# ACTIVE SOLIDARITY: INTERSECTIONAL SOLIDARITY IN ACTION

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Abstract: While solidarity lies at the heart of collective action, it is not easily achieved. Social movements are characterized not only by difference within activist ranks but also by power asymmetries that reflect broader domination and distrust. The concept of intersectional solidarity is central to contemporary social justice movements' efforts to negotiate these divisions, but how can it be achieved? To answer this question, we offer some guidelines for *enacting* intersectional solidarity, drawing on a theoretically grounded examination of three contemporary social movements in the US and abroad (Occupy, Gezi Park, and the Women's March).

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**INTRODUCTION**

The Women's March, organized to protest the election of United States President Donald Trump, was the largest single-day protest in US history, encompassing more than 600 marches in the US and more than 160 marches outside the US, encompassing some 80 countries (Chenoweth and Pressman 2017; Fisher, Dow and Ray 2017; Heaney 2019; McKane and McCammon 2018). Movements of feminist resistance in the US, including not only the Women's March but also feminist-organized campaigns like BlackLivesMatter and movements for immigrants' rights, are the latest in a long line of social justice movements bridging diverse communities.[1] These movements demonstrate the power of identifying and amplifying myriad voices, showing that identity-based organizing can yield impressive results (Roberts and Jesudason 2013). Many contemporary social justice movements frame their organizing work as inspired by intersectionality (Terriquez et al. 2018; Milkman 2017).

There has been both scholarly and activist controversy about whether the Women's March lived up to its intersectional ideal (Heaney 2019; McKane and McCammon 2018). This leads us to ask: Have contemporary movements translated the ideal of intersectional solidarity into action? How and to what degree did these movements *enact* intersectional solidarity? Some contemporary movements showcase new organizational forms, forms that seem to feature greater diversity in leadership, while others are more traditional (Milkman 2017). As feminist activists seek to address divisions that have emerged with renewed salience in recent years, for example,

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[1] For reviews of social movement literature on intersectionality see Heaney 2019 and Irvine et al. 2019; for discussion of contemporary movements, see Fisher et al. 2017, 2018.

around self-identification, gender identity and sex-based rights, what can they learn from the Women's March and other, similar instances of gendered mobilization?

Although the concept of intersectionality has become a core one for feminists, and the study of intersectionality is now a well-established field, important gaps remain in the work on intersectionality in social movements.[2] Specifically, though several scholars have emphasized the importance of intersectional *praxis* as an accompaniment to intersectional consciousness (Ayoub 2019; Hancock 2016; Tormos-Aponte 2019; Irvine et al 2019; Townsend-Bell 2011), there is little concrete guidance as to what such praxis might look like. For example, though coalitions are the main organizing tool identified by Crenshaw (1989, 1992), a growing body of research points to the problems that coalitions present for intersectionally marginalized groups (Adam 2017; Strolovitch 2005). What does it mean to put intersectional solidarity into practice? How might groups prevent the powerless from falling through the cracks in their efforts at intersectional mobilization, both coalitional and otherwise?

In this paper, we sketch some answers to these questions, examining some contemporary instances of gendered mobilization to explore *how* these movements negotiated questions of identity, structure and power. Our examples include the protests in Gezi Park (Turkey), the Women's March, and Occupy Wall Street. All three aim for inclusion along various axes of intersectional marginalization, including gender and sexual identity, offering lessons for thinking

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[2] For a more on this point see Irvine et al. 2019; Heaney 2019.

about the practice of intersectional solidarity.[3] In each case, we ask *whether and how these movements enacted intersectional solidarity*.[4]

For each movement, we focus on two specific dimensions of intersectional solidarity that we see as particularly action-oriented. The first is whether and how the group countered power relations that structure relations of race, class, gender, and sexuality *by explicitly affirming group differences*. The second is whether and how efforts at solidarity *substantively engaged diverse groups in deliberation*. Intersectional solidarity is difficult to put into practice, but is worthwhile as an ideal toward which movements might aspire. We see partial instantiations of intersectional solidarity in the movements we consider. We offer an approach to intersectional praxis, outlining a series of organizational practices which movements can adopt. We call this approach *active solidarity*. Our cases reveal several challenges for the practice of intersectional solidarity. We conclude by considering the implications for contemporary feminist politics.

**PART I:  ACTIVE SOLIDARITY AS AN APPROACH TO ENACTING INTERSECTIONAL SOLIDARITY**

As an ideal, intersectionality requires not only observing differences, but also making an effort to confront power (Crenshaw 1991; Hancock 2016; May 2015; Tormos 2017; Wadsworth

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[3] All social movements are shaped by structures of gender and power (Einwohner et al. 2000). We use the term "gendered mobilization" to respond to calls for broadening the study of feminist protest to include anti-racist, environmental and other forms of organizing in its purview (Cohen et al., 2018; Irvine et al. (2019).

[4] We are cognizant of the on-going concern about work on intersectionality that does not foreground the experiences of Black women, and criticisms that work taking an intersectional feminist approach obscures the contributions of Black feminists. Throughout this piece, we situate our work with respect to foundational Black feminist texts, and our discussion of each movement encompasses the experience of women of color in the movements we consider. We also acknowledge the broader intellectual history and contemporary mission of work on intersectionality that incorporates attention to sexuality and to contributions of Latina and Chicana feminists as well as Black feminists in the global diaspora (see Hill Collins and Bilge 2016; Emeljulu and Sobande 2019).

2011). These efforts to counter power must address group-specific forms of oppression and be grounded in the lived experiences of marginalized groups (Young 1990; 2002; Mansbridge and Morris 2001). Doing so requires attending not only to identities, but also to the ways that identities structure power, that is, *critical diversity* (Herring and Henderson 2012).

Activists have generated a variety of techniques for countering group domination. Which ones might be both practicable and consistent with the ideal of intersectional solidarity that feminist scholars have articulated? Extant scholarship outlines strategies for *individual* activists to enact intersectionality in their everyday lives (e.g., Hancock 2011), and explores the ways that intersectionality as an idea serves as a collective action frame (Heaney 2019; Terriquez et al 2018), but few scholars have outlined *organizational* strategies for entities like movements (e.g. Strolovitch 2005). This essay articulates a version of intersectional praxis that focuses attention on countering domination and pursuing broad engagement in a collective process we call *active solidarity*.

**Solidarity**

Feminists have developed new models of solidarity, that is, ways to organize support and cooperation with the "other", including intersectional solidarity.  We offer *active solidarity* – not as a new type of solidarity nor as a new form of intersectionality–but rather as an approach to *practicing* intersectional solidarity, as an aspirational ideal for such organizing.[5] Active solidarity is a practice that proactively recognizes and seeks to counter the effects of unequal power on deliberation. It requires *intentionally* confronting power; seeking to dismantle privilege and reducing its role in corrupting our discussions. It seeks to create space for the marginalized so they can command more attention and influence. If *solidarity* refers to the ongoing process of

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[5] For more discussion of the issue of ideal or non-ideal theory see Valentini (2012).

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coordinating action by creating and maintaining ties between social groups, then *active solidarity* entails the engagement of movement adherents in deliberations structured to enable marginalized groups to participate on an equal footing in shaping movement goals, strategies and tactics.

**Political Solidarity**

Our focus in this essay is on political solidarity. Much of the work on solidarity and diversity examines social solidarity (Banting and Kymlicka; Levy 2017; Soroka et al. 2013). But political solidarity is distinct from social solidarity, and ought to be theorized as such (Sholz 2008). Political solidarity is sometimes defined quite broadly as encompassing any collective action aimed at responding to a perceived injustice, but is also sometimes defined more narrowly, focusing on intentional coordination of action for specific ends. Regardless, social movements provide an opportunity to study political solidarity: It represents key moments in which people choose to coordinate their action in pursuit of an idea of the good life, of social justice (Ayoub 2019; Rai 2018; Sholz 2008).

Solidarity among women (and even the idea of gender itself) has been criticized as a project that requires an emphasis on sameness (Mohanty 1988; Moi 2001). But work on intersectionality provides a link between identity and social structure that emphasizes the indeterminate, constructed, coalitional nature of political identities (Crenshaw 1989; Young 2002; Mohanty 2003). This theorizing develops models of solidarity for feminist movements that aim to counter power differentials and recognize difference (Hancock 2011; Mohanty 2003; Rai 2018; Steans 2007; Tormos 2017). These models emphasize the importance of eschewing an organizing strategy that assumes a shared identity or interest for all women, and point to the need to recognize the differentiated histories, interests and identities of different groups of women (Roth 2004; Mohanty 2003; Strolovitch 2007; Townsend-Bell 2011; Weldon 2006). On this

view, more solidarity does not mean more sameness, or less criticism of fellow activists or movements.  It means identifying, and seeking to remedy, patterns of domination and exclusion.

How to practice this dual strategy of rejecting an identity as "Woman" while affirming distinct groups or identities of particular "women" is less clear. Recently, some have interpreted the challenge of trans inclusion and rejecting the gender binary as necessitating a move away from talking about "women" towards talking about "gender plus" or even "kyriarchy" (e.g. Ellerby 2017). But Crenshaw's idea of political intersectionality proposes seeing the category "women" as a coalition, as a political project, not as a category we should reject.

Intersectional solidarity must include solidarity across different experiences and identities, solidarity with the "other" (cf. Dean 1996; Levy 2017). To build inclusion, however, identity- or group-specific strategies may need to be employed. For example, separate organization and caucuses can nurture the development and expression of issues and perspectives that would otherwise be overlooked or ignored (Weldon 2006; 2011). Paradoxically then, to create solidarity that is not based on the assumption of a shared identity as women, and to enhance the participation of subaltern groups, it may be necessary to affirm specific gender, race, sexual and other identities in the course of forging an inclusive movement.

**Active Solidarity**

There are many forms and degrees of solidarity (Sholz 2008), and we do not seek to provide an exhaustive typology here. Rather, we seek to discern elements of intersectional solidarity that can guide feminist praxis (Irvine et al. 2019; Tormos 2019; Hancock 2016). To this end, our discussion focuses on two key dimensions of intersectional solidarity: the ways that activists are *substantively involved in the deliberations* that define coordinated action, *and the*

*way in which the process of developing coordinated action takes explicit account of cross-cutting cleavages*, or structures of intersectional marginalization, seeking to enhance and secure the participation of particular groups that would otherwise be excluded. These dimensions define our idea of *active solidarity*, or coordinated action through deliberation and the active interrogation of power imbalances (See Supplementary Table 1).

*Passivity versus Active Engagement*

We describe active solidarity in contrast to more passive forms of engagement. Solidarity is stronger as a political force when it is an *active process* of substantive interaction, involving deliberation, negotiation, and engagement between different social groups (Chatterton et al. 2012; Steans 2007; Waterman 2001). Consider U.S. Supreme Court Justice Stephen Breyer's (2005) idea of "active liberty" as an understanding of liberty that involves a collective political commitment to enabling citizens to participate in self-governance. *Active* liberty is distinguished by the focus on citizens' engagement in their own representation. It involves constant involvement in a collective conversation, and "the right of ordinary citizens to shape the workings of government" (Toobin 2005). Likewise, active solidarity points to processes that ensure the right of movement adherents to shape the workings of the movements of which they are a part. These processes rest on challenging norms of domination and enhancing deliberation.

*Power Asymmetries, Group Difference and Deliberation*

Deliberation offers a critical mechanism for coordinating across difference. When people freely deliberate over movement goals and tactics, the actions and identities that emerge will be more reflective of the diversity of participants. Such discussion strengthens movements, making

them more legitimate, innovative and effective. This is particularly true when discussions are able to substantively involve a diverse group of participants.

Diversity offers many benefits to social movements, benefits that are enhanced when diverse participants participate in movement discussions. The physical presence of diverse groups (sometimes called "descriptive representation") among those defining and contributing to movement goals can inspire greater trust. A more diverse group has a broader knowledge base, as a collective (Weldon 2006). Groups that can draw on the diversity of participants are more innovative and are better at problem solving (Page 2008). In this sense, diversity is a political resource, providing a wider set of experiences on which to base political decisions and creating a broader set of groups who can potentially be drawn into political action (Young 1990; 2002). Diversity widens the organizational base and expands potential allies.

The mutually reinforcing benefits of deliberation and diversity can only be enjoyed if the organizational practices of the movement ensure that diverse groups are included, symbolically and substantively. This brings us to the second way that our ideal of solidarity is "active." Active solidarity requires a collective commitment to enabling the participation of all, including intersectionally marginalized groups. *Active* solidarity is an obligation to both create and be a part of a community, a form of politics in which participants work to produce the inclusion they seek (Breines 1989, Gawerc 2012, Polletta 2004). This cannot mean that inclusivity is the responsibility primarily or only of the marginalized, but it does mean that they must be involved in their own liberation. Importantly, discussions in particular movement sub-groups (such as caucuses or working groups) must ultimately be connected to the wider group in order to counter broader marginalization (Fraser 1995).

There are many pitfalls of deliberative processes aimed at consensus when it comes to diversity: The ideal of unmediated deliberation tends to reinforce homogeneity, privileging dominant groups and suppressing dissent (Mansbridge 1980; Young 1990), especially in social movement organizations (Smith and Glidden 2012). Power differentials may manifest in an unequal distribution of resources and status. Thus, if deliberation is to be inclusive, it must be structured to work against these repressive tendencies (Smith and Glidden 2012; Young 2002).

One strategy for addressing power asymmetries might be to erase group differences by affirming universal or shared elements of an actor's identity, playing down group difference as a way of minimizing the influence of power. Social psychological research has shown that appeals to more universal identities can strengthen political support for solidarity in the form of support for social programs (Huddy and Khatib 2007). Others have argued that a sort of strategic essentialism, a collective identity that emphasizes similarities over differences, may strengthen movements and magnify political influence in certain circumstances (Gitlin 1996; Spivak 1996).

However, such an approach likely worsens relations of domination among groups, as the views of the privileged are asserted as universal perspectives that crowd out or silence the marginalized voices (Young 1990; 2002; Montoya 2019). Even when they are physically present, the contributions of women, people of color, and so on are given less weight, treated with less respect, ignored or viewed as illegitimate interventions (Bohnet 2016; Karpowitz and Mendelberg 2014; Wise 2013). Indeed, without formal measures to ensure their voices are heard, the issues confronting marginalized groups tend to fall through the cracks of social movement organizations as part of the "tyranny of structurelessness" (Freeman 1972; Polletta 2004; Strolovitch 2007). Without attention to the specific claims of marginalized groups, participants are likely to adopt the norms of dominant groups unwittingly, inadvertently

reinforcing power dynamics within marginalized groups (cf. Imig 1996; Simien and McGuire 2014; Young 1990, 2002).

Domination is often invisible to those who dominate. When hegemonic power relations of the larger society go unrecognized, they become reified within movement organizations. Asymmetrical power relationships must be intentionally identified, recognized, and engaged lest societal norms undermine the work of building a shared identity and collective action (see Gawerc 2012). When members of marginalized groups do not see themselves represented among movement leaders or spokespeople, and when their ideas and concerns repeatedly fail to attract the attention of the broader movement, they may feel alienated and excluded (Davis 1998).

Intersectional solidarity, a political expression of intersectionality, is "a form of activist organization that recognizes and addresses multiple and interactive systems of oppression" (Cho, Crenshaw and McCall 2013, 800; Steans 2007; Townsend-Bell 2011; Greenwood 2008), that "moves beyond  allegedly universal, single-axis approaches" (Cho, Crenshaw, and McCall 2013, 800). Such "intersectional praxis" (Townsend-Bell 2011) is critical for building solidarity in contemporary movements (Hancock 2011). Building coalitions, and even seeing identities themselves as coalitions, is a key strategy that has been articulated for realizing intersectional praxis (Ayoub 2019; Collins and Chepp 2013, 80; Crenshaw 1993).  But coalitions do not necessarily solve the problems of dominance and exclusion (Adams 2017; Strolovitch 2005). How can organizations build more inclusive movements?

Extant scholarship outlines individual actions that can be taken to further solidarity between and among intersectionally marginalized groups. For instance, Hancock (2011) emphasizes altruism, consideration, cooperation, cultural empathy, and trustworthiness as key to overcoming barriers. Greater reflexivity- a reflection on how one's own social position may be

influencing one's activist practice- is also seen as a way to move closer to intersectional solidarity (Rai 2018; Steans 2007).These insights provide guidance for individual action but are less illuminating when it comes to charting a systematic way of countering privilege at an organizational level. What rules should *collectives* adopt to ensure inclusion and solidarity? Although individual actions can promote the empowerment of one's fellow activists or citizens, the "active" part of active solidarity is a collective commitment, visible at the level of organizational structure, agenda or policy.

Movement organizations can be proactive, adopting a sort of affirmative action in movement deliberations that helps to ensure that diverse participants are included in movements (Strolovitch 2007). Strategies include measures such as descriptive representation, separate organization of marginalized groups into caucuses, and using a "progressive stack" (organizing speaker lists to ensure diversity so that dominant groups do not monopolize the discussion), and giving additional weight to issues identified by marginalized groups (Eschel and Maiguashca 2010; Strolovitch 2007; Townsend-Bell 2012; Weldon 2006). Each of these efforts represents a purposive approach to countering power in movement deliberations and activities, actively seeking to create domination-free discussion (Habermas 1981; Smith and Glidden 2012). This approach works best when formal rules of inclusivity are articulated, and tends to work less well when informal, personalized forms of connection (such as friendship) are taken to be models for political practice (Freeman 1972; Polletta 2004; Smith and Glidden 2012; cf Rai 2018).

Affirming specific identities is compatible with collective organizing across identity-based lines. Separate organizing enables the articulation of marginalized group perspectives, but these new ideas must be brought into conversation with dominant groups and publics (Fraser

1995; Young 2002). Inclusive norms of deliberation for the broader movement make this more likely (Weldon 2006). Such norms are an important element of active solidarity.

Active solidarity is not about celebrating diversity for its own sake (Ward 2008). As Herring and Henderson write (2012, 636), "What makes diversity a critical concept and not just an elusive one is the idea that it has to be tethered to other concepts such as equity, parity, and opportunity." Critical diversity links diversity to power and the way it represents dominant groups as the norm.

Active solidarity attends to diversity in this critical diversity sense. Differences are foregrounded in order to reveal the perspectives of dominated or excluded groups. Deliberation is aimed at devising forms of political action that are reflective of sublimated viewpoints. Inclusivity is an on-going task, and the presumption must be that problematic exclusions continue to require attention. In this sense, active solidarity is reflexive, but in a collective mode (cf. Dean 1996; Rai 2018; Stean 2007). Active solidarity is not purely procedural. It is value-laden and chief among its values is inclusion. Relations of domination may not be eradicated in deliberative contexts, but they can be recognized and mitigated through these processes.


*Five Elements of Active Solidarity*

We conceptualize active solidarity as an approach to organizing, an ideal type of intersectional political praxis, a set of practices feminist and other movements can adopt to varying degrees. Based on the preceding discussion, we offer five elements of such solidarity. Political solidarity can be either active or passive. By specifying passive and active levels of each component, the elements can be used to examine the degree to which movements enact intersectional solidarity in their organizational practices.

First is the question of *how key movement decisions are made*. Are they deliberative or are they made by executive fiat? Second, *how does the organization structure itself and these discussions* to ensure that the powerless and marginalized are more likely to speak? Are there caucuses? Third, activists and analysts alike should look at *the ways that movements represent themselves* in their discourse and other organizational materials. Do these rhetorical and discursive expressions symbolically include, and reflect the input of, the powerless and excluded? Fourth, intersectionality suggests the value of attending to the politics of presence: *How diverse is the leadership of the group*? Do the marginalized and powerless see themselves represented in the main leadership bodies of the movement? Or is the "top" of any movement hierarchy (formal or informal) dominated by the more privileged and powerful? Last, are there frequent *opportunities for dissent*, so that inclusion is seen as an on-going project? Attending to these five elements of movement practice will aid in discerning whether movements enact intersectional solidarity. We now explore the degree to which each movement adopted these practices, and whether doing so brought them closer to the ideal of intersectional solidarity.

## PART II: ACTIVE SOLIDARITY IN OCCUPY, GEZI PARK, AND THE WOMEN'S MARCH

In this section, we consider three social movements- Gezi Park, Occupy, and the Women's March.  These examples illustrate a range of movements seeking a degree of intersectional solidarity and are not meant to represent the wide range of possible forms of gendered mobilization (Irvine et al., 2019). Nor do we present any one of these cases as representing an ideal movement. Instead, our approach considers pitfalls and strengths of the organizing practices employed by these movements. In each case, we ask whether and how these movements enacted intersectional solidarity. To what extent do these movement practices

demonstrate active solidarity? What lessons can we learn from their experiences? For each

movement, we discuss five practices comprising active solidarity (see Supplementary Table 1):

decision-making, organizational structure, organizational materials, leadership, and opportunities

for dissent.


## Occupy Wall Street

Occupy Wall Street was a diverse group of student and other activists who created an

encampment in Zuccotti Park in New York City in 2011 to protest income inequality and the

disproportionate influence of the country's top 1% in terms of income. Occupy protesters sought

to rejuvenate democracy and to empower ordinary citizens, the "99 percent." In under a month,

the movement spread from the roughly 1,000 protesters to nearly 1,000 cities in 80 countries.

Occupy embraced a wide array of social justice issues, and perhaps most distinctively,

aimed to adopt a radically participatory organizational structure (Flank 2011; Gitlin 2012; Van

Gelder 2011). This included, among other things, opposition to hierarchical organizational

structures and a preference for horizontal, leaderless organization (Gitlin 2012; Van Gelder

2011).

Deliberations in Occupy Wall Street were governed by consensus decision-making. This

commitment to consensus was explicit from the beginning of the movement,[6] reflecting the

degree to which the movement was about participatory democracy (Gitlin 2012). During these

deliberations, activists used their own rules for expressing consent and dissent, rules that did not

depend on the ability to construct arguments or adopt the language of the dominant group.

Merely making the "blocking" sign was adequate to block a proposal. Approval could be

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[6] E.g., "First Communique: We Occupy Wall Street" Sept 19 2011 (in Flank, 2011).

indicated by waving the hands in an upright position ("twinkling"); waving with the fingers pointing down expressed dissent (Gitlin 2012).

The Occupy movement also eschewed official leaders, even mockingly appointing a dog as their spokesperson. This official move, however, did not preclude the emergence of unofficial leaders or "facilitators" (Gitlin 2012; Montoya 2019). In order to enable diverse leadership, the movement made efforts to ensure that women and people of color were well represented among those trained as facilitators (Gitlin 2012, 104). Other moves aimed at encouraging diversity included a "progressive stack," a sort of affirmative action on the discussion list that ensured that women and people of color got an opportunity to speak (Gitlin 2012, 93).

Occupy Wall Street operated by forming several working groups. In 2011, there were about 97 working groups, at least 15 of which had 200 or more members. These working groups included issue-specific as well identity-based groups, including one called Women Occupy Wall Street (WOWS) and another for people of color (Gitlin 2012).

The Occupy Wall Street movement eventually appointed a "spokes" committee (as in hub and spoke) to represent the working groups. The job of representing each group rotated among working group members. In spite of the expectation that the Spokes committee would enable better decision-making, movement actions were largely blocked by this group: as few as three people stood in the way of actions supported by the vast majority of participants. Some participants saw this decision-making model as frustrating and ineffective (Gitlin 2012; Smith and Glidden 2012).

While Occupy aimed for inclusivity, it fell short of this goal in many respects. Early on, women noted the tendency of men (especially white men) to dominate discussions, and despite its leaderless structure, men were disproportionately the focus of media attention (McKee and

Taylor 2018; Montoya 2019). The encampments were dangerous for women and sexual minorities, with reports of sexual harassment and assault (McKee and Taylor 2018; Pickerill and Krinsky 2012). In response, marginalized activists within Occupy developed a number of groups, such as Women Occupy Wall Street (WOWS) in New York and the SF Women's Alliance in San Francisco, which helped provide safe spaces that mitigated, at least somewhat, many activists' experiences of marginalization. The structure of Occupy allowed these new spaces and organizations to emerge, out of "working groups" and communications, both in person and online (McKee and Taylor 2018; Montoya 2019).

Occupy's "Principles of Solidarity" began with a vision of a collective that transparently engaged in direct, participatory democracy. Occupy explicitly enunciated a type of solidarity based on recognizing privilege and working against it in all interactions, affirming a *collective* responsibility to work together to overcome oppression. The movement aimed at making knowledge and technology accessible and available to all so as to enable members to create, modify and distribute materials. The movement was a cooperative project of political imagination, conjuring "a new socio-political and economic alternative that offered greater possibility of equality" (Working Group on Principles of Consolidation, reproduced in Van Gelder 2011).

Deliberative practices in Occupy helped give voice to marginalized activists. In movement deliberations, the "blocking" mechanism was used by a small group of women of color, members of a "South Asians for Justice" group, to express their strong opposition to language that they felt erased the history of racial oppression, and to propose new language, which was ultimately adopted and reflected in the final, official statement representing the movement (Montoya 2019). This intervention shows that movement decision rules can empower

marginalized groups and result in changes in movement actions and outputs, especially when coupled with an organizational structure that supports the development and articulation of subaltern perspectives. As Montoya (2019) shows, Occupy activists engaged in protest, organization and argument internally to object to exclusionary language, rhetoric and practices and to improve the movement spaces for women, people of color, LGBTQ folks, and those who found themselves at the intersection of these categories.

Occupy Wall Street illustrates key elements of active solidarity:  The mode of decision-making; attention to critical diversity in organizational structure and discourse (if not always in practice); efforts to ensure descriptive representation of marginalized groups; and opportunities for dissent. Divisions based on race, gender, and sexual orientation did become more salient axes of conflict over time, but these divisions may have been mitigated to some extent by the organizational structure adopted by Occupy.

Occupy also suggests some contradictions and challenges for intersectional praxis. For example, each effort at organizing particular marginalized groups, in caucuses or working groups or the like, involved creating boundaries that delineated new forms of internal exclusion (Montoya 2019). The burden of attending multiple caucuses made full and effective participation in each more difficult for those belonging to multiple categories, e.g., the people of color caucus and the LGBTQ caucus (Montoya 2019), what some may recognize as the challenge of "double militancy" (Beckwith 2002). And the work of building coalitions and cooperation across these internal groups also seemed to fall disproportionately to the intersectionally marginalized (for example, women of color). While groups that enact solidarity through identity-based organizing, can make their movements more inclusive, they may also create new forms of exclusion that present new challenges.

**Gezi Park**

Our second case, the Gezi Park movement, began in May 28, 2013 in Istanbul, Turkey. This movement was a response to the state's plans to destroy Gezi Park, a park adjacent to Taksim Square in Istanbul's Beyoğlu district. The plan involved replacing the park with a mall. Initially the protest was a sit-in (a tactic of occupation) organized by small group of environmentalists (Evren 2013). However, these protests grew into a full occupation of the park. The movement expanded to include not only environmentalists, but also students, their mothers, members of the Kurdish minority, the LGBTQ community, leftists, feminists, and secular and religious Turks (Arat 2013; Eken 2014; Evren 2013; Karakyali and Yaka 2014).

The diverse group of Gezi Park protestors made decisions concerning how their messages would be framed through collective decision-making processes at assemblies (Karakyali and Yaka 2014). The encampment established assemblies for decision-making processes, and enabled communal living through the creation of libraries, classes, and food pantries. These features of the movement were similar to Occupy.

Through processes of collective deliberation, marginalized groups were able to raise concerns about sexist, homophobic, or racist slogans used by others in the movement (Karakyali and Yaka 2014). These slogans were transformed as the movement developed, becoming increasingly inclusive of the many identities present in the park – e.g., "Everywhere is Taksim, Everywhere is Resistance." Slogans also increasingly affirmed the presence of different groups, for example, through the transformation of the LGBTQ activist slogan "'so what if we are faggots' ('Velev ki ibneyiz') to 'Faggots are here, where is Tayyip? ('Ibneler burada, Tayyip nerede')" (Karakyali and Yaka 2014: 125). The movement grew more diverse and inclusive over

time. It maintained a horizontal organizing structure and resisted absorption by established civil society organizations and political parties (Evren 2013).

Activists at Gezi constructed an identity of *çapulcu* (an oppositional identity against the state) without forcing homogeneity (Eken 2014; Onbasi 2016). The identity of *çapulcu* (roughly translating to marauders) responds to Erdoğan's use of the term in an attempt to delegitimize the protest (similar to French President Nicolas Sarkozy calling youth protesters *racaille* or "scum" and the term's reappropriation by suburban French youth).[7] The word *çapul* was deployed by activists in graffiti to indicate the importance of active protest as constituting this identity (Everyday I'm *çapuling*, I *çapul* therefore I am).

Political experience gained through involvement in Gezi as well as alliances solidified during the protests created opportunities for LGBTQ candidates in the 2015 elections. While the Turkish left did not see initial gains in the 2014 elections after Gezi (Çarkoğlu 2014), the protest led to expanded political representation, bringing in new groups and issues. For example, Asya Elmas, the first trans woman to run for public office (mayor of Kadikoy on the Halk Democratik Partisi (People's Democratic Party – HDP ticket), cited the experience of the Gezi protests as politically empowering and her motivation for contesting public office (Krejeski 2014). Likewise, Baris Sulu, a longtime LGBTQ rights advocate, ran as the first out parliamentary candidate on the HDP ticket for Eskisehir. Finally, the experience of Gezi may have bolstered the HDP as a party. In fact, HDP co-chair Sebahat Tuncel argues that Gezi was a turning point enabling the party to push for an agenda that moved from a passive solidarity between the Turkish left and Kurds in Turkey towards "march[ing] together with a common programme and

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[7] "Sarkozy, youth and the R word" *New York Times* (April 6, 2007)
https://www.nytimes.com/2007/04/06/world/europe/06iht-word.4.5176286.html

under a common umbrella" (BBC 2013). In 2015, the HDP, which publicly proclaimed itself as the party of Gezi, was able to expand their coalition and present themselves as more than a Kurdish party, capturing 13% of the vote and gaining positions in the Turkish Parliament. And attendance at the Istanbul Pride march reached record numbers subsequent to the Gezi protests.

In terms of organizational structure, the movement was never formally bureaucratized (Aknur 2014; Evren 2013), making it hard to discern any formal mechanisms to ensure the expression of dissent or to ensure voice and presence for marginalized groups. Nevertheless, the group seems to have accomplished some important moments of inclusion. This runs counter to expectations drawn from the literature on the tyranny of structurelessness (Freeman 1972; Polletta 2004; Smith and Glidden 2012): The Gezi protests seem to have managed to have avoided some problems of structurelessness, at least as the movement evolved. An important caveat to this observation is that while the park and new political networks remain, any political gains are threatened by the authoritarian actions of the current government. Particularly after the 2016 coup, press freedom continues to deteriorate, academic freedoms have been curtailed, curfews continue in Eastern Turkey, and opposition MP's have been arrested and detained.

The Gezi Park movement cultivated solidarity through collective decision-making. The movement also constructed a powerful movement identity that allowed for differences among movement adherents, primarily due to its oppositional, action-based nature. Through deliberation and critique, activists involved in Gezi recognized their differences, attempted to address power imbalances, and built new networks of solidarity which persisted after the protestors were forcefully removed from Gezi. The Gezi protests created new relations of solidarity between different groups within Turkey. As the brief account above suggests, this protest has been linked to greater political participation by LGBTQ people in Turkey, an

important instance of identity-based organizing producing concrete political gains for marginalized groups (cf. Tormos 2017).

**The Women's March**

Our final case is the Women's March. What began as a Facebook invitation to travel to Washington DC on Inauguration Day to protest the Trump presidency spread rapidly. On January 21, 2017, between 500,000 and a million people joined the Women's March on Washington (Chenoweth and Pressman 2017; Wallace and Parlapiano 2017), and between three and five million people participated in over 600 "sister marches" across the country. International marches drew over 300,000 participants outside the US (Chenoweth and Pressman 2017).

Marchers of all ages and genders came out in force across the locations. Many wore the now-iconic "pussy hats": knit caps with pointed corners meant to look like a cat's ears, worn to symbolize defiance against Trump's misogyny, as infamously captured by the "Access Hollywood tapes," a recorded conversation in which Trump could be heard bragging about his ability to grab women by the genitalia with impunity. The Trump threat that galvanized the marches found expression in a variety of causes, not limited to "women's" issues. Marchers also expressed support for causes related to the environment, immigration, police brutality, and LBGTQ issues (Fisher et al. 2018). The participants clearly approached these causes with a feminist lens. Signs, t-shirts, and buttons proclaimed the importance of feminism, and women, such as "Women's Rights are Human Rights," "Pussy Power," and "The Future is Female."

The Women's March is distinct from our other cases in that it was not place-based; deliberations did not take place in a single park or encampment, but in a variety of places, real

and virtual. Face-to-face deliberation occurred on the local level, as the broad organization of the March enabled localized action. For instance, in the days and months following the 2017 March, participants were encouraged to join small local groups (or "huddles") for various political activities, such as postcard writing.

With a diverse leadership in place, the March organization crafted a platform that included a number of "unity principles" that read in part:

> The Women's March on Washington is a women-led movement bringing together people of all genders, ages, races, cultures, political affiliations, disabilities and backgrounds in our nation's capital on January 21, 2017, to affirm our shared humanity and pronounce our bold message of resistance and self-determination. Recognizing that women have intersecting identities and are therefore impacted by a multitude of social justice and human rights issues, we have outlined a representative vision for a government that is based on the principles of liberty and justice for all (Women's March 2017).

With so many participants, across the U.S. and worldwide, the 2017 March was diverse. Importantly, though, the 2017 March organizers *recognized* their diverse constituency and attempted to be as inclusive as possible. In fact, responding to complaints about the lack of diversity among the March's initial organizers, explicit efforts to diversify the leadership bore fruit; notably, the March brought on several well-known activists who became the main co-organizers and prominent faces of the movement: Bob Bland, Tamika Mallory (an African American woman), Carmen Perez (a Mexican American woman), and Linda Sarsour (a Palestinian American woman)(Ruiz Grossman 2016).

Descriptive representation of marginalized groups among the movement leaders was part of a deliberate effort to be more inclusive. The language, symbols and priorities of the movement similarly aimed to invite participation of and solidarity with marginalized groups, including Muslim women, people of color, and other groups. Deliberations that involved mass constituencies were largely digital, taking place over social media, but enabled participants to shape the movement in significant ways. In addition, local groups varied in their inclusivity, but many seemed to adopt a participatory, deliberative approach. For example, some groups used a sort of caucus approach (San Antonio, Tx) while others used more of a project management approach (Boston, MA) (Kelly-Thompson 2019). And national deliberations (such as phone calls) involved activists from many of these different groups in developing ideas, agendas and strategies (Kelly-Thompson 2019). Indeed, the March appears to have attracted a diverse group of activists, including those who were previously involved in the Black Lives Matter movement and movements for immigrant and refugee rights. Participants in the March were particularly committed to the idea of intersectionality (Heaney 2019).

Mobilization in the Women's March was also linked to greater electoral participation and/or success in the 2018 Midterm elections in the United States (Fisher 2019; Heaney 2019; Kelly-Thompson 2018). In the Midterms, several trans people were elected to public office for the first time, and many more women ran and were elected. The mobilization of support for women, including trans candidates, beginning with the networks and initiatives established at the Women's March or the subsequent "huddles" likely facilitated the historic changes in the representation of women and trans folk after the 2018 Midterms.

The Women's March offers some important lessons about intersectional praxis. There is evidence that the Women's March was not as successful in reflecting or representing

marginalized communities as organizers and participants hoped.  For instance, the emergence of "sister marches" seems to have varied by the race and ethnicity of local populations (McKane and McCammon 2018). Assessments of the inclusivity of the Women's March run the gamut from a characterization as being dominated by "whiteness" (Rose-Redwood and Rose-Redwood 2017) to providing an effective venue for women's organizing (McKane and McCammon 2018) to achieving greater inclusion (Fisher et al. 2017; Fisher et al 2018) (see Heaney 2019 for a longer discussion). While the March may have advanced inclusion on some fronts, it also seems likely that it mirrored exclusions in the broader society. Certainly, like Occupy and other US movements, the leadership of the movement was at least initially criticized as overly white, though the March did respond to these criticisms.  Indeed, most social movements reflect these broader inequalities, despite the efforts and disappointment of activists (Montoya 2019).

A more recent exchange illustrates deliberations (albeit digital) about inclusivity and shows that the Women's March is actively grappling with how to create and maintain intersectional solidarity. On November 19, 2018, Teresa Shook, who created the original Facebook event invitation that turned into the March, made news by calling for the resignation of several prominent March co-organizers. Shook pointed to the co-organizers' public participation in events with Louis Farakkahn, a controversial figure who has made anti-Semitic and anti-LBGTQ statements, as a violation of the March's unity principles (Lang 2018). In response, on November 20, 2018, March co-organizer Linda Sarsour (one of the co-organizers called out by Shook) posted a message on the March's official Facebook page that read in part:

> The Women's March exists to fight bigotry and discrimination in all their forms
> — including homophobia and anti-semitism — and to lift up the voices of women
> who are too often left out…Every member of our movement matters to us —

including our incredible Jewish and LGBTQ members. We are deeply sorry for

the harm we have caused, but we see you, we love you, and we are fighting with

you…We are trying to build an intersectional women's movement. That is a

monumental task that is hard, it is messy. We are here for every hard

conversation…

The Women's March shows that the struggle to achieve inclusion in social movements is an on-

going process, never complete or finished.

## DISCUSSION

What do we learn about the five elements we see as critical for enacting intersectional solidarity?

Are they useful tactics to negotiate difference and domination?

Each of these elements of intersectional solidarity was practiced to some degree by at

least one of these movements, and most were practiced by all three. Every movement reflected

this approach to some degree in its messaging, vision and leadership. In every movement,

argument and contention within the movement led to more inclusive slogans, messaging and

more diverse membership and even (in some cases) leadership.  Movements evolved towards

greater inclusiveness and substantive participation as they persisted, in response to challenges

from activists demanding greater inclusion. This suggests that contemporary movements may be

moving towards more diversity and more robust deliberation as they persist and learn (Milkman

2017; Heaney 2019).

Active solidarity requires that movements take specific measures to empower and include

marginalized groups, such as giving these groups' issues and concerns more weight in movement

agenda-setting and discussions (Strolovitch 2007). Intersectionally marginalized groups

*themselves* are the experts on which issues should be included prominently, and leaders need to

ensure that such groups are meaningfully participating in defining movement agendas, missions, slogans, and so on. A diverse leadership can help ensure that movement agendas are forged with sensitivity to diverse perspectives, but separate caucuses or groups may be just as critical in providing a mechanism by which internal dissidents can provide input. Deliberation alone (Occupy), and diverse leadership alone (the Women's March) gave way to a combination of smaller, more deliberative groups and caucuses, and in the case of Occupy and Gezi, at least, these were defined along the lines of the identity of marginalized groups. Movements changed as they sought to improve legitimacy and maintain broad coalitions. In some cases (e.g. Gezi), these measures were largely informal.

The political efficacy of the movements we have considered may be partly due to their ability to reach beyond the specific identity group driving the mobilization- women depended on allies who did not identify as women, or whose identity as women varied in salience. Similarly, Black Lives Matter has mobilized allies of all races. Identity-specific caucuses help to define the issues and perspectives of marginalized groups, but the broader movements into which they feed can have broader identities. Any group defined along the lines of group identity will likely exclude some people and groups that should be included. These caucuses, then, may represent one way to enact intersectional solidarity, even if formal efforts at separate organization (as opposed to informal mechanisms) are not always used.

Separate organizing may also be a defensive move, made necessary by a context in which marginalized groups feel their perspectives are not being reflected in movement deliberations, decisions and outputs (Eschel and Maiguashca 2010; Montoya 2019). The formation of such caucuses, rather than reflecting a weakening of the movement, may represent an evolution of movement thinking about particular issues or groups (Montoya 2019).

In defensive contexts, groups may be prone to drawing boundaries (for caucuses or other movement organizations) in ways that create new exclusions, and they may be particularly resistant to efforts to address these exclusions; Efforts to redraw group boundaries (even to make them more inclusive) may be experienced as existential threats. Marginalized groups must determine their own boundaries if they are to overcome domination and achieve self-determination. But a broader coalition cannot tolerate exclusionary sub-groups (e.g., women's groups that exclude trans women, or racial justice communities that fail to challenge male domination with their ranks). Such exclusions can create a difficult tension for those aiming to enact intersectional solidarity.

The movements we consider mostly avoided these tensions by developing movement identities that affirmed specific identities without excluding anyone who wished to ally themselves with the movement's substantive aims. Much controversy attended the decision to exclude pro-life groups in the Women's March, for instance, but this measure defined the priorities of the movement based on ideas, not identity. This fits with Sholz's distinction between political solidarity based on shared political goals and political solidarity based on social identities; It suggests that movement identities are importantly defined by the social justice goals of the movement, and though they build on the identities of social groups, they are not equivalent to the group identities of the adherents. At the same time, each of the movements we considered developed the powerful coalitions and messages they employed through identity-based organizing of one kind or another, because these strategies gave marginalized groups the space to develop their own strategies and perspectives.

In both Gezi and the Women's March, trans women appear to be empowered and mobilized through these efforts to enact intersectional mobilization. Indeed, intersectional

activism seems particularly important to trans activists (Heaney 2019). The Women's March included trans women as well as many men as well as trans and gender-fluid people who may not have identified as women or who rejected gender binary organization. The Women's March may have successfully mobilized a large group of women through an expanded, intersectional coalitional understanding of "women," perhaps the coalition-based identity envisioned by Crenshaw (1993) and Mohanty (2003). This may suggest that the exclusionary effects of identity-based organizing that Montoya (2019) observes are not necessary for movement success, even if they are an observable tendency.

All three movements employed capacious, oppositional identities to mobilize activists, identities that went beyond the socially defined identities of the groups- the 99% was defined broadly as everyone who was not the super-privileged economic elite; the Women's March called out to all women, men, queer and trans folk with its articulation of a set of priorities that one could support without identifying as women (e.g., Black Lives Matter, Love is Love, etc.); The Gezi protests embraced an oppositional identity defined by celebrating opposition to Erdogan, a broad identity that involved those who were traditionally political opponents (nationalists and separatists) and those traditionally sidelined or excluded (trans folks). The oppositional nature of movement identity allowed this "big tent" identity to develop.

The tensions between identity-based organizing and forging broader movement identities might not be as easy to overcome in the absence of a palpable threat (Ayoub 2019). Indeed, some felt that Occupy was paralyzed by the inclusive, deliberative structure it developed, perhaps because there was no imminent threat that all agreed should force action. Electoral opportunities to oust political opponents in the case of the Women's March may have galvanized more political action than in the case of Occupy where Democrats presented a more ambiguous target.

More restrictive identity-based organizing (say, excluding men from women's spaces; making some spaces available only to people of color or LGBTQ folk) may be needed to create the "safe spaces" or counter-publics required to develop the group perspectives that inform these effective movement agendas (Fraser 1992; Young 2002). But who counts as a "woman"? Who delineates the racial groups that define "people of color"? Drawing these boundaries presents a challenge for movements inspired by the intersectional ideal (see Gamson 1997). This challenge may be best negotiated by keeping an eye on the context and the political goal, asking which way of drawing the lines most challenges extant gender, racial, sexual and other hierarchies, which political strategy empowers marginalized groups and makes change more likely.

## CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

We have elucidated elements of an intersectional, deliberative approach to organizing solidarity. The elements we propose constitute an approach to progressive action that translates intersectional feminist principles of solidarity into organizational practice. While each element alone is more limited, together, these measures constitute a powerful way of enacting intersectional solidarity. We call these five elements *active solidarity*.

The ideal we propose is demanding in terms of relationship-building and the level of substantive involvement envisioned, taking more time and effort than hierarchically structured, short-term efforts. Falling in line is easier than defining, or contesting, where and how the line is drawn. And in spite of the effort it requires, active solidarity will not solve all the problems of social movements. Nor will it, on its own, resolve broader social inequalities. Nor do we claim that the movements we have discussed have achieved inclusion in some ultimate sense, even to the degree that they practice active solidarity: Active solidarity is an on-going process of seeking

inclusion, one that is never complete.  And as we have shown, in the course of addressing some forms of exclusion, new challenges for inclusion arise.

To the extent that movements do achieve greater inclusion, however, they may contribute to a richer democratic public sphere, one less dominated by powerful groups, and one in which marginalized groups are better represented, in terms of both presence and substance. Further, if group-specific strategies - what some would call "identity politics"- advance inclusion without undermining solidarity, this may suggest new political strategies for building broader solidarity in societies riven by inequality. In this sense, lessons from feminist organizing offer insight into timely and timeless questions about identity, power, and democracy.

**Appendix: Table 1: Indicators of Passive and Active Solidarity**

| Observables | Passive | Active |
|---|---|---|
| How key movement decisions are made | Decisions are made through executive decisions by leaders in closed meetings and disseminated by command | Decisions are made through discussion or deliberation; Movement discussions are accessible |
| Attention to critical diversity in organizational structure | No specific organizations through which marginalized groups are socially connected | Specific caucuses or independent organizations of marginalized subgroups within movement |
| Attention to critical diversity in discourse, such as in movement platforms and identities | Identities emphasize homogeneity and compliance with extant norms | Movement identities emphasize internal diversity; Discourse draws attention to particular subgroups and marginalized perspectives |
| Descriptive representation in leadership | Leadership is more homogenous | Leadership is diverse; Physical presence of marginalized subgroups highly visible in leadership |
| Opportunities for dissent | Participants either participate in movement events according to preordained rules, or they are ejected from events; No formal or procedural opportunity for dissent. | There are regular opportunities for criticism and dissent of movement decisions by marginalized groups |

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