturally prevent ethnically minoritised people from participating, entailing underrepresentation.

5.4 – Conclusion

Participant contributions evidence the insufficient relevancy of BCP to the huge diversity of lived experiences of ethnically minoritised people which inhibits accessibility and causes underrepresentation. That climate protest is not made universally engaging in its messaging, organisation, and praxis, indicates that these spaces do not offer the potential for participation and empowerment to all people equally. The limited applicability of BCP arises in part from the failure to position the struggle for planetary preservation in the context of and in combination with struggle against systemic social oppression and the subjugation of ethnically minoritised people. Moreover, by grounding the praxis of BCP in the privilege of ethnic whiteness it manifests in a manner that is not necessarily attractive, impactful, or relevant to ethnically minoritised people, hindering engagement.

6. Ethnically Minoritised People Are Excluded from British Climate Protest

This chapter argues that harmful social structures shape BCP and exclude ethnically minoritised people. While the previous chapter detailed the dearth of pull factors that inhibit initial engagement with BCP, this chapter presents the abundance of push factors that actively exclude ethnically minoritised people despite environmental concern and enthusiasm towards protest participation. These include material and emotional priorities and capacity, exposure to violence, and the ethnically white culture of BCP.

6.1 – Priorities and Capacity

Ethnically minoritised people have needs that take priority over participation in climate protest, particularly when accounting for class inequalities. Ethnically minoritised people are overrepresented amongst those of low SES in Britain (GOV.UK, 2023; Institute of Race Relations, 2024) and are thus more likely to be preoccupied with the basics of living, such as earning enough to eat, than ethnically white people (de Mel, 2025, Participant C, 2025; Romaine, 2025). Protest movements are not of concern when day-to-day survival is occupying mental and physical energy and time (Ayamba, 2025; Participant A, 2025). If ethnically minoritised people do have the biographical availability to engage with protest they are likely to do so in response to racial subjugation as the most immediate threat to life (Participant A, 2025), rather than in response to climate change which may (although decreasingly) be perceived as a future issue (Moser, 2010, pp.33-34; Nisbet, 2009). Moreover, Participant A (2025) emphasised that the degree of oppression experienced by ethnically minoritised people means survival is itself protest (Hartman, 2021, pp.227-228), reducing capacity to engage in more 'formal' resistance. These priorities and pressures on time based in class inequality inhibit the capacity of ethnically minoritised people to participate in climate protest, leading to underrepresentation.

Drawing on the contributions of TCJ and prefiguration further illustrate the role of material unavailability. Managing economic inequality takes priority over climate activism and thus contributes to protest underrepresentation, highlighting the way structural inequalities and oppressions intersect to inhibit protest participation. BCP that overlooks the multitude of

intersecting oppressions at play in the context of the climate crisis compounds the inaccessibility of protest spaces for ethnically minoritised people. If differing material needs are unaccounted for then BCP's espoused inclusivity is ultimately insincere. Incorporating the prefiguration of environmentally sustainable economic liberation for the future into the approach of BCP, such as by establishing alternative production and consumption processes (Schiller-Merkens, 2022, p.467) in small-scale organising, would improve accessibility.

Climate protest requires an inordinate degree of emotional capacity for ethnically minoritised people which impedes participation. Ethnically minoritised people feel more emotionally attached to and affected by environmental devastation due to the predominant manifestation of the climate crisis in Global Majority countries (Mertz *et al.*, 2009, pp.745-746; Ogunbode *et al.*, 2023, p.21; Oxfam, 2025). Resultantly, directly confronting the horrifying realities of climate change through protest requires greater emotional labour for ethnically minoritised people than for ethnically white people (Participant A, 2025), with negative implications for protest participation. Alternatively, de Mel (2025) suggested that the emotional commitment needed to motivate protest participation excludes ethnically minoritised immigrants who, relative to their country of origin, may feel disconnected from the impacts of climate change in Britain.

Political context can exacerbate the exhaustion and pain associated with BCP for ethnically minoritised people. Draconian retaliation against climate protest (Amnesty International, 2024; Atkins, 2025; Gayle, 2025), and climate denialism proclaimed by emerging political party Reform UK (Seabrook, 2025; Sethi and Ward, 2024) have fuelled hopelessness of engaging with political leaders through protest and increased associated risks of violence for ethnically minoritised people, discouraging participation (Participant B). Relentless institutional subjugation quells belief in change-making ability amongst ethnically minoritised communities and dampens optimism and hope, making protest seem pointless. This is particularly the case for ethnically minoritised immigrants who are deemed sub-human by the state (Tyerman and van Isacker, 2024), meaning "it's very hard to want to even try and change the minds of people in power." (Participant B). High demands on emotional availability and the disheartening political context of protest discourages ethnically minoritised climate protest participation in Britain.

6.2 – Policing and Safety

Ethnically minoritised people are disproportionately targeted by the police in Britain (Bowling and Phillips, 2003; Shankley and Williams, 2020; Vomfell and Stewart, 2021) which increases the risks associated with protest for ethnically minoritised communities and drives underrepresentation. Disproportionate policing was cited almost universally amongst participants as a salient reason for why they or other ethnically minoritised people may avoid climate protest. Participant A (2025) gave anecdotal evidence of a climate protest at which an ethnically minoritised person was targeted for arrest from a large pool of ethnically white protesters. This exemplifies the way oppressions intersect to make protest inaccessible for ethnically minoritised people. Jordan (2025) adds nuance by recognising that her mixed-race, middle-class, female identity would put her at less risk of being singled out than a darker skinned, working-class man (Prison Reform Trust, 2023; Sturge, 2024, pp.9 and 15). This serves as a reminder that my study cannot account for the experiences of all ethnically minoritised people who will have varying perceptions of and insight into BCP depending on their individual identities.

The over-policing of ethnically minoritised people and disproportionate impacts of legal repercussions interact augmentatively to deter ethnically minoritised people from climate protest involvement. Participants expressed significant concern over the implications of arrest for their prospects (Jordan, 2025; Participant B, 2025; Participant C, 2025) given that ethnically minoritised people suffer greater stigma and social impediment due to criminalisation than ethnically white people (Decker *et al.*, 2015; Unlock, 2019). Additionally, a person making themself vulnerable to legal reprisals relies on trust that "the people who are going to take away their freedoms, either through imprisonment or fines or other sanctions, see them as a human being." (Participant B, 2025). Ethnically minoritised people do not have such a guarantee (Brito, 2024, pp.9-10) and are therefore underrepresented in BCP due to distrust in the equity of policing and the criminal justice system.

Concerns over policing and arrest have been exacerbated by an ongoing legal crackdown on protest in Britain through legislation such as the Public Order Act and the Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Act (Atkins, 2025; Mortimer, 2025). Enhanced policing and surveillance have made protest increasingly unfeasible for ethnically minoritised people who are now

subject to even greater legal persecution (Participant B, 2025). The risks associated with protest for ethnically minoritised people increasingly outweigh any potential benefits (Participant B, 2025), contributing to their underrepresentation in BCP. The importance of changes to protest policing and the wider political context in which climate protest occurs reveals temporal limitations of my study. Participant feeling towards climate protest at any given moment is inevitably somewhat tied to the ever-changing political climate in Britain.

Participation in climate protest makes ethnically minoritised people vulnerable to verbal and physical harassment driven by racism. When protest disrupts the public and induces backlash ethnically minoritised people are singled out and exposed to a double aggression of frustration at the protest and racially motivated attack (Jordan, 2025, Participant A, 2025). Ethnically minoritised people are made victims of abuse before ethnically white people due to this racist double aggression, inducing reluctance towards climate protest participation. The failure by BCP to sufficiently offer solidarity to ethnically minoritised people and prioritise safety and care exacerbates this vulnerability to violence and further discourages protest participation (Jordan, 2025). When ethnically minoritised protesters are not supported by their more privileged counterparts, vulnerability increases and protest becomes inaccessible.

It is evident from these contributions that racism is a significant barrier to ethnically minoritised people partaking in BCP. Analytical application of TCJ reveals how racist policing and the disproportionate detriments associated with arrest are constitutive of wider structural oppression and protection of the environmentally destructive political status quo (Abdullah, 2024; Guzman, 2015). Racial discrimination is disseminated throughout society (from policing and sentencing (Lymperopoulou, 2024) to the likes of employment (Quillian and Lee, 2023)), resulting in structural prevention of protest participation for ethnically minoritised people. Additionally, public retaliation grounded in racism underscores the necessity of practical solidarity to the actions of BCP to maximise its accessibility. There has thus far been a failure to prefigure an environment in which all activists are equally safe and protected, deterring involvement by those left vulnerable.

6.3 – The Whiteness of British Climate Protest

6.3.1 – *Whiteness Shapes Protest Culture*

In our interview, Ayamba (2025) gave a detailed analysis of how the historical ethnic whiteness of British environmental spaces has persisted in modern-day climate protest, leading to the exclusion of ethnically minoritised people. The deep historical foundation of British environmentalism in ethnic whiteness (Fowler, 2020; Palmer *et al.*, 2025) has contributed to the construction of climate protest groups as exclusive 'clubs' reserved for ethnically white 'members' (Ayamba, 2025). Resultantly, while BCP may purport radical principles of climate justice and social liberation, its predominantly ethnically white makeup maintains a culture that is "based on a white discourse… [and] doesn't necessarily address the concerns of the Global Majority" (Ayamba, 2025). Climate protest that is physically dominated by ethnically white people and thus grounded in an exclusively Global North interpretation of environmentalism fails to resonate with or appeal to ethnically minoritised people who become disillusioned with BCP. Therefore, "the only way is to decolonise, democratise…, and look at the organisational culture" (Ayamba, 2025) of BCP to uproot its historical ethnic whiteness and facilitate accessibility for ethnically minoritised people. This contribution demonstrates how BCP groups that fail to engage with TCJ to address the historical structures of oppression that shape them will inevitably exclude ethnically minoritised people and perpetuate underrepresentation.

The economically privileged, ethnically white culture of BCP (Hayes, Doherty and Saunders, 2020, p.3; Wennerhag and Hylmö, 2022, p.365) imposes exclusionary expectations on participation. This culture has induced a tendency to glorify and trivialise arrest (Smoke, 2019; Thöresson, 2020, p.16) which alienates and marginalises people without such privileged identities (Jordan, 2025; Participant B, 2025). In this way, BCP culture fails to account for the way protest risk differs according to identity (Craig, 2025; Jordan, 2025) and thus makes ethnically minoritised people particularly unsafe. Moreover, Jordan (2025) highlighted how expectations of engagement with practices of lifestyle environmentalism, such as being vegan, not flying, or avoiding using plastic, may exclude and stigmatise people who are unfamiliar with or cannot afford such practices. This is reinforced by Participant B (2025) who described expectations of lifestyle environmentalism as punitive, and doubted their personal

authenticity as an environmentalist because they do not adhere strictly to these practices. This exemplifies how basing the norms of BCP exclusively on the experiences of privileged ethnic whiteness leads to the othering, invalidation, and thus exclusion of environmentally concerned people with different positionalities and perspectives.

Lifestyle standards and trivialisation of arrest reveal the failure of BCP to critically engage with the structural constituents of the climate crisis according to TCJ, to the detriment of participation by ethnically minoritised people. Trivialisation of arrest leaves systemic racism in policing unacknowledged and erases the differing risk levels associated with protest. Furthermore, an overemphasis on lifestyle environmentalism imposes a status hierarchy on climate protest participation (Korkmaz and Cizreli, 2024) based in ethnic whiteness. This diverts attention from the structural causes of the climate crisis (Dawson, 2010; Lu, 2023, pp.23-25; Surprise, 2024, pp.448-449) that intersect with the oppression of ethnically minoritised people who are consequently deterred from participation in BCP.

6.3.2 – Harm Perpetuation in Protest Spaces

Harm inflicted upon ethnically minoritised people who do enter BCP spaces causes and compounds exclusion and underrepresentation. Ethnically minoritised people are "allowed in [to climate protest], but not allowed to really participate" (Romaine, 2025) or exert influence. Instead, ethnically minoritised people are sidelined and restricted (Romaine, 2025) while ethnically white protesters are afforded authority and control over how climate protest functions and manifests. This reflects a failure by BCP to prefigure resistance that serves people equally, entailing disinclination towards participation for the ethnically minoritised people it marginalises. Additionally, insufficient prioritisation of protection and care in protest spaces exacerbates the disproportionate vulnerability of ethnically minoritised people to the dangers associated with protest (Jordan, 2025) and deters involvement.

Ethnically white climate protesters may consider themselves immune from complicity in oppression due to their participation in politically progressive activism (Participant A, 2025). This makes BCP susceptible to infiltration by racist dynamics that perpetuate harm against ethnically minoritised people in a space that is supposedly alert to structural injustices. For example, XR's collaboration with the World Wildlife Fund (WWF) for the 'Restore Nature Now'

march in 2024, despite WWF's imperial approach to conservation and alleged abuses of indigenous people (BBC News, 2020; Domínguez and Luoma, 2020; Wilfried Huismann, 2014), exemplifies BCP's susceptibility to complicity in oppression and insufficient commitment to the need for structural transformation. Relatedly, Craig (2025) recalled receiving pushback from ethnically white activists who "don't like being told they're racist" (Craig, 2025) when attempting to address racist dynamics in environmental spaces. Resistance to addressing intra-group oppressions demonstrates how a failure to incorporate TCJ into protest in totality, both in external approach and internal relations, makes climate protest harmful for ethnically minoritised people.

The lack of prominent ethnically minoritised voices in BCP contributes to the sense that it is not a place for ethnically minoritised people. The predominant occupation of leadership roles by ethnically white, middle-class people conveys an image of exclusivity, not universal applicability (Participant B, 2025). Were climate protest to present a greater diversity of ambassadors, participation would seem attractive and accessible to a wider range of people (Ayamba, 2025; Participant C, 2025). In this way, the underrepresentation of ethnically minoritised people in BCP is a circular problem: "you need [ethnically minoritised] people to know how to engage with [ethnically minoritised] people." (Craig, 2025). BCP has failed to sufficiently prefigure demarginalization and take accountability for its exclusionary culture, resulting in a setting that perpetuates the suppression of ethnically minoritised people while ethnically white people maintain influence and prominence (Lajarthe and Laigle, 2024, p.6). Consequently, protest is perceived as unrepresentative, is not universally applicable, and the cycle of underrepresentation continues.

Participant B (2025) concluded that the underrepresentation of ethnically minoritised people in British protest comes down to "who is allowed to believe they have the power to create change". Climate protest only provides ethnically white people with the opportunity, space, and power to prefigure and imagine an alternative future, while the perspectives of ethnically minoritised people are insufficiently acknowledged. Multiple participants (Craig, 2025; Jordan, 2025; Participant A, 2025; Participant B, 2025) commented that our interview was the first opportunity they had been given to talk in-depth about my research topic. This points to a failure by BCP to make space and time for conversations about different experiences and

thus prefigure an environment that is empowering for *everybody*, leading to the exclusion and underrepresentation of marginalised communities.

6.4 – Conclusion

Ultimately, the ethnically white premise of BCP culture creates an environment in which ethnically minoritised people do not feel welcome, included, or safe. This exclusive, one-dimensional culture makes climate protest spaces susceptible to perpetuating harm against ethnically minoritised people who are not afforded the opportunity to assert their perspectives or needs. Applying TCJ and prefiguration synergistically reveals that ethnically minoritised people are excluded from political resistance that does not take the inextricability of social persecution and climate destruction (Newell *et al.*, 2021; Porter *et al.*, 2020) as principal in its approach.

In addition to the exclusionary shortcomings of BCP itself, external structural inequalities are significant in causing and perpetuating the underrepresentation of ethnically minoritised, environmentally concerned people. Economic inequality, pressures on material and emotional capacity, and systemic racism severely hinder protest accessibility for ethnically minoritised people. In line with TCJ, it is important to recognise the way oppressions compound one another. The immediacy and threat of social marginalisation and oppression, and resultant underrepresentation in climate protest, means that ethnically minoritised voices are suppressed within and excluded from the climate movement in Britain. This in turn maintains the self-perpetuating cycle of underrepresentation.

7. Conclusion

This dissertation has established that, despite exhibiting high levels of environmental concern (Ballew *et al.*, 2020; Pearson *et al.*, 2017), ethnically minoritised people are problematically underrepresented in BCP. My in-depth qualitative research and applied analytical framework offer a unique and comprehensive response to this. Utilising TCJ and prefiguration as analytical tools reveals, crucially, that overarching social inequalities and systemic oppressions are fundamental to the underrepresentation of ethnically minoritised people in BCP. For example, restrictions on material and emotional capacity compounded by class inequalities and racist policing are key reasons for underrepresentation. Incorporating a class analysis adds intersectional nuance to my research, reinforcing its overall quality.

BCP's insufficient acknowledgement of structural oppressions in its approach has exacerbated underrepresentation, as has its grounding in ethnic whiteness. Resultantly, protest does not manifest in an inclusive or relatable manner for ethnically minoritised people and may even be a space in which harm and oppression are perpetuated. My analytical framework acknowledges the contribution of climate protest to existing paradigms of social injustice and questions the unequal potential for empowerment in and applicability of BCP. I thus critique BCP in a manner largely absent from existing scholarship. My structural emphasis and the identified disconnect between environmental concern and protest participation offer a unique contribution and have considerable implications for the future of BCP.

7.1 – Limitations

This paper could have drawn more refined conclusions had it not homogenised 'ethnically minoritised people' (Pearson et al., 2017, p.11). Doing so has obscured potential nuances in rationale for non-participation in BCP amongst ethnically minoritised, environmentally concerned people. The inability of this research to represent a full range of experiences must be recognised. For example, although attempts were made to acknowledge distinctions between the experiences of ethnically minoritised British nationals and immigrants, a more formal recognition of the extent to which immigrant status can impact protest participation would have improved the rigour of my findings. Research engaging with more precise demographic groups would better draw out these nuances.

Although my conclusions are particularly relevant to ethnically minoritised people, I insufficiently consider whether the identified reasons for protest underrepresentation are applicable to a variety of marginalised demographics. My research fails to account for the wider spectrum of intersectionalities that might impact protest participation. This implies the need for further research into other demographics that are, despite environmental concern, underrepresented in BCP to establish whether the underlying structural causes identified in this dissertation remain. Furthermore, my findings could have been enhanced with the inclusion of ethnically white participants as a point of comparison to better ascertain what about BCP is exclusionary for ethnically minoritised people specifically.

Importantly, I must acknowledge that many ethnically minoritised people courageously participate in BCP despite the plethora of obstacles reported in this dissertation. Relatedly, I have concerns that the unappealing and inaccessible presentation of BCP by this dissertation may in fact aggravate ethnically minoritised underrepresentation. I hope my findings are not a source of disempowerment, rather a rallying cry for BCP to make necessary changes. The positionality held by an ethnically minoritised researcher would have been preferable to develop a study that better empowers ethnically minoritised people.

7.2 – Implications

The analytical framework I have developed can be used to offer constructive suggestions for facilitating improved representation of ethnically minoritised people in BCP. The exclusivity of BCP stems in large part from its one-dimensional structural orientation around the ideologies and experiences of ethnically white people. Drawing on TCJ; this can be addressed through active demarginalization by centring resistance on the voices, experiences, and understandings of marginalised peoples (brown, 2017, p.29; Lajarthe and Laigle, 2024), and with conscious unlearning and re-learning to uproot inequalities within BCP (Sultana, 2022, p.119). Prefiguration makes clear that looking inwards and recognising the inseparability of means and ends necessitates that climate protest prioritises social justice and is led by ethnically minoritised people, such that an ecologically sound world is also a socially emancipated one.

Despite a certain inadequacy of nuance to my research, the structural emphasis of my findings has crucial and universally relevant implications for BCP. It shows that the underrepresentation of ethnically minoritised, environmentally concerned people ultimately comes down to the thus far insufficient recognition that climate protest is, and must be, about more than just climate change. Deep-seated structures of oppression including racism, capitalism, and imperialism must be explicitly recognised and confronted *as part of climate protest*. This way, climate protest becomes a means of addressing the marginalisation of ethnically minoritised people and thus encourages participation. BCP must centre itself in, not separate itself from, struggle against social injustices and the structures that uphold them to ensure that a world beyond the climate crisis is one of liberation for all.

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