



Original Article

Communicative intersectionality: advocating for equality, diversity, and inclusion in media industries

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Abstract

Despite efforts to address equality, diversity, and inclusion (EDI) in the film and television workforce, marginalized groups remain underrepresented. This article introduces a communicative intersectionality theoretical framework to analyze the EDI-focused advocacy of social movement organizations (SMOs) in these industries. Drawing from feminist studies, social movement studies, critical strategic communication, and critical public relations (PR), this framework integrates political intersectionality and communicative framing, examining SMOs' coalition-building, strategic communication advocacy, and online collecting actions framing. Highlighting critical praxis, the article considers how SMOs navigate intersecting social identities and systemic inequities through collaborative initiatives like Time's Up UK and Raising Films. By emphasizing difference-in-sameness, this article reveals how communicative intersectionality illuminates inclusive, personal storytelling of workers' experiences, industry reform, and systemic change. This framework bridges the gap between theory and practice, offering actionable insights into addressing EDI issues in screen industries and providing a foundation for future research on intersectional injustices and advocacy.

Keywords: communication and social movements, diversity, framing, media industries, work

The film and television screen industries in the United Kingdom have persistently attempted to address social inequities in the workforce through cultural equality, diversity, and inclusion (EDI) initiatives (Ozimek, 2020). However, historically marginalized groups, including those based on race, gender, ability, and class, are still underrepresented in these industries. Recent reports demonstrate that while the overall representation of marginalized workers in the U.K.'s media industries has increased, workers of some minority groups are still underrepresented (Bectu, 2024; Creative Diversity Network, 2022, 2024; Eikhof, 2020; Ofcom, 2023; Ozimek, 2020). For instance, disabled workers were underrepresented across all job levels in television and radio industries in 2022–2023, comprising only 10% of employees and 8% of senior managers, despite a population average of 16%, with similar disparities seen nationwide (Ofcom, 2023). Additionally, off-screen television workers from Black, Asian, and minority ethnic (BAME) backgrounds only minimally increased from 11.8% in 2019–2020 to 13.4% in 2022–2023, with gains across nearly all groups, except for a 0.2% decline among East Asian and East Asian British individuals; however, these figures still lag behind the country's overall BAME population (12.8%) and London's BAME population (40.2%).

Against this backdrop, this article critically evaluates how screen industry advocacy organizations strategically address EDI issues and introduces *communicative intersectionality* to theorize the political potentials of EDI research in these industries. Recognizing the seriousness of EDI issues in the U.K. screen industries, many workers and grassroots

community organizations have actively confronted these issues. Inspired by #OscarsSoWhite, the hashtag #BaftasSoWhite emerged as a form of social media activism, responding to the all-White acting nominations at the 2020 British Academy Film Awards; it resurfaced in 2023 following criticism of an all-White roster of winners (BBC, 2023; White, 2020). At the same time, an EDI-focused advocacy group in the U.K., Time's Up, launched an online campaign encouraging people to share their alternative Bafta nominations (Grater, 2020). These campaigns mobilized many industry workers, illuminating the persistent racism and other inequalities within the industries. This article contributes novel insights into understanding and addressing such pervasive EDI injustices in these industries by reevaluating the notions of political intersectionality (Cho et al., 2013) and social movement framing (Benford & Snow, 2000; Bennett & Segerberg, 2012).

This article contends that a communicative intersectional theoretical framework is needed to better understand and address the multidimensional nature of these prevalent EDI issues in the screen industries. Rooted in feminist and critical race theory, Crenshaw (1991) coined intersectionality to describe “the various ways race and gender interact to shape the multiple dimensions of Black women” (p. 1244). She analyzed the restrictions imposed on Black women in social movements, the labor market, and the multiple forms of violence they have suffered. Intersectionality has become a major research paradigm with “intercategorical” and “intracategorical complexity” (McCall, 2005, p. 1773). Researchers have adopted diverse analytical categories to

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document unequal relationships among social groups, such as race, gender, ethnicity, and class, and the changing structures of privilege, discrimination, and oppression among overlapping and multiple dimensions (Al-Faham et al., 2019). Recognizing its multifaceted nature, intersectionality encompasses three key categories: *structural intersectionality* refers to overlapping structures of domination; *representational intersectionality* refers to how social categories are constructed and represented in mainstream and popular culture; and *political intersectionality* is concerned with oppression and marginalization facilitated by organizational policies and political agendas and ways that social movements resist systemic marginalization (Carbado et al., 2013; Cho et al., 2013; Crenshaw, 1991; Dennissen et al., 2020; Salamon, 2019). Despite varying definitions and applications, scholars consistently operationalize intersectionality to analyze power dynamics and the pursuit of social justice. The flexible and interdisciplinary nature of intersectionality suggests that scholars could facilitate a multidimensional theorization and analysis of EDI issues in the screen industries, generating original knowledge.

This article contributes a theoretical framework to examine the political and communicative dimensions of EDI advocacy and activist initiatives of social movement organizations (SMOs) operating in screen industries. We aim to bridge theory and praxis, contending that insights gained from grounded material praxis can inform theoretical developments and vice versa (Cho et al., 2013). Challenging accounts in critical-cultural media studies on screen industries, this article integrates intersectionality and framing theories from feminist studies, social movement studies, critical strategic communication, and critical public relations (PR). By moving beyond single-axis approaches, our framework provides a comprehensive understanding of how SMOs express political intersectionality through three communicative dimensions rooted in and driving critical praxis: coalition-building; strategic communication advocacy and activism; and collecting actions framing practices. These dimensions enable SMOs to navigate intersecting identities and power dynamics effectively while facilitating coalition-building among diverse stakeholders. By bridging a theorization of communicative intersectionality with actionable strategies, our framework can inform how SMOs transition from rhetorical performance to praxis. In screen industries, these communicative dimensions can inspire organizational change by fostering inclusive storytelling, intersectional policies, and EDI outcomes through collaborative and strategic initiatives. Intersectional

framing can broaden the scope of advocacy initiatives, contributing to systemic industry change.

Next, we introduce our communicative intersectionality theoretical framework based on two underdeveloped theoretical dimensions in the literature: political intersectionality and communicative framing. We start with the conceptual foundations of political intersectionality in the screen studies literature, foregrounding marginalized workers and organizational praxis focused on EDI issues. Our framework emphasizes the industry-wide organizing potential of SMOs in building coalitions based on the notion of difference-in-sameness, SMOs' online collecting actions framing through strategic communication advocacy, and political intersectionality frames, which bridge communicative intersectional theory and praxis. To demonstrate our framework's utility, we apply it to two cases of advocacy in the U.K. screen industries: Time's Up U.K.'s campaigns and Raising Films' research-driven programs (see Table 1). In the concluding section, we discuss how communicative intersectionality addresses EDI issues in screen industries, bridging theory and practice while providing a foundation for future research on intersectional injustices and advocacy.

Political intersectionality, coalition-building, and critical praxis in screen industries

Researchers have employed intersectionality to analyze EDI issues within screen industries, but they have mostly emphasized the structural and representational dimensions (Berridge, 2019; Herbert, 2018; Ozimek, 2020; Wilde, 2022). This focus typically neglects the political dimensions, which foreground how policies, industry interventions, and social movements influence marginalization and oppression (Borchorst & Teigen, 2010). This section outlines the first component of our communicative intersectionality framework, considering how political intersectionality can facilitate coalitions through unity in diversity and bridge the gap between theory and praxis. It stresses transformative policy and industry-wide change rather than just abstract ideas or individual-focused solutions (Carastathis, 2016).

We contend that political intersectionality is needed because existing EDI initiatives by major broadcasters and cultural organizations often fail to address systemic inequalities (Cobb, 2020; Cobb & Wreyford, 2017; Newsinger & Eikhof, 2020; Noonan & Brock, 2023; Nwonka, 2021). For instance, *empowering interventions* focus on individual career development, providing training and mentoring schemes,

Table 1. Components of communicative intersectionality.

Component	Description	Examples
Coalition-Building and Critical Praxis	Reflecting on shared struggles to build coalitions and collective action strategies while valuing difference-in-sameness across intersecting oppressed social groups	Raising Films (RF): partnerships with academics and organizations through research; Time's Up UK (TUUK): cross-industry alliances, including academics
Strategic Communication Advocacy	Leveraging protest and dissent public relations practices to amplify oppressed social groups and individuals and to drive systemic transformation	RF: industry reports, public advocacy through film festival panels, symbolic actions (e.g., the Ribbon), and online personal testimonies; TUUK: alternative film nominations
Collecting Actions Framing Practices	Using a political intersectionality master frame and personal stories to mobilize collective actions by uniting dispersed oppressed groups and individuals under a shared identity and purpose	RF: online testimonial space for individual carer workers to share their stories; TUUK: individuals' lists of alternative Baftas, highlighting invisible talent

like BBC's Extend program and Channel 4's Production Trainee Scheme. While these interventions are relatively easy to implement and short-term goal oriented, they fail to resolve structural disparities. *Transforming interventions* aim for systemic reform typically through funding and policy, such as BFI's Diversity Standards Criteria, but they still risk perpetuating marginalization without a comprehensive intersectional framework. Despite these efforts, scholarly research often overlooks how grassroots campaigns explicitly embody political intersectionality.

Political intersectionality, as Crenshaw (1989, 1991) and Cho et al. (2013) define it, enables social movements to recognize diversity and leverage differences while facilitating unity (see also Al-Faham et al., 2019; Carastathis, 2013; Dennissen et al., 2020; Okechukwu, 2014; Salamon, 2019; Walby et al., 2012). This approach is essential for coalition-building, as political intersectionality can mediate the tensions between SMOs' diverse political interests and avoid perpetuating marginalization under the guise of inclusion (Chun et al., 2013; Cole, 2008). The 2017 Women's March on Washington (WMW), which was the largest women's protest in the U.S., exemplifies both the potential and challenges of building coalitions, as it united participants across multiple social groups (Einwohner et al., 2021; Fisher et al., 2017). However, it faced criticism for its White-dominated leadership, while individuals privileged singular issues related to their personal interests. Effective coalitions must balance intragroup and intergroup differences, fostering collective identities that transcend rigid categorizations to avoid reducing advocacy to an "oppression Olympics" (Hancock, 2011). SMOs could transcend zero-sum politics (Al-Faham et al., 2019), creating possibilities for building intersectional solidarity across diverse identities and power dynamics (Tormos, 2017) and potentially "become sources of social empowerment and reconstruction" (Chun et al., 2013, p. 928).

Coalition-building depends on recognizing the diversity of social identities and political interests, while also identifying shared experiences of marginalization and the structural factors that perpetuate it (Carastathis, 2013; Cole, 2008; Gawerc, 2021). Strategies like Luna's (2016) *same difference* and *difference-in-sameness* foreground unity while considering internal inequalities: "same difference (...) differentiates women of color from external 'others' and subsumes internal power differences to emphasize shared political goals," and "difference-in-sameness (...) recognizes the ways in which women of color themselves face diverse challenges and can experience inequality in relation to one another" (p. 771). The "same difference" strategy is focused on fostering unity and building solidarity, while the "difference-in-sameness" strategy seeks to address and avoid perpetuating inequalities within a group (Gentile & Salerno, 2019; Luna, 2016). By recognizing shared structural oppressions and employing those strategies, different groups can establish a strong foundation for coalition-building, solidarity, and social or political transformation.

The discussion above underscores the need for and challenges of *theorizing action and praxis-oriented research*. Some academics actively engage in EDI-focused initiatives within the screen industries, but there is an enduring perception of a divide between scholarly research and industry practices (Liddy, 2023). Fostering tripartite communication among academics, media workers, and industry (advocacy) organizations could bridge this gap, unlocking the potential of research to consider political intersectionality in practice,

facilitating coalitions, grassroots campaigns, policy reforms, and industry-wide initiatives (Eikhof, 2024; O'Brien et al., 2023). By highlighting a unity in diversity among the intersectional experiences of marginalized workers, these efforts can offer actionable insights and contribute to addressing EDI issues.

Freire's (1970/2000, 1994) notion of *critical praxis* provides a means for linking political intersectionality and coalition-building to concrete action (see also Giroux, 2021; Hooks, 1994; Slowey, 2023). Critical praxis emphasizes the need for the oppressed to critically examine and become conscious of their subjugated conditions and the root causes of their oppression. A critical praxis must be developed collaboratively with oppressed individuals or groups, particularly at the intersections of social class, race, and gender. Through a process of reflection, the oppressed can become empowered to actively struggle for their liberation. Freire (1970/2000) explains:

The oppressed, whose task it is to struggle for their liberation together with those who show true solidarity, must acquire a critical awareness of oppression through the praxis of this struggle (...). To no longer be prey to its force, one must emerge from it and turn upon it by means of the praxis: reflection and action upon the world in order to transform it. (p. 51)

A critical praxis is continually shaped and reshaped through the very act of struggle. By engaging in reflection and action, Freire (1994) affirms that marginalized groups can mobilize and organize against systemic oppression and build coalitions that embrace a praxis committed to "unity in diversity": "concentrating on the similarities among themselves" in a "quest for this oneness in difference" (p. 153, p. 157). Praxis has served as a key focus of intersectional critique and intervention, encompassing diverse actions of SMOs, including social and worker-focused movements advocating for economic justice with and for low-income women of color (Cho et al., 2013).

Community-based and social movement *participatory media* projects exemplify how Freirean critical praxis has empowered historically marginalized individuals to reshape film and television narratives and advocate for change (Low et al., 2012). Such projects have consistently aimed to empower participants to achieve meaningful social or political transformation, rather than primarily produce a product (i.e., a film). For example, O'Neill's (2018) *Inside Film Project* empowered prisoners and parolees in the U.K. with the technical ability and skills needed to create films as a tool of self-expression to counter how their working-class experiences have been misrepresented. Similarly, Walker's (2018) *Insider Windows* project enabled community members in Nepal to learn about film production to make movies to tell their own stories. However, extending Freirean principles from individual projects to broader, *industry-wide political intersectionality initiatives* is an area that could be explored in more depth.

Overall, political intersectionality provides a powerful entry point into considering the heterogeneous nature of marginalization in screen industries. Effective communication strategies are essential for coalition-building and mobilizing political intersectionality in praxis (Roth, 2021). The 2017 WMW highlighted the importance of framing intersectional communicative strategies, such as self-reflective organization and consensus-based dialogue in addressing tensions within diverse coalitions (Vardeman & Sebesta, 2020). However,

scholars must further explore how political intersectionality and communicative strategies can be applied to the screen industries to understand and enhance collaboration and advocacy. By considering coalition-building and critical praxis, scholars and practitioners can bridge the gap between research and action, amplifying the voices of oppressed media workers, while creating the potential for systemic change to improve EDI in screen industries. Next, developing a strategic communication advocacy dimension for political intersectionality can provide a roadmap for understanding how social movement actors within screen industries engage with and navigate differences.

Strategic communication advocacy for political intersectionality in screen industries

Grassroots campaigns and community-based media advocacy groups have been instrumental in addressing EDI issues in the screen industries, but their contributions remain underexplored (notable exceptions include Berridge, 2019; Christian & Peterson-Salahuddin, 2023; Comunian & Conor, 2017; Eikhof, 2024; Newsinger & Eikhof, 2020; Noonan & Brock, 2023; O'Brien & Kerrigan, 2023; Paleker, 2020; Percival & Hesmondhalgh, 2014; Wreyford et al., 2021). For instance, campaigns like South Africa-based Sisters Working in Film and Television's #ThatsNotOk (Paleker, 2020), as well as U.S.-based hashtag solidarity campaigns like #EndLatinxClusion, #Hollywood4BlackLives, and #ChangeHollywood (Christian & Peterson-Salahuddin, 2023), highlight the intersectional challenges faced by marginalized social groups, including caregivers and women of color. Additionally, screen industry organizations such as Creative Diversity Network (2022, 2024) in the U.K. collect critical diversity data, foregrounding the issue of underrepresentation in the screen industries workforce. Social media have further strengthened these campaigns, fostering platforms for advocacy that demand immediate industry responses. Turning to the next component of our communicative intersectionality framework, this section affirms that campaigns like these provide fertile ground for understanding how SMOs can mobilize multiple identity issues and diverse political agendas for systemic change through strategic communication advocacy.

Achieving meaningful and transformative change in EDI requires grassroots and community-based organizations to establish wider-reaching alliances. Effective responses to EDI issues rely heavily on collective action among these organizations (O'Brien et al., 2023). They entail not only fostering alliances among these organizations at the grassroots level but also forming strong partnerships with key stakeholders, such as major screen agencies and broadcasters, to build cross-stakeholder coalitions (Eikhof, 2024; O'Brien & Kerrigan, 2023; Wreyford et al., 2021). In this context, political intersectionality can serve as a fundamental lens to guide the mobilizing of collective resistance among minority groups with diverse identities and workers suffering intersectional marginalization. Meanwhile, coalition-building guided by political intersectionality can help create strong partnerships to withstand internal tensions, allowing various stakeholders to make sustained progress on addressing EDI issues in screen industries. More scholarly attention could be paid to balancing the varied needs and goals arising from these intersecting identities within a collective movement.

Moreover, a deeper understanding of how organizations with overlapping and conflicting interests build coalitions

requires that we consider strategic communication, a core element of collective action and movement organizing. This consideration can reveal how shared organizational goals and differences are navigated in forming effective coalitions. Scholars emphasize the importance of dialogue, identifying how meaningful exchange happens across all levels of collective advocacy (Eikhof, 2024; O'Brien & Kerrigan, 2023; Wreyford et al., 2021). Many grassroots campaigns and community-based advocacy groups and organizations are often sparked by forums or networking groups (Comunian & Conor, 2017; Percival & Hesmondhalgh, 2014; Wreyford et al., 2021). Debates and discussions around EDI issues at the industry level often occur during various industrial events and meetings, such as conferences, workshops, and film festival panels, potentially offering a platform for industry workers, activists, and stakeholders from diverse backgrounds and levels to collaborate (Liddy, 2022, 2023; Wreyford et al., 2021). Additionally, the internet contributes to the strategic communication of grassroots campaigns and organizational initiatives through tools such as emails, online chats, social media, and official websites (Berridge, 2019; Paleker, 2020; Wreyford et al., 2021).

Political intersectionality can provide a guide for evaluating communication practices to determine to what extent underrepresented voices are heard without oversimplifying and placing these workers into a monolithic minority group (Liddy, 2023; O'Brien & Kerrigan, 2023). However, scholarly discussions remain underexplored on facilitating strategic communication advocacy and activism regarding these EDI initiatives. In particular, more research is needed to address how organizations with unequal power dynamics can bridge differences in goals, values, methods, and identities to foster collaboration. Equally important, intra-group nuances should be recognized and communicated. Moreover, research on mechanisms to amplify the voices of intersectionally marginalized workers is critical to dismantling the systems that consistently silence them.

We emphasize how SMOs engage in *strategic communication* practices (Adi, 2018; Hallahan et al., 2007; Salamon, 2023a; Salamon, 2023b). Strategic communication refers to "the purposeful use of communication by an organization to fulfil its mission," foregrounding "deliberate communication practice on behalf of organizations, causes, and social movements" (Hallahan et al., 2007, p. 3). Such practices shape the nature of SMOs' advocacy and activism and difference-in-sameness, ultimately contributing to inter-organizational coalition-building (Carroll & Ratner, 1996; Coombs, 1998; Salamon, 2023a; Terriquez et al., 2018). SMOs express and constitute their advocacy and activism through various PR communication materials, employing strategies and framing tasks to also shape intra-organizational and public perceptions. Such strategic communication entails the persuasive PR practices that SMOs employ to advance their goals, draw attention to grievances regarding corporate or governmental performance, and effect societal change, such as influencing public policy or organizational policy decisions (Adi, 2018; Ciszek, 2015; Coombs, 1998; Coombs & Holladay, 2012; Weaver, 2018). Acting as "cultural intermediaries," SMOs leverage PR materials to craft "strategic communication for social change" (Ciszek, 2017, p. 702). SMOs operating at various levels, from the grassroots local to the transnational, employ PR practices for collective action, using strategic communication beyond its conventional corporate and

commercial applications (Adi, 2018; Ciszek, 2015; Weaver, 2018). Communicative framing particularly plays a critical role in expressing intersectional political inequities and advocating for more EDI within screen industries.

We assert that communicative intersectionality is effectively mediated and articulated through this PR-based collective action, integrating both traditional and innovative communicative strategies, and activism and advocacy within SMOs. SMO activists and advocates employ a range of strategic communication PR practices, including media relations, promotions, and campaigns, to disseminate their messages to diverse audiences, fostering community engagement (Ciszek, 2015; Demetrious, 2011; Weaver, 2018). Strategic communication practices in social movements encompass protest PR and dissent PR. Protest PR is “punctual” and “emotional,” while dissent PR is “more strategic and long term” (Adi, 2018, p. 9). Protest PR often involves direct action and *activist* tactics, such as die-ins, sit-ins, marches, and rallies (Adi, 2018; Ciszek, 2015). In contrast, dissent PR employs *advocacy* through informational discussions, public education, lobbying, press releases, newsletters, personal and movement stories, social media updates, and reports. For example, women’s SMOs have creatively employed dissent campaigns, leveraging motherhood, nudity, and the female body on billboards to mobilize public opinion against controversial legislation (Weaver, 2013). Similarly, coalitions of organizations have reshaped discourse around women’s human rights through innovative framing in PR and lobbying efforts (Somerville & Aroussi, 2013). Additionally, LGBT advocacy organizations have capitalized on personal narratives, using spokespersons’ authentic and overlapping stories of coming out and migration to build grassroots support (Gentile & Salerno, 2019; Mundy, 2013). Through these practices and framing, SMOs bridge PR advocacy/activism with political and communicative intersectionality, enabling them to influence systemic change in screen industries.

SMOs harness digital platforms, including autonomous websites and social media accounts, to facilitate PR activism and advocacy and gain power resources. These platforms offer SMOs numerous benefits, such as low cost, high visibility, accessibility, and the ability to bypass traditional media gatekeepers (Adi, 2018; Coombs, 1998; Salamon, 2023a; Soriano, 2015; Taylor et al., 2001). By leveraging these platforms, SMOs can build legitimacy, inform the public, expand their networks, and persuade stakeholders, while retaining relative control over their messaging. Social media platforms particularly enable SMOs to communicate political intersectional perspectives, creatively using symbols, text, and narratives to navigate between “‘same difference’ and ‘difference-in-sameness’” (Gentile & Salerno, 2019, p. 218). These activities empower media workers to establish dynamic *virtual* SMOs with distinct organizational identities that capitalize on digital platform affordances (Salamon, 2023b). However, SMOs face challenges in navigating power dynamics and limitations of dialogic engagement on digital platforms (Reber & Kim, 2006; Taylor et al., 2001).

Collecting actions framing, political intersectionality and digital media in screen industries

Intersectional SMOs engage in digitally networked action for personalized and networked advocacy and activism,

employing *connective action framing*. Connective action emphasizes personalized communication shared across interactive online networks, broad public engagement, and messages that are easy to personalize (Bennett & Segerberg, 2012). This approach marks a shift from traditional collective action frames, which rely on identifiable, well-established advocacy organizations, hierarchical organizational structures, and organizationally-managed advocacy efforts (Benford & Snow, 2000; Snow & Benford, 1992; Snow et al., 1986). With connective action, digital media shape the core dynamics of organizing and action, whereas with collective action, they are supplementary. For example, the TV Workers’ Rights Advocacy Petition in the U.K. mobilized freelance workers through online connective action to successfully end exploitative and illegal labor practices in the television industry, bypassing bureaucratic constraints (Percival & Lee, 2022).

However, such rapid, platform-driven, and decentralized organizing efforts risk becoming a rhetorical performance of intersectionality rather than praxis, as the ease of using digital networks can bypass the traditional capacity-building dialogic communication needed for transformation (Earl & Kimport, 2011; Fominaya, 2020; Salamon & Saunders, 2024; Tufekci, 2017). Decentralized movements may struggle to coordinate localized, individualized issues and long-term strategies, which are necessary for translating online action into offline structural change. These barriers can limit the potential for praxis. Movements may attain short-term visibility but struggle to sustain long-term structural impacts or institutional changes by overemphasizing digital media action.

Nevertheless, movement organizing may integrate both connective and collective action logics, drawing on “e-tactics” that include offline and online components (Earl & Kimport, 2011, p. 12), and developing a hybrid *collecting actions* logic. Through a “logic of collection” or “collecting actions,” Gerbaudo (2024) argues that their aim is “‘collecting’ [people], gathering behind a collective banner all the otherwise dispersed Internet users who are part of the same social group and are affected by common grievances” (p. 4906). Online personal testimony campaigns, such as #MeToo, exemplify how personal identity and collective identity reinforce each other. Such campaigns typically employ explicit collective action frames to engage the public around particular social group identities and issues, including gender, sexuality, race, and/or class. This reimagining is significant, as such status-based groups were initially considered less important for connective action (Bennett & Segerberg, 2013). Collecting actions blur traditional distinctions, illuminating tensions between fostering individualized participation and achieving collective coherence (Gerbaudo, 2024). These tensions are particularly relevant for SMOs addressing intersectional oppressions, as they must balance unity in diversity (Freire, 1994), employing unified messaging to avoid diluting their intersectional aims.

In our communicative intersectionality framework, we recognize that the overarching framing task of SMOs’ collecting actions is inherently *communicative*. These actions are responses to structural, representational, political, and context-specific forms of intersectional oppression, which facilitate coalitions and difference-in-sameness in practice. This understanding acknowledges that the social process of framing is shaped by power dynamics (Carragee & Roefs, 2004), with SMOs constructing frames through intersectional praxis

that engages with multiple layers of identity and oppression. Within screen industries, these dynamics become particularly complex as SMOs navigate intersectional EDI issues.

To shape their organizing efforts, SMOs employ an *identity-politics master frame* (Carroll & Ratner, 1996), or what we term a *political intersectionality master frame* shaped by broader power dynamics and intersectional critiques (Carroll & Ratner, 1996; Cho et al., 2013; Okechukwu, 2014). This master frame links personalized collecting actions frames, identity markers (e.g., race, gender, and sexuality) and systemic power structures (e.g., patriarchy), framing the redistribution and sharing of power as a core objective. To move beyond rhetorical performance, SMOs address the structural challenges mentioned above (Fominaya, 2020), building long-term strategies and coalitions that bridge the gap between online visibility and offline action (Salamon, 2023b). Okechukwu (2014) has found that using political intersectionality could facilitate “frame resonance,” demonstrating how “structural identities” foster “collective identity and group mobilization” (p. 153). Our approach reimagines how digital media could further support intersectional praxis, highlighting the need for collecting actions to be grounded in long-term, systemic reflections and actions (Freire, 1994; Gerbaudo, 2024), rather than viewing digital media action as the end in itself. Thus, SMOs often supplement their digital efforts with traditional strategies, including face-to-face interactions, print media, and radio communication (Soriano, 2015).

Applying communicative intersectionality in the U.K.’s screen industries

This section demonstrates how we can apply our communicative intersectionality framework to analyze existing advocacy initiatives in the U.K. screen industries. We outline the initiatives of two organizations, Time’s Up UK and Raising Films, considering the varying degrees to which they articulate the key tenets of communicative intersectionality: coalition-building and critical praxis; uses of strategic PR communication advocacy practices; and intersectional collecting actions framing.

Time’s up UK: Addressing workplace harassment and discrimination

Our four core components of communicative intersectionality can be used to analyze Time’s Up UK’s advocacy efforts around bullying, harassment, and discrimination regarding marginalized groups in the screen industries and across the global labor force. Time’s Up UK (n.d.-a) is a charitable organization that advocates for “safe, fair and dignified work for everyone.” *Political intersectionality* and *coalition-building* have been central to Time’s Up UK’s movement organizing strategy. Time’s Up UK (n.d.-a, n.d.-b) was founded in February 2018, responding to the resurgence of #MeToo and the burgeoning Time’s Up US movement in fall 2017. A group of U.K.-based women initially united, including actors, producers, writers, and other workers across the film, television, and theater industries. When launching, Time’s Up UK published an open letter in *The Observer*, outlining its commitment to political intersectionality across industries beyond only gender relations or one national context: “This global movement (...) is intersectional, with conversations across

race, class, community, ability and work environment, to talk about the imbalance of power” (Morgan et al., 2018).

Time’s Up UK (n.d.-a, n.d.-b) have solidified this commitment through its *coalition-building* and *critical praxis* initiatives, translating intersectionality into tangible resources and impactful action. In 2018, Time’s Up UK consulted and collaborated with prominent women’s rights organizations, grassroots campaigns, and Black Equity Organizations, advocating for systemic change, particularly for women of color, who face unique forms of oppression. They established the Justice & Equality Fund, a crowdfunded campaign that raised about £3 million, aiming to eradicate sexual harassment, abuse, and impunity in the U.K. In doing so, they could launch a free legal advice service for women, collaborating with Rights of Women, and release the Tackling Sexual Harassment in the Workplace Toolkit, working with Fawcett Society and partners, Chwarae Teg, the Women’s Resource and Development Agency, and Close the Gap. This free resource helps employers and women employees respond appropriately to sexual harassment, demonstrating how praxis could contribute to systemic change in the workplace. These initiatives have focused on not only raising awareness and satisfying EDI quotas in screen industries but also shifting power dynamics across society.

Additionally, Time’s Up UK have leveraged dissent PR materials for *strategic communication advocacy* to amplify their mission, further raising awareness and organizing actions around issues of harassment, abuse, and intersectional oppression. To do so, Time’s Up UK (n.d.-a, n.d.-b) have mobilized screen workers’ distinct creative skills. For instance, they crafted the open letter published in *The Observer* and produced an online video testimonial from actor Emma Watson before the 2018 Bafta Film Awards. They have also used social media posts and the traditional press to create personal and movement stories around an alternative Bafta nomination list.

The Time’s Up UK campaign for an alternative Bafta nomination list was launched in response to the all-White acting nominees at the 2020 Baftas, illustrating how *collecting actions framing* underpins grassroots efforts to address EDI issues in the screen industries. Unlike the #BaftasSoWhite campaign, which primarily highlighted racial exclusions, Time’s Up UK framed its advocacy with a *political intersectionality master frame*, emphasizing the compounded barriers faced by individuals in the U.K. screen industries marginalized by both race and gender identities and systemic power structures. This campaign also importantly foregrounded how personal identity and collective identity reinforce one another. For example, Dame Heather Rabbatts, chairwoman of Time’s Up UK, bemoaned that women directors lacked recognition, emphasizing exclusion on both racial and gender grounds in the campaign statement (Harding, 2020). Similarly, Victoria Emslie, actress and founder of Primetime, asserted that casting directors Shaheen Baig and Aisha Bywaters—both women of color—deserved recognition in the Bafta casting category (Rosser, 2020). This intersectional framing encouraged workers from diverse backgrounds to participate, amplifying a wide range of voices to confront EDI issues in screen industries. This campaign has broadened the discourse of online advocacy, extending beyond critiques of racism and digital-only collective action to also foreground gender inequality and offline organizing, while embodying other principles of political intersectionality. Key figures

from grassroots EDI-focused advocacy groups also joined the campaign, among them Primetime's Emslie and British Black List founder Akua Gyamfi (Time's Up UK, 2020). This campaign exemplifies how a grassroots organization can align their efforts to confront intersecting inequities in screen industries, demonstrating the transformative potential of personal and collective advocacy efforts grounded in political intersectionality.

Time's Up UK's alternative Baftas campaign further strategically leveraged social media platforms like X (formerly Twitter) and Instagram, alongside traditional press outreach, to challenge Bafta's narrative on diversity while amplifying marginalized voices in these industries (Harding, 2020). By mobilizing screen workers from diverse backgrounds and engaging prominent industry trade publications like *Screen Daily*, Time's Up UK expanded the visibility of systemic inequities in racial and gender representation. High-profile participation, including interviews with actress Carey Mulligan and actor Himesh Patel, also raised the campaign's reach, fostering public dialogue on these critical issues (Rosser, 2020). Rather than simply critiquing Bafta, the campaign's alternative Bafta nomination list offered a tangible, political intersectionality master frame for representing talent across racial, gender, and cultural groups in the screen industries and exposing systemic oppressions. Similar to #BaftasSoWhite and #OscarsSoWhite, Time's Up UK's campaigning demonstrates how grassroots advocacy can drive institutional change in screen industries by integrating strategic communication, collecting actions framing, and practical solutions, providing valuable insights for academics and practitioners alike (Malik, 2024).

Raising films: Organizing parents and carer workers

The key components of communicative intersectionality can also be used to analyze Raising Films' advocacy initiatives around best working practices for parents and carer workers in the screen industries and throughout the labor market. Raising Films (n.d.-a) is a U.K.-based community interest company, a form of nonprofit social enterprise, aiming "to support, promote and campaign for parents and carers in the UK screen sector." Like Time's Up UK, *political intersectionality* and community-based *coalition-building* have fundamentally shaped Raising Films' advocacy strategy. Raising Films (n.d.-a) was founded in 2015–2016 by five women working in film and television and backed by an advisory board and network of industry ambassadors. While Time's Up UK and Raising Films were both born online, Raising Films originated as a blog inviting screen workers to share their experiences of labor and care, eventually evolving into a formal organization (Wreyford et al., 2021). According to Co-founder Sophie Mayer (2015), Raising Films responded to growing concerns over job loss, harassment, and sexism disproportionately facing pregnant women and new mothers, particularly in an industry characterized by short-term contracts with long, demanding working hours. Mayer (2015) introduced Raising Films' dedication to political intersectionality within the film industry; she described their focus on "organizing parents and carers" around "a barrier that disproportionately affects women, and exponentially affects women of color, working class women, migrant women and queer people who may lack family support network and/or economic resources."

Raising Films have demonstrated this dedication to political intersectionality by *building coalitions* and implementing *critical praxis* initiatives that bridge academic research and advocacy. Unlike Time's Up UK, Raising Films (2017, 2018) have primarily focused on carrying out original research. Raising Films initiated the dialogue in 2015–2016 by collaborating with gender and women's studies researchers at the University of Stirling and leading industry organizations, such as Creative Scotland. Raising Films (2018) published the *Making It Possible* report based on the first comprehensive U.K. nationwide survey regarding the impacts of parenting and caregiving on career development in screen industries. This report brought together intersectional quantitative and qualitative data, while offering policy recommendations for industry best practices. Building on this research, *Raising Our Game* is Raising Films' (2017) most comprehensive industry report, highlighting the impacts of labor casualization, limited awareness of workers' rights and best practice, and the myth that screen work is a privilege. This research was supported by the British Film Institute and a team of academic consultants, including Drs. Tamsyn Dent, Susan Berridge, and Clive James Nwonka.

Raising Films have leveraged insights gathered from such research to inform, educate, and inspire meaningful change. For example, Raising Films (n.d.-e, 2016a, 2016b) have held their novel, family-friendly, and individualized "Making It Possible" personal and career development events since 2016 in partnership with local film schools and film festivals across the U.K., including in Edinburgh, Bath, Leeds, and London. To make these training events accessible, they provide childcare. Additionally, Raising Films' "Raising Your Game" is an industry-focused training program aimed at organizations, such as production companies, festivals, and conferences. Connecting research and action, these critical praxis initiatives help parents and carer workers in screen industries challenge and transform industry and societal power dynamics (Liddy, 2022; Wreyford et al., 2021).

Like Time's Up UK, Raising Films have relied on dissent PR practices for *strategic communication advocacy* to further shape and put into practice their organizational mission around supporting, promoting, and campaigning for parents and carer workers. Their official website includes a testimonial space for carer workers, predominately women and mothers, to share their experiences, which have been published since May 2015 (Berridge, 2019). We contend that the testimonial space encapsulates *collecting actions framing*, facilitating personal and movement "stories" around "experiences both good and bad" of working in screen industries (Raising Films, n.d.-d). Berridge (2019) argues that "testimonials" presentation—published collectively and alongside one another on the site—allows for recurring experiential patterns to emerge that make it difficult to see these accounts as an individual woman's problem and, importantly, highlight the specific gendered dimensions of the emotional violence of neoliberal laboring practices" (pp. 646–647). These testimonials hold significant potential to become a collective voice driving social transformation by illuminating the interplay between personal and collective struggles, challenging dominant (gendered) narratives, fostering solidarity, and advocating for structural change. Collectively, we view the testimonials through the *political intersectionality master frame*. They foreground the compounded challenges faced by parents and carers in screen industries who are

marginalized by intersecting identities, including gender, class, and/or race, as well as systemic inequities. By actively engaging and amplifying voices from diverse carer workers, including those marginalized by other identities, these testimonials have the potential to reflect a wide spectrum of experiences and build an inclusive movement.

Additionally, the “Raising Films Ribbon” exemplifies key principles of communicative intersectionality, facilitating coalition-building among organizations and individuals who support carer workers’ diverse needs, goals, and social interests in screen industries (Raising Films, n.d.-b). The Ribbon serves as a symbolic marker and a dissent PR practice of strategic communication advocacy. It foregrounds inclusive activities in screen industries, while illuminating collecting actions framing through a political intersectionality master frame and personal stories on its website and social media accounts. For example, recipients in 2021 included the North East International Film Festival, which highlighted LGBTQ+ representation, individuals with disabilities, females, and mothers in film; another recipient was short film director Marnie Baxter, recognized for her work as a young female care worker in Shetland, the remote and northernmost region of the U.K. (Raising Films, n.d.-c, 2021a, 2021b). By acknowledging and celebrating people and organizations that prioritize parents’ and carers’ diverse needs, the Ribbon bridges communicative intersectionality in theory and praxis. It facilitates coalitions within screen industries, amplifying intersectional voices to increase awareness and push for systemic change regarding caregiving responsibilities.

Discussion and conclusion

This article introduces a novel theoretical framework to analyze communicative intersectionality in screen industries research (see Table 1), integrating insights from feminist studies, social movement studies, critical strategic communication, and critical PR. By situating both intersectionality and framing within these interdisciplinary perspectives, our framework addresses gaps in EDI research within the screen studies literature, emphasizing intersecting social identities and systemic inequalities. Through the lens of political intersectionality and difference-in-sameness, our approach provides a deeper understanding of how marginalized workers experience and navigate intersecting oppressions in screen industries. It offers an alternative to reductive approaches that prioritize singular identities or oversimplify underrepresented workers’ lived experiences (Eikhof, 2024; Ozimek, 2020).

The concept of difference-in-sameness (Luna, 2016)—or unity in diversity (Freire, 1994)—is particularly valuable for recognizing both shared worker struggles and nuanced differences within and across social identity groups. Extant research underscores the importance of considering workers’ everyday material experiences to better understand how systemic inequities manifest in production cultures (Berridge, 2019; Eikhof, 2024; Ozimek, 2020). By integrating this perspective, our communicative intersectionality framework offers a comprehensive approach for analyzing the interplay of structural and individual-level factors contributing to marginalization in screen industries. Moreover, our framework situates EDI issues within broader historical and social contexts of racism, classism, sexism, and colonialism (Newsinger & Eikhof, 2020), aligning with critical calls to contextualize

discrimination beyond surface-level industry analyses (Cho et al., 2013; Eikhof, 2024; Salamon, 2019).

Coalition-building (Carastathis, 2013) and critical praxis (Freire, 1970/2000, 1994) are central to communicative intersectionality’s practical applications, facilitating critical reflection and partnerships among researchers, workers, and organizations within screen industries to collectively amplify industry and broader societal impacts. Collaborative efforts can bridge gaps between academic research/theory and industry practice (Eikhof, 2024). However, building coalitions across sectors presents challenges, including conflicting goals, intergroup biases, and resource limitations (Nwonka & Malik, 2021; Randle & Hardy, 2017). Long-term offline and online communication strategies (Soriano, 2015) and an emphasis on difference-in-sameness (Luna, 2016) can help foster solidarity and practical reforms, while respecting the individual and unique perspectives of diverse stakeholders. Evidence for these claims is provided in practical initiatives like Time’s Up UK’s crowdfunded Justice & Equality Fund, which tackles workplace harassment among individuals, and their Tackling Sexual Harassment in the Workplace Toolkit, which provides actionable resources for organizations. Similarly, Raising Films exemplifies critical praxis through their research-driven “Making It Possible” program, which supports individual carer worker inclusiveness, and the “Raising Your Game” initiative, which promotes industry-wide EDI reforms in organizations.

Another key contribution of this communicative intersectionality framework lies in its capacity to guide research on strategic communication advocacy (Adi, 2018) and collecting actions framing strategies (Gerbaudo, 2024) of SMOs and grassroots advocacy groups. This framework further provides a foundation for evaluating SMOs’ political intersectionality framing practices (Cho et al., 2013; Okechukwu, 2014), particularly in their efforts to address identity-based injustices through their strategic communication advocacy. By analyzing how these organizations become hubs for constructing collecting actions frames (Gerbaudo, 2024), we can better understand the processes through which dispersed groups and individuals unite under shared goals. Time’s Up UK and Raising Films exemplify how these organizations strategically use dissent PR and political intersectionality framing to challenge systemic inequities in screen industries. For example, Time’s Up UK employs alternative Bafta award nominations to highlight overlooked diverse talent, leveraging dissent PR to shape public discourse. Similarly, Raising Films’ Ribbon initiative symbolically recognizes organizations and individuals supporting diverse caregivers, combining individual storytelling and industry-wide dissent PR advocacy. By foregrounding these diverse collecting actions framing activities *online*, our framework reveals how SMOs and individuals emphasize personal identities while constructing collective identities, mobilizing collective action, and navigating challenges of fragmented political and social agendas.

While formal and established organizations are dominant in EDI research, other digital grassroots advocacy efforts play a vital role in making visible and addressing systemic inequities (Berridge, 2019; Gerbaudo, 2024; Nwonka & Malik, 2021; Ozimek, 2020; Salamon & Saunders, 2024). Yet, existing literature has tended to overlook the contributions of smaller U.K.-based grassroots media advocacy organizations, such as BEAM Network (n.d.), Primetime (2024), ScreenCraft Works (2023), and UK Muslim Film (2023), and

U.S.-based charitable organizations, including [BLD PWR \(Build Power\) \(n.d.\)](#). These organizations adopt varied strategies to tackle EDI issues from a political intersectional perspective. They challenge established norms, facilitating inclusive practices, while providing resources for underrepresented media workers and building coalitions with bigger and established organizations, like in the cases of [Time's Up UK \(n.d.-a\)](#) and [Raising Films \(n.d.-a\)](#). Our communicative intersectionality framework underscores the importance of considering these organizations in future research and their collaborative potential to shape and reshape industry practices.

Finally, our framework offers a broader foundation for future research. While our focus on SMOs provides valuable insights, it represents only one aspect of the complex dynamics of EDI work in media industries. For example, advocacy also extends to internal PR practices *within media companies* ([Adi, 2018](#)). Media companies' employee resource groups (ERGs) exemplify internal advocacy: worker-led committees organized around demographics, such as race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, and age, fostering EDI within companies, like Vox Media, BuzzFeed, and Channel 4 ([Salamon, 2019](#)). Other external organizations also contribute to EDI advocacy and activism: for instance, informal groups established through websites and social media networking sites ([Percival & Lee, 2022](#)), like [The TV Mindset \(n.d.\)](#); industry coalitions, including [Creative Diversity Network \(2022, 2024\)](#); social enterprises, such as [B3 Media \(n.d.\)](#); and community organizations, among them [Resource Productions \(2022\)](#). Researchers could investigate how various organizations and individuals employ a political intersectionality master frame and collecting actions framing, examining their strategic communication advocacy and activism at different levels. In-depth interview research could provide valuable insights into how different organizations engage in praxis, reflecting, negotiating, and reaching consensus on these issues, and forming coalitions. Moreover, future research could expand the scope to different contexts, particularly EDI issues across various media industries from political and communicative intersectional perspectives in the Global South ([Ozimek, 2020](#)). By identifying common patterns across regions, researchers could better understand the distinct strategic communication advocacy and framing practices that SMOs employ worldwide.

Conflicts of interest None declared.

Data availability

The data underlying this article are derived from sources in the public domain and are listed in the References.

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