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"It Can't Just Be the Younger People": Exploring Young Activists' Perspectives on Intergenerational Tensions and Solidarities for Climate Justice

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ABSTRACT

Youth activism for climate justice is inherently intergenerational. Fundamentally, young activists demand urgent action by today's adult power-holders for the security and well-being of their own and future generations. Despite intergenerationality being core to the movement, few studies with young activists have explored their views and experiences of intergenerational relations and tensions and how to advance intergenerational solidarities for climate justice. Addressing these critical topics, the present study used in-depth interviews with young activists (ages 15–17) in the climate justice movement across the US. Themes generated through reflexive thematic analysis centre on: (1) youths' adoption of "next generation" and "last generation" identities, respectively emphasising the heightened climate risks faced by their own and future generations, and the closing window of opportunity to prevent catastrophic climate breakdown; (2) their experiences of hostile and benevolent adultism; and (3) the need for adults to listen to, take seriously, centre, amplify, and—most importantly—respond to youths' demands. They urge adults, particularly those in powerful positions, to use their age-based privilege, political enfranchisement, material resources, professional status, and decision-making authority to uplift young people's voices and tangibly advance climate justice through solidarity-driven intergenerational partnerships and action. Implications for youth-centred research and policy are discussed.

1 | Introduction

Intergenerational rights and responsibilities are prominent themes in scholarship on the youth climate justice movement (Davies, Tabucanon, and Box 2016; Kenis 2021; Nissen, Wong, and Carlton 2020). The climate crisis[1] threatens the rights of younger and future generations to live in a world characterised by stable, predictable climatic conditions resembling those experienced by older and previous generations (Thiery et al. 2021; Wray 2023). Moreover, the greatest responsibility for fuelling the climate crisis lies with older generations' power-holders who, for decades, have failed to take transformative action to prevent further climate degradation (Schuppert 2011). In response to the existential threat of unabated, rapidly-accelerating climate change, the youth climate justice movement has grown markedly in recent years, with activists demanding urgent systems change to avert the changing climate's inherently inequitable and ecologically- and politically-destabilising effects (Diógenes-Lima et al. 2023).

Activism, a term ascribed with a range of meanings and interpretations, is generally understood to involve people engaging in

activities aimed to generate social change (Anderson 2011). In their exploration of contemporary youth activism in the United States, Conner and Rosen (2016) define activism as "acts that challenge the status quo and seek to reconfigure asymmetrical power relations" (Conner and Rosen 2016, 2). Through activities such as community organising, direct action, and civil disobedience, youth activism consists of:

> ... organized efforts [by] groups of young people to address the root causes of problems in their local, national, and global communities ... Activism comes in many forms (including, in person or virtual, grassroots or joining an established organization or cause, one-time participation or long-term commitment).
>
> (Ballard and Ozer 2016, 223)

In their influential article exploring diverse forms of youth activism on climate change, O'Brien, Selboe, and Hayward (2018) introduced a typology of youth climate activism encompassing "dutiful, disruptive, and dangerous" forms of dissent. As they describe, youth climate activism ranges from working within existing economic and political systems to demand change—for example, through policy advocacy and international forums (i.e., dutiful dissent); seeking to change economic and political systems from the outside—for example, through marches, boycotts, and demonstrations (i.e., disruptive dissent); and, finally, by actively creating alternative systems and/or ways of being aimed to replace unjust, unsustainable existing institutions and modes of life to spur lasting transformation (i.e., dangerous dissent). Youth climate justice activism encompasses all of the above, while emphasising the reality that climate change disproportionately impacts marginalised groups, exacerbates existing inequalities, and systematically mutes the voices of disempowered, impacted groups such as themselves *as* young people.

Scholarly interest in youth climate justice activism has deepened alongside the growth of the movement (Neas, Ward, and Bowman 2022). Despite intergenerationality being at the core of movement goals, to date, limited research has dealt explicitly with how young people experience the intergenerational dynamics (e.g., tensions; benefits) of their activism (for exceptions, see Bowman and Germaine 2022; Elsen and Ord 2021; Hayes et al. 2022; Jones and Lucas 2023; Wright and McLeod 2023). In particular, limited research conducted with young climate justice activists has examined how they perceive and experience intergenerational relations in their activism and how they describe challenges to, and recommendations for intergenerational solidarities with the non-activist adults in their lives (e.g., parents, teachers, school administrators, policymakers) toward advancing climate justice. The present study used in-depth interviews with teenage climate justice activists in the US to begin to explore these critical topics.

1.1 | Intergenerational Injustice: The Insult of Adultism Atop the Injury of Climate Breakdown

A key motivation young people point to for their involvement in the climate justice movement is intergenerational injustice (Diógenes-Lima et al. 2023). In the context of the climate emergency, intergenerational injustice has been defined as "the uneven consequences of the climate crisis, as future generations will suffer more from the climate crisis despite not being the ones responsible for causing it" (Piispa and Kiilakoski 2022, 904). As the rapidly expanding literature on youth climate activism has documented, young activists are united by a sense of betrayal and outrage rooted in compounding intergenerational injustices: (1) that climate change is a "mess" created by older generations' power-holders; and that (2) they are failing to "clean it up" to protect the rights of younger generations to a sustainable future (Connolly 2021; Martiskainen et al. 2020). Most notably, the multidimensional burdens of climate change—psychological and material, present and future—are being passed on to younger generations who bear no fault in the matter and, increasingly, perceive no desirable future unless rapid and radical systems change is imminently undertaken by today's adult leaders.

When age categories are invoked in discussions of climate-driven vulnerabilities and intergenerational injustice, it is important to distinguish between essentialist (i.e., natural or universal) and constructivist (i.e, social, relational) interpretations. Regarding the former, Patricia Hill Collins (2020) notes that, in Western scholarship, age has historically been referenced as a "*descriptive* demographic category, one that uses chronological time to mark off childhood, adolescence, [etc.] ... as seemingly natural phases of the life course" (Collins 2020, 124). Along these lines, children's heightened physiological and developmental vulnerabilities to a variety of climate change health impacts (e.g., air quality; extreme heat) are increasingly acknowledged as a dimension of intergenerational injustice (Donger et al. 2024). What is less often acknowledged, according to Collins (2020), is age as a "social phenomenon" and "*analytical* category" that is shaped by how "societies assign social meaning to chronological age" (Collins 2020, 124–5). Like gender, race, and class, age not only shapes how climate change is experienced by different groups within society, but it is also a source of differential power, status, and wealth that often places adults in a position of greater relative power and privilege compared to children and youth (Grenier 2007; Collins 2020). A constructivist interpretation reminds us that lived experiences associated with age categories are not fixed, but culturally and socially constituted.

Young people around the global are generally afforded fewer rights, limited political agency, and face a range of barriers to self-determination compared to adults. Still, how youth is defined, experienced, performed, legislated, and enforced varies considerably over time and across cultures (Walker and van Holstein 2024). Moreover, because the categories "youth" and "young people" typically encompass adolescence (e.g., teenage years) as well as emerging adulthood (e.g., ages 18–25), what it feels like to be a young person can vary considerably even within a person's own lifetime. For example, in the US, young people under age 18 are legally determined to be "minors," meaning that they lack important rights (e.g., to vote) and are legally under the control of parents or legal guardians until they reach the age of majority. As such, the age-based experiences of 15- to 17-year-olds can differ markedly from those considered to be legal adults.[2]

An important source of intergenerational tension experienced by young activists has been adultism, defined as, "the systematic mistreatment and disrespect of young people," manifesting as "behaviours and attitudes based on the assumption that adults are better than young people" (Bell 1995, 1). Legal minors are disproportionately impacted by adultist attitudes and practices, especially in the policymaking realm. For young people who are politically disenfranchised, climate action is seen as their only option given greater limitations to exercising their citizenship (Collin, Bessant, and Watts 2023). Deeply entrenched and institutionalised in many cultures, "adultism dictates that only adults are viewed as credible authorities and able to act, while youth serve as recipients of knowledge and action" (Bettencourt 2020, 154). Adultist tendencies are often to blame when young climate justice activists report being silenced, ignored, excluded, and undermined by adults when attempting to make their voices heard on climate (Bowman, Bell, and Alexis-Martin 2021; Löw-Beer and Luh 2024). As noted by Comaroff and Comaroff (2023), given the seriousness of threats to youths' well-being in the face of climate change, adults' "lack of concern"—whether in policy positions, private industry, or the public at large—can be seen as "at best uncaring, at worst criminal" (Comaroff and Comaroff 2023, 175). In short, for young climate justice activists, adultism is often experienced as the "insult" added to the "injury" of climate breakdown.

1.2 | Intergenerational Relations Over Time: Common but Differentiated

When discussing the generational dimensions of the climate crisis, it is again important to distinguish between essentialist and constructivist frames of reference. Regarding the former, generations can be employed as *descriptive* categories to explain anticipated climate impacts. For example, younger generations' prolonged exposure to climate harms from childhood into adulthood will compound their life-course vulnerabilities as a matter of relative likelihood and quantity of experienced climate disruption (i.e., greater proximity and duration). Like children's greater physiological vulnerabilities, the larger cumulative impact of climate change on younger and future generations is increasingly recognised as a form of intergenerational injustice (Donger et al. 2024). From a constructivist perspective that considers generation as a social/relational category of *analysis*, Collins (2020) notes that:

> ... people who share similar experiences when they are young, especially if such experiences have a direct impact on their lives, develop a generational sensibility, or shared identity. ... Generational analyses provide important clues as to why people who share common historical events while they are young develop a generational consciousness
>
> (Collins 2020, 123–4)

As a social phenomenon, generations are iteratively defined and ascribed meaning in relation to one another. Intergenerationality has been theorised as an aspect of social identity that is dynamically shaped by "the relations and interactions between generational groups" (Hopkins and Pain 2007, 288).

Historically, intergenerational relationships have been characterised by "sharing knowledge, cultural norms, [and] traditions as well as reciprocal care, support and exchange of resources" (United Nations [UN] 2024). However, societal shifts and climate degradation are undermining these intergenerational support structures (Chapola, Datta, and Waucaush-Warn 2024; Honwana 2014). Recent decades have witnessed what anthropologists Comaroff and Comaroff (2023) have described as a "heightened degree of intergenerational antagonism," whereby:

> ... younger generations hold their elders accountable for "stealing their future," for limiting their life chances, and for giving substance to their feelings of unprecedented insecurity and anxiety; reciprocally, those elders are dismissive of youth, of their cultural practices, chosen forms of resistance, and sense of being in the world.
>
> Comaroff and Comaroff 2023, 167)

Tensions between generations are not a new societal formation. Scholars such as psychoanalyst Sigmund Freud and sociologist Pierre Bourdieu viewed conflict between generations as inevitable (Comaroff and Comaroff 2023). Different conditions experienced by generations, Bourdieu (1977) theorised, give rise to "different definitions of the impossible, the possible and the probable, [which] cause one group to experience as natural or reasonable practices or aspirations which another group finds unthinkable or scandalous, and vice versa" (Bourdieu 1977, 78–79). With regard to generational analyses, a constructivist interpretation reminds us that intergenerational relations are ever-shifting in relation to present-day realities and the meanings assigned to them.

1.3 | Intergenerational Tensions, Youth Precarity, and Climate Justice

The distinct conditions of late-stage capitalism under which young people today are coming of age pose a particular array of intersecting challenges (Espinoza 2022; O'Loughlin and Sloam 2022). In addition to climate breakdown, today's young people are living through a tangle of historically-situated, interconnected crises (Bowman and Pickard 2021; Pickard, Bowman, and Arya 2020)—or what the climate justice writer Mary Annaïse Heglar (2020) termed "the age of crisis conglomeration." Though climate change weighs heavily on how many young people orient themselves toward their futures (Jones 2023), young people around the world are also facing conditions of "growing scarcity, austerity, and precarity"—times wherein previous generations' conditions of reliable, long-term employment, living incomes, and generous benefits have "increasingly given way to insecure jobs, gig economies, and zero-hour contracts; in which ever more people are embroiled in spiraling debt" (Comaroff and Comaroff 2023, 172). In a global study that surveyed 10,000 young people (16 to 25 years old) on factors related to climate anxiety, the majority of respondents (51.7%) felt that their family's economic, social, and/or physical security

will be threatened, and three-quarters (75.5%) perceived the future to be frightening (Hickman et al. 2021). For school-age youth who are politically disenfranchised, this sense of betrayal, uncertainty, and urgency was a main reason for school strikes (e.g., Kenis 2021)—the question being: Why go to school to prepare for a future that is continually threatened by today's inaction?

The youth climate justice movement is concerned with addressing the root causes of the climate crisis and promoting policies that advance people's health, security, and well-being, particularly for those on society's margins who are disproportionately impacted by social, economic, and environmental policies. Consequently, many young activists working for climate justice emphasise the interconnectedness between climate breakdown, neoliberal capitalism, and youths' experiences of precarity. Whereas "youthhood," the life stage between childhood and adulthood, is often a period defined by significant life decisions and change, for many of today's young people, even basic markers of the transition to adulthood—let alone safe ecological conditions—seem out of reach (Furlong, Woodman, and Wyn 2011; Jones 2023). Due to the rising cost of living, increasing numbers of young people cannot afford critical expenses (e.g., housing, education, insurance, and childcare), leaving many to delay or decline marriage and childbearing. Hickman et al.'s (2021) global study of youth found that 39.1% were hesitant to become parents due to the climate crisis, and 54.9% felt they would not have access to the same opportunities their parents had. Terms such as "waithood" and "continuous present" have been coined to describe young people's experiences of this protracted liminal state (Bone 2019; Honwana 2014). Given these realities, youth climate justice activism is an existential struggle, not only for stable planetary conditions, but for young people's present and future life circumstances. For teenagers under age 18 whose political agency is especially limited, activism offers a critical avenue to express their views, feel part of a community, and take action to change conditions for the better.

Nevertheless, the reality is that societal transformation cannot be accomplished by young people alone. Intergenerational collaboration and exchange are critical to advancing climate justice. Despite this need, scholarship on youth climate activism has tended to employ single-generation analyses, separating adults and young people into discrete categories (Lam and Trott 2024). Given the centrality of intergenerationality to the project of climate justice, there is a need for research that attends to how young people perceive, experience, negotiate, and seek to alter intergenerational relations.

1.4 | The Present Study

With notable exceptions (e.g., Arya 2022; Elsen and Ord 2021), few studies with young climate justice activists have explored the intergenerational dynamics of their activism, how they make sense of the challenges they experience, and what recommendations youth have for adult-youth relations toward advancing climate justice. In addressing this need, a distinction must be made between adults who are acting alongside youth as fellow activists and/or allies and the other adults (e.g., parents, teachers, school administrators, policymakers) with whom young people interact through their activism. In her work with the young climate justice activists, Arya (2022) observed that while adults served in a range of supportive roles within the movement, "the greatest tensions … between young people and older generations involved those adults who were not present [in movement activities]" (Arya 2022, 223). Accordingly, the present study explores young activists' intergenerational experiences with non-activist adults, including their perspectives on how non-activist adults can work in solidarity with young activists to advance climate justice. Specifically, the present study used in-depth interviews with young climate justice activists (ages 15–17) in the US to address three research questions:

1. How do young climate justice activists describe the intergenerational dimensions of their activism?
2. What challenges do young activists experience when interacting with non-activist adults?; and
3. What recommendations do young activists have for non-activist adults to support the youth climate justice movement?

2 | Method

Sixteen young climate justice activists, ranging in age from 15 to 17 years old (i.e., legal minors), took part in in-depth, semi-structured interviews for this study. The young activists (14 women; six multiracial; five White; two Black; two of South or East Asian descent) were all from the US (eight from the Northeast; six from the West; one from the Midwest; one from the Southeast) and self-identified as being involved in climate justice activism. All activists were involved in groups ranging from youth- to adult-led, with actions ranging from local to global in nature, using a variety of approaches (see Figure 1).[3]

Recruitment consisted of emails to US youth-led climate justice organisations and snowball sampling. Participants were asked to review study information and consent documents, then fill out a brief eligibility survey (i.e., confirming age, activist identity) followed by a socio-demographic questionnaire. Participants were then interviewed over Zoom for approximately 1 h ($M = 67$ min) and compensated with a $25 gift card for their time. This study's methods were reviewed by the university's Institutional Review Board and youths' participation was voluntary. During interviews, participants were encouraged to address questions according to their degree of comfort, in as much or as little detail as they wished, and to skip questions they did not wish to answer. Interviews explored youths' journeys into, and experiences with climate justice activism, including its impact on their everyday lives, relationships, and visions for the future. Full interview transcripts were analysed for the present research, with particular attention to participants' responses to questions dealing explicitly with age, including: "Who or what do you think motivates young people to become involved in climate justice work?", "In the youth climate justice movement, what is the role of non-youth?", and "What is the role of those who are older?"

To analyse transcripts, I engaged in a multi-phase process, grounded in reflexive thematic analysis (RTA; Byrne 2022;

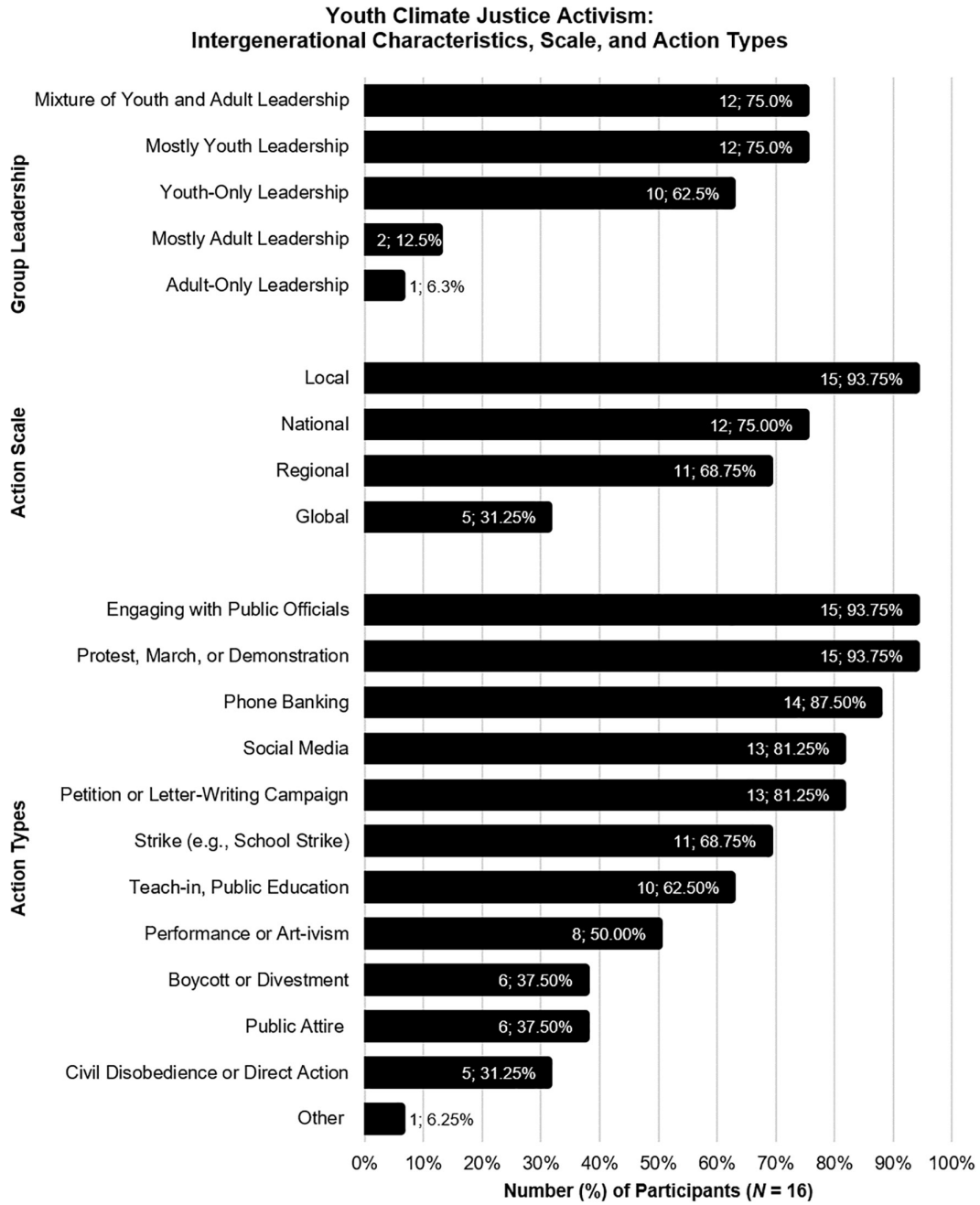

FIGURE 1 | Youth climate justice activism: Intergenerational characteristics, scale, and action types.

Braun and Clarke 2021). RTA is "a method for developing, analysing and interpreting patterns across a qualitative dataset, which involves systematic processes of data coding to develop themes" (Braun and Clarke 2022, 4). During data analysis, I first reviewed all transcripts to gain familiarity with the dataset. I then created initial codes to capture youths' references to intergenerational dynamics, challenges, and recommendations using semantic and latent codes consisting of "surface" and "hidden" and/or "underlying" meanings, respectively (Byrne 2022, 1397). Next, I again reviewed transcripts along with initial codes to begin generating themes on the basis of shared meaning across the dataset. This iterative process involved combining and condensing codes, with reference to initial codes and full transcripts, to arrive at a smaller set of core themes that collectively described youths' perspectives. I coded on paper transcripts, generated a separate code list, and recorded brief memos during analysis. The final phases of analysis involved naming core themes and producing the written report.

The originators of RTA, Braun and Clarke (2019), view qualitative research as a "creative, reflexive and subjective" process of "meaning and meaning-making … [which is] always context-bound, positioned and situated" (Braun and Clarke 2019, 591). Rooted in the "reflexive" nature of RTA, it is important to acknowledge that the present study—from conceptualization through RTA and writing—is shaped by my social position and the values and assumptions I have brought to the research process (Byrne 2022). In brief, these include my positionality as a White, cis-gendered woman and tenured professor located at

a research-intensive university in the Midwestern US, which occupies the unceded ancestral lands of the Shawnee and Myaamia (Miami) peoples. My privileged identities—particularly in terms of education and professional status—as well as my generational positioning as a Millennial, have inevitably shaped my approach to this research. Moreover, many of these identities represent important ways my social positioning diverges from participants in this study, thus limiting my perspective. A core motivation for the present research has been my firm commitment to centring and uplifting the voices and actions of young people and advancing climate justice. From my doctoral research forward, I have dedicated my academic pursuits to conducting youth-centred research focused on addressing the climate crisis. Thus, this research is inevitably shaped by my values and aspirations related to promoting young people's well-being and the flourishing of all life—human and more-than-human—within planetary boundaries through collective action for societal transformation.

3 | Results

Findings are organised by this study's research questions, with subsection headings indicating major themes. Representative quotes are provided for each thematic category and are supplemented with participant pseudonyms and ages. Quotes were selected first with attention to their representativeness of overall study findings, while ensuring that the voices of all participants are included in this report.

3.1 | RQ1: How Do Young Climate Justice Activists Describe the Intergenerational Dimensions of Their Activism?

3.1.1 | Adopting "Next Generation" Identity: Youth Activism to Address Present-Day and Future Injustices

Being "the next generation" who will face the impacts of the climate crisis more than older generations was a salient identity for the young activists in this study. When describing their journeys into climate justice activism, intergenerational in/justice was a central driving force. The young climate activists in this study were moved to join the climate justice movement both to protect their own futures as well as those of voiceless future generations consisting of their own children and grandchildren. As Charlotte (age 15) explained:

> This is our world and this is our future, and the sad thing is that I'm 15 and I need to start worrying about whether I'm gonna have a planet for my kids to live on and my grandkids, which is really terrifying. But it's also really motivating for me, because I know that I wanna change this world and … make it a better place for my kids and my grandkids and all the generations to come.

When asked who or what motivates young people to become involved in climate justice activism, Iris (age 17) responded, "Just knowing that we are the next generation. … Just the thought of the future, and are we going to have a future to live in? I think that's what keeps young people fighting for climate justice."

Awareness of injustice was another motivating factor. Lucy (age 17) explained that understanding the climate crisis as a justice issue made it more concrete and relevant to people's lives. As she explained, what spoke to her generation was becoming aware of the interconnectedness of climate breakdown with other forms of injustice.

> Once climate justice started becoming more well-known, especially among my generation, I think it showed that it looked like a real tangible issue in people's lives and one that was connected to other problems in the world like racial injustice or economic injustice. I feel like that view of it rather [than] as some separate issue—as it's something intersecting with a bunch of other things—resonated with me and a lot of other people my age, I think.

The young activists interviewed for this study were ages 10 to 12 in 2016 when the US elected a president that came to be known as the "Climate Denier-in-Chief" (Great Transition 2017). When recounting what motivated their activism, participants made it clear that their activism was a direct response to the current state of the world and adults' climate inaction. Fuelling their activism were feelings of anger, distrust, and betrayal. As participants explained, not only did older generations create the climate crisis, they were also failing to adequately respond—despite knowledge of its consequences for adults' own (grand)children and future generations. Many young activists felt they had no choice but to take action themselves. Akiva (age 16) pointed to "a lot of different things" that may motivate young people to join the climate justice movement, but emphasised intergenerational injustice.

> As young people, we are the ones who are gonna have to deal the most with the effects of climate change. … For most of us coming of age in Trump's presidency, it kinda gives [young people] a view of, "Oh, things go really badly if you don't take action. You can't just trust the government, or the adults to handle things."

3.1.2 | Claiming "Last Generation" Identity: Youth Activism as an Obligation and Sacrifice, Not a Choice

Like Akiva, many young activists described being propelled into climate justice activism by a sense of duty rather than choice. Adding to their sense of outrage toward adults' inaction, they emphasised that those capable of acting now are the "last generation" with immense power to "stop" climate change. As Eliana (age 15) explained:

> I don't really feel like I have a choice to be a climate activist, and I think a lot of other young people feel

> the same way. I kinda feel like it's up to my generation to stop climate change and that it's something that we have to do. ... The reason I say "my generation" is because we are the last generation that can stop climate change.

Tied to their sense of obligation to act, several participants emphasised the psychological and material burdens felt by young activists. Beyond grappling with the emotionally-taxing awareness of the climate crisis for their generation, participants explained that, day to day, there were competing demands for their time between activism and organising on one hand, and their schoolwork, freedom, identity development, and personal life on the other. Rooted in the intergenerational injustice of adults' climate inaction, Carla (age 17) told of confronting the limits of her capacities—both temporal and psychological—while organising online during the pandemic.

> As a young person, I feel like I shouldn't be spending all my time behind a screen talking about all of the world's problems. ... It's something that adults should have been doing a long time ago. But young people kind of have to step up and take action, so that's something that keeps me going. But it's also really difficult because I'm at a time in my life where I'm trying to figure out who I am. I'm in high school, I have to take care of my grades, I have to do extracurriculars, I have to think about college. And also, I have my own family responsibilities, and it's just a lot to handle. So, it's really difficult ... because I want to help out in so many different ways, where at the same time I have to think about if I can even fit that into not only my schedule, but into ... Do I have the mental capacity to do it as well?

In describing such tradeoffs, young activists' identities *as youth* were salient. As Willow (age 16) explained, "some people think that their childhood is getting taken away right now because ... older generations put the crisis (and other crises) on this generation, and that's terrible." At the end of a 19-min interview, when asked if there is anything important that she would like to add, Audre's (age 16) final thoughts emphasised this important sacrifice.

> I think it's important just to state that ... climate justice and climate activism is a burden that we're having to shoulder because of the generations before us. And it should be taken that way. We should be focusing on other things in our childhood. We should be doing other things, but because of the current state of the world and how things work right now, we have to give that up just so that we can ensure that we survive in the future and that future generations survive ... We have to give up our childhood, and just being kids, because our future is at stake.

Notably, young activists described a number of psychological benefits to their activism such as feeling connected to other young people, empowered, and more hopeful. Many derived deep enjoyment and strong positive relationships in the climate justice movement. Still, these rewards coexisted alongside a deep sense of moral indignation. Specifically, since young people are not responsible for the climate crisis, they felt that they should not have to expend so much time and energy pushing adults to take necessary actions. As Mila (age 15) explained:

> I find activism to be very empowering and inspiring and something that I really enjoy doing. But I think there are times when I feel like I shouldn't need to be doing this. I shouldn't have to be 16 years old and ... fighting for the future of the planet. I feel like other people, *adults* should be doing that and we should be able to live the childhoods and youth that we want to.

In describing the intergenerational dimensions of their activism, a critical element was the reality that youth climate justice activists—as young people—cannot themselves take the full range of actions needed to avert the climate crisis. Rather, they are dependent upon the actions of adults. Young activists know that drastic action must be taken, and they are appealing to adults to do what only they can do. When asked about the challenges she has faced in her activism, Antonia (age 17) described the fear that accompanies her relative powerlessness compared to adults:

> I guess the biggest challenge I face is probably balancing [the] climate justice work that I do with the rest of my life. ... I have had to give up some things. ... It is a sacrifice to give your life over to something, and sometimes it feels like, "Why am I doing this if we're not ... seeing actual change happen on the national level and a global level?" We know that it needs to happen, but there's nothing we can really do about it. We're trying, but we can't be the actual ones who [do it]. We don't have the control that other people have. And even though we know that stuff needs to happen now, not having the control to do that can be really scary.

3.2 | RQ2: What Challenges Do Young Activists Experience When Interacting With Non-Activist Adults?

3.2.1 | Confronting Hostile Adultism, From Silence to Antagonism

The young activists in this study emphasised that actions taken by adults—particularly political leaders and other power-holders—are necessary to avert the worst effects of climate breakdown. Making such demands thus required

intergenerational communication and exchange between youth in the movement and adults in positions of relative authority, from policymakers to legal adults (over age 18) who are able to vote. However, as they explained, appealing to adults presented a range of challenges rooted in adultism. Among the most common was simply being ignored. Hostile adultism has been defined as, "a form of bias against young people that emphasizes and assumes their inferiority and incompetence in all matters relative to adults in order to justify their subordinate societal status" (Trott 2024a). When asked what kinds of messages she had received from leaders and adults through her activism, Carla (age 17) responded that "the worst of all ... [is] the fact that they don't even respond to our asks or say no." She continued:

> Messages from [leaders and adults], a lot of the times, is silence. ... I think the worst of all was one senator. Now, he didn't vote no on the bill; he didn't vote at all. ... It shows that you really don't care. The worst kind of responses—and the kind that we typically get—are no responses at all.

Young activists described numerous experiences of not being taken seriously as young people. Beyond being ignored, this included having their competence routinely questioned by adults who perceived themselves to "know better" due to their age and experience. When describing her "biggest challenge so far," Mila (age 15) told of being undermined due to her age: "Even if you have a plan that you've checked and are sure that it's feasible, [adults] still don't wanna acknowledge that." Like others in this study, Charlotte (age 15) explained that age-based exclusion and criticism from adults is common, which is why youth-led activist spaces can be so empowering.

> Oftentimes, teens are silenced just because they're too young or they don't really know what's going on. And I've definitely been met with a lot of people and a lot of criticism saying that I'm too young to be organizing or we don't really know what we're saying. ... But this space is very important to uplift teen voices because they are the ones that are going to need to save our planet. And I feel very, very, very empowered when I'm around other teens versus being with adults, or being with people that maybe don't understand their impacts as much as we have experienced them.

Many young activists in this study were involved in school strikes and walkouts as part of the Global Climate Strikes in 2019. For some, major events in May and September of that year were their introduction to the climate justice movement. In describing the challenges they experienced interacting with adults through their activism, participants explained that the adults in their schools, including teachers and administrators, undermined their efforts in several ways, from patronising comments to hostile actions. Aurora (age 15) explained that her school's administration was "difficult to work with ... [because] they were against us a lot of the time." They refused meetings requested by young activists in advance of the Global Climate Strikes and proceeded to oppose their efforts in ways that made her feel like "giving up."

> We tried to meet with them and explain, "We're doing this, and this is how you can support us." And they didn't listen. They tore down our flyers, [and] they made it super difficult for kids to leave. ... I'm, at this point, kind of done trying to work with my school district on climate stuff. ... It's just been so difficult in the past, and I tried to have them hear us and they don't listen [and] ... they didn't really ever give a reason.

3.2.2 | Encountering Benevolent Adultism, From Empty Praise to Empty Promises

In contrast to adults' hostile behaviour, some participants described receiving accolades from adults who expressed both approval and pride in their efforts. While on the surface this may seem a welcome divergence from adults' overt opposition, participants were concerned that this behaviour was also potentially undermining. Benevolent adultism has been defined as "a form of bias against children and young people that emphasizes and assumes their innocence, vulnerability, and/or dependence on adults to justify their subordinate societal status" (Trott 2024a). Through a benevolent adultist lens, the actions of young activists are societally noble and valuable for identity formation and skills development, but ultimately non-threatening. For example, Willow (age 16) felt misunderstood and belittled when her teacher reacted to her climate activism as a "cool hobby." As she responded, "I don't think it's just a hobby. ... I think it is important and ... something that ... needs to happen."

Moreover, young activists worried that adults' apparent support could serve to diminish the power of their actions by removing the resistance dimension. For example, by endorsing young activists' walkout efforts, Akiva (age 16) suspected that adults were engaging in a form of cooptation:

> I also do think there's sort of this interesting line between adults supporting young people versus adults co-opting a youth movement. ... For instance, ... people were planning school walkouts in protest, and several schools that I knew said, "Okay, we give you permission to walk out, and you guys can go sit outside for 20 minutes and then come back into class and it's all good." ... Which takes all of the power out of the action, if there's nothing that you're rebelling against. They're kind of like, "Yes, we give you permission to protest," and then there's no actual impact to your action.

Similarly, some participants sensed that adults' words and gestures of encouragement were a form of placation. More than anything, young activists desired to see adults taking substantive

action in response to their demands. Instead, youth described instances where adults engaged in misleading and mollifying behaviour, making empty promises and not acting on them. This was another reason, beyond the climate crisis itself, that youth expressed a sense of betrayal by adults in positions of leadership. As Aurora (age 15) explained:

> My school district is really good at ... promising to do things to make them look good and then not following through at all. They passed a resolution several years ago that said, "We're gonna [implement] a climate justice curriculum" ... and they never did it. No adult is gonna straight up say, "Yeah, we don't want climate justice, we want the planet to burn, and we don't care about your generation." But ... they put on a disguise of, "Oh yeah, we care about you. We're working on it." And then they just don't do it. It's really frustrating.

Ultimately, the young people in this study stressed the urgency of real-world climate crisis action by adults. A major challenge, however, was getting adults to respond with concrete actions. As they explained, lip service came easy, but follow-through was difficult. Akiva (age 16) summed it up this way:

> I think as young people, grown-ups or adults, they feel very good about themselves when they listen to us or they see us, but then they're like, "Wow, that's good for you guys." But then we're like, "Well, will you do what we're asking us to?" and they're like, "No."

"Instead of just being sort of a fun, feel-good moment for everyone," Akiva continued, youths' actions should "actually lead to impact." After all, this is why young people joined the movement for climate justice.

3.3 | RQ3: What Recommendations Do Young Activists Have for Non-Activist Adults to Support the Youth Climate Justice Movement?

3.3.1 | "Listen to Us": Seeking Equal Status

Young activists voiced a range of recommendations for adults to better support their efforts and advance climate justice. Unsurprisingly, many expressed similar sentiments to Aurora (age 15) who said, "If adults would just take us more seriously, that would be appreciated." In describing what that would look like, participants emphasised the need for adults to truly listen to, and amplify their concerns and demands—and not brush over the difficult parts with aims to keep things positive and upbeat. In making this appeal, Eden (age 17) told of a young climate activist whose criticism of oil companies was edited out of a published interview.

> They edited all the stuff she said, so they only left in the stuff that was cheesy like, "We need to save the world." ... So, [what's needed is] more actual listening and not ... [doing] things just for kudos, like "We're changing the world." ... [And] being aware that actual change needs to happen ... It's not just like a rainbow dream and everyone agrees, "Yeah, we should fix the world." But ... things need to change now. People are being hurt now. There are actual consequences.

Beyond truly listening to their demands, taking young people more seriously would require greater inclusion and power-sharing between adults and youth, whereby young people could contribute in substantive ways to decision-making and action on climate. Mila (age 15) described an even playing field in which young people's perspectives are given the same consideration as adults'.

> The dynamic should change. I think that youth should be invited onto more ... councils and advisory boards in the government. And their voice should be included in the decision-making process as much as possible—or, even more than adults. I think that adults will see some effects of the climate crisis—especially young adults right now—but the kids and the youth are the ones that will be impacted the most directly. So, I think that our voices being elevated to the same status as adults and being included in all of those conversations would be how we should interact together to fight for the climate movement.

3.3.2 | "Back Us": Requesting Instrumental Support

In addition to greater respect for young people's perspectives, some participants hoped that adults would take specific actions that centre, uplift, and respond to young people's concerns. In this study, all young activists were legal minors not yet able to vote. Daya (age 16) felt that adults should be "listening to young people, uplifting them, and voting in solidarity with them." When asked about the role of older people in supporting the youth climate justice movement, she responded:

> I think the role of non-youth is to definitely support and uplift youth voices ... They should really be amplifying the actions of youth and the thoughts and ideas that youth are bringing up ... as well as people who are over 18 should obviously vote. [laughs] I think that goes without saying, but that's definitely something you can do. ... In my [group], we're aged all the way from 14 to maybe 30 or something, and a good portion of people involved can't vote, so we need that support.

Similarly, Amy (age 17) emphasised the need for adults' instrumental support (e.g., funding, votes) as well as their respect for young people. Her exasperation was clear when she said: "If you have a position of power, use it, listen. ... If you've got money and you're older, give us your money. If you're older and really like to take up space, stop taking up so much space. And vote for the people we tell you to vote for." When asked about the

role of adults in the movement for climate justice, Akiva (age 16) expressed similar recommendations and, like Amy, a sense of indignation. Appealing to adults, she said:

> First of all, support us. What does that mean? I think that means if you're in a position of power, however small that is, whether it's just like you're working at some organization or you're a school administrator or you're in local office or whatever, you centre our voices, listen to us and actually take action on the issues that matter to us. Also, adults are the ones with the money, so if we need funding, that's who we're reliant on a lot of the times, so that's a really major way for people to support us. ... Have some ... respect for us instead of just trying to make us a little pet project that you're proud of.

3.3.3 | "Join Us": Inviting Intergenerational Activism

Several participants called upon adults to join the movement, noting that adults are welcome in youth-led spaces. Jess (age 15) noted that because they "don't have anyone over the age of 18" in her group, it sometimes poses difficulties. Beyond needing adults for certain tasks, Jess pointed out that adults and young people can offer mutual support, and youth-led organisations can benefit from adults' past experience.

> We actually don't have any adults in the organization, which is kind of hard. ... I think it's good to have organizations like that, but definitely, some organizations will need to have adults, and I think it's important that they're helping us and that we are helping them. And maybe we can just inspire them to get more involved, but also a lot of things are easier when you have an adult involved, so I think they can really help us and we can learn from them.

Participants noted that, rather than being "youth-only" spaces that seek to keep out adults, many youth-led organisations exist to centre the perspectives of young people. Like others in this study, Eric (age 15) noted that it was a misconception that "only" youth are welcome in many youth-led groups. Rather, as he explained, "[in] the youth climate movement ... we don't actually care about age that much. We want people to just get involved." Audre (age 16) elaborated on this dynamic, echoing several others, to emphasise that the focus on young people is a response to their widespread exclusion from positions of leadership and decision-making on climate—not a counter-attempt at age-based exclusion:

> In the youth climate justice movement, we don't reject or we don't denounce older people. I think we just focus on the youth because we want to uplift youth voices, and we want the youth to be given a chance to take the lead and make choices.

3.3.4 | "Do the Work": Urging Climate Justice Action

At the core of the youth climate justice movement was a desire for adults to heed youths' concerns and desires and take concerted action to advance climate justice. Whether that meant everyday adults joining the movement and standing alongside young people in making demands for necessary change, or powerful adults changing policies, creating programs, passing legislation, and changing systems in response to youths' demands, young activists made clear that their organising is ultimately intended to prompt concrete action. Antonia (age 17) explained that, at the end of the day, young people cannot take the full range of necessary actions, so the actions of adults in positions of power are critical.

> On a larger scale in the country, I really hope that our leaders, who are obviously not youth, really just take youth into account when they make their decisions ... [because] the truth is we really can't do the actual work, like passing the policies. We can advocate for it as much as we want, but we're not the ones who actually have the power to pass those policies, and so we need them to do that for us. There's no way that we're going to achieve climate justice unless they listen and do what we're asking for.

Ultimately, to achieve climate justice, the young activists in this study made clear that everyone is needed in this struggle. As Eliana (age 15) explained, all living generations have a role to play in bringing a more climate-just world into being.

> My generation is the last generation that can stop [climate change], but all the other generations that are still here, we need their support and we need their help. And obviously, I can't even vote is one of the big things, and I don't have the power or money or resources that older generations have. And so, we definitely need everything that they can do. I think we need everyone if we're gonna stop climate change. It's definitely not just the young people. It can't just be the younger people.

4 | Discussion

This study explored young climate justice activists' views and experiences of intergenerational relations and tensions and how to advance intergenerational solidarities for climate justice. Themes generated through reflexive thematic analysis encompass youths' adoption of "next generation" identity, emphasising the disproportionate risks of climate breakdown faced by their own and future generations. Further, identifying as the "last generation" with the capacity to avert catastrophic climate change, they described their activism as a burden and sacrifice, rather than a choice, that necessitates dividing their time between school, hobbies, personal life, and activism to demand swift action by adult power-holders. They stressed that, given

the urgency of climate action, all generations must work together because young people cannot themselves enact the systemic and policy changes required. Through their activism, young activists described facing both hostile (i.e., overt, obstructive) and benevolent (i.e., subtle, undermining) forms of adultism, which ranged from being ignored and actively blocked to receiving adults' praise and promises in ways that belittled or rendered their actions ineffectual. In recommending ways to cultivate intergenerational solidarities for climate justice, young activists underscored the need for adults to listen to, take seriously, centre, amplify, and—most importantly—respond to youths' demands. Participants urged adults, particularly those in positions of power and influence, to use their age-based privilege, political enfranchisement, material resources, professional status, and decision-making authority to uplift young people's voices and tangibly advance climate justice. Findings of the present study have key implications for policy and youth-centred research practices.

4.1 | Young People's Biographical Precarity and the Necessity of Intergenerational Solidarities

A key finding of the present study was young people's identification as "next generation" recipients of disproportionate climate risks, combined with their sense of urgency for climate action, rooted in the notion that people alive today are the "last generation" to prevent the worst impacts of climate breakdown. Thus, in explaining the intergenerational dimensions of their activism, young activists emphasised the necessity of climate action for their own present and future well-being, while pointing out that the systemic and policy changes required to ensure a climate-just future require immediate action by adults. Consequently, participants' core motivations for activism, consistent with previous studies (Diógenes-Lima et al. 2023; Han and Ahn 2020), were rooted in aspirations for intergenerational justice and action.

Early social movement theorists explained young people's disproportionate involvement in activism as a consequence of their relative "biographical availability," compared to adults, whose jobs, families, financial obligations, and other responsibilities were thought to impede activist participation due to time constraints and perceptions of risk (McAdam 1986). Now critiqued for classist and adultist assumptions (Conner, Elegon, and Cohen 2024), such theorising asserted that young people had greater capacity to be activists due to not having to risk losing a job or the ability to feed their families in the process. With greater attention to the systemic forces shaping young people's everyday realities and future prospects, "biographical precarity" offers a better explanation for factors driving today's young activists to speak out and demand change (Conner, Elegon, and Cohen 2024). "Rather than having nothing to lose if they engage in activism, many youth activists feel they have *everything to lose* if they do not. Their very futures are at stake" (Conner, Elegon, and Cohen 2024, xx [emphasis added]). Indeed, many young activists in this study viewed climate activism as a burden and sacrifice, but one they deemed necessary given insufficient action by today's adult leaders.

In this and previous studies (Bone 2019; Bowman and Pickard 2021), young people explained the contours of their lives and dedication to activism in terms of their generation's precarity in the context of intersectional and compounding threats to their present and future well-being, while foregrounding social justice (Conner, Elegon, and Cohen 2024). Findings of the present study add emphasis to the need to understand intergenerational relations and tensions as "neither generic or universal," but rather as a shifting set of meanings that give rise to a "shared sense of generational consciousness" (Collins 2020, 126). As Collins (2020) has noted:

> ... The category of youth ... encompasses a constellation of generational experiences among people who share a chronological age but where society, culture, history, and power relations shape both the opportunities they encounter and the social meaning of being young. (Collins 2020, 126)

In the present study, young climate justice activists viewed climate justice as a unifying banner under which justice-driven systemic transformation may occur, resulting in alternative social, economic, and political systems capable of providing greater economic security, ecological regeneration, and material and psychological well-being in ways that address multiple concurrent injustices (Bowman and Pickard 2021; Choi 2023). A key tenet of climate justice is to prioritise and address the specific needs and perspectives of marginalised groups who are often disproportionately affected by climate breakdown, such as groups that are minoritized (e.g., Black Indigenous, and people of colour [BIPOC]) and historically-excluded on the basis of gender, sexuality, ability status, and other identities (Trott, Reimer-Watts, and Riemer 2022; Trott et al. 2023). In this and previous studies (e.g., Elsen and Ord 2021), age-based marginalisation was recognised as a driving force behind the youth-led climate justice movement. Young people are not only a critically-impacted group, but one that has traditionally been kept out of formal spaces of climate decision-making and action (Trott 2021). Thus, youth-led groups aim to centre the perspectives and uplift the voices and actions of young people as they push for necessary change.

Findings of the present study are consistent with a growing body of research noting that young people do not feel heard or respected by adults when they express their concerns about climate change (Jones and Lucas 2023). Among the chief intergenerational challenges described by youth activists in this study were overt and covert forms of adultism (Trott 2024a). On one hand, participants experienced hostile adultism when they were ignored or obstructed in their efforts by adults who presumed their incompetence; On the other hand, youth faced benevolent adultism when receiving praise for their noble efforts or placation through feel-good promises by adults who, upon failing to act, rendered youths' efforts ineffectual. Thus, findings of the present research add emphasis to calls for researchers and policymakers to engage in youth-adult partnerships in ways that challenge adultism directly through "bottom up" approaches that "that work to create conditions for youth and adults to operate as equal partners" in achieving shared outcomes (Alcock et al. 2011; Bettencourt 2020; Neas, Ward, and Bowman 2022; Oto 2023, 533). Doing so is critical for justice-driven, intergenerational exchange. Indeed, challenging the "succession

model" that upholds traditional generational power imbalances, Collins (2020) explained:

> ... Intergenerational engagement need not be a uni-directional, top-down hierarchy. Rather, intergenerational engagement can be recursive and reciprocal, with each group bringing distinctive generational standpoints to a common political project ... provid[ing] rich ground for challenging intergenerational patterns of assimilation into intersecting systems of power. (Collins 2020, 127)

Given their urgency and immensity, the radical transformations invoked by the youth climate justice movement require intergenerational solidarities (Lam and Trott 2024). Beyond greater "people power" promised by generations united, upholding intergenerational justice requires that today's generations come together to "assume duties and responsibilities toward later generations" (Davies, Tabucanon, and Box 2016, 418). Moreover, the frank reality, underscored by participants in this study, is that young people need today's adult decision-makers and power-holders to act swiftly to prevent further climate breakdown. The reasons for doing so are multi-layered. On a societal level, Hayes et al. (2022) caution that, "without an intergenerational response there is a risk that generational and mistrust divisions that were already considerable in many western democracies will widen further" (Hayes et al. 2022, 804; see also Pickard 2019; Verlie and Flynn 2022). The clear exasperation observed among young activists in the present study offers supportive evidence in this regard. It is important to recognise, however, that intergenerational responsiveness is a mutual process. As noted by Roy and Ayalon (2022),

> Intergenerational discourse that alienates collaborators, sympathizers, and well-wishers must be replaced with messages of inclusivity highlighting the potential for "all-hands-on-deck" opportunities. All parties would benefit from careful consideration of the language that they use to inspire everyone, regardless of age, to "unite behind the science" for the benefit of all. (Roy and Ayalon 2022, 11)

On a planetary level, the intergenerational project that is climate justice is ideally a collaborative effort to reimagine and rebuild systems—to *generate* a world that can support the well-being of all, while recognising and respecting the boundaries of Earth's finite systems. The risks of climate inaction cannot be overstated, but neither can the potential rewards of solidarity-driven, intergenerational collaboration to achieve climate justice.

5 | Limitations

This research is limited in several ways. First, around the world, the concept of generation is not universally recognised or defined. When generations are given meaning within cultures, they become "concrete abstractions" made significant by their titles and interrelationships (Comaroff and Comaroff 2023, 167). As such, how the young people in this study refer to generations is culturally situated in the US context where—like many Western contexts—families are becoming smaller, young people are delaying marriage and childbearing, and "multigenerational families with intergenerational support and reliance are rapidly declining" (UN 2024). Moreover, intergenerational relations are historically situated, and variation occurs according to how they are "cognitively apprehended, affectively experienced, and culturally represented" (Comaroff and Comaroff 2023, 176). Future research with young climate justice activists that attends more deeply to patterns of intergenerational socialisation and support and in a greater diversity of cultural contexts is recommended. Additionally, given their complex and unique intergenerational dynamics, young activists' experiences with adult activists and allies within the climate justice movement warranted its own analysis and is beyond the scope of this paper. As a result, findings reported here do not account for the full range of youth-adult interactions described during interviews.

6 | Conclusion

The climate crisis is an issue of intergenerational in/justice, and young activists around the globe have drawn attention to the failures of adult power-holders to take necessary action to stabilise Earth's climate for the protection of their own and future generations (Neas, Ward, and Bowman 2022; Pickard, Bowman, and Arya 2020; Trott 2024c, 2024d). Young activists' perspectives boil down to their rightful and understandable concerns about, and desires for the materialities of a decent, dignified life enabled by secure socio-ecological conditions. Given the future orientation of much climate justice rhetoric, it bears noting that we already live in a climate changed world (Lyon et al. 2021), and in this research, young activists remind us that they already are the commonly-invoked "next generation" who are (and will be) bearing the greatest burdens of climate breakdown. For young activists, that reality only serves to fuel their fervent action on behalf their own and unborn generations.

Native American ancestral teachings foreground humans' collective responsibility not only "to be the caretakers of all that is here," but also to "ensure the survival for the seventh generation" (Clarkson, Morrissette, and Régallet 1992; Warner 2015, 12). Like the young activists interviewed for this study, we all live in someone else's future and others' past. Those in positions of power today are, on average, the seventh-generation descendents[4] of the pioneers of the industrial revolution. Those seven generations have witnessed the rise of machines to replace hand tools, rapid transportation systems to replace animal- and human-powered travel, and global communication systems—including the internet—allowing for instantaneous access to information and connection across vast distances, replacing slow communication through handwritten letters and word-of-mouth. At first unknowingly, this staggering transformation of everyday life was simultaneously altering the composition of Earth's atmosphere, marking the beginning of rapid, modern-day anthropogenic climate change (Lyon et al. 2021). And in the Euro-American context, this period also gave rise to named generations (Comaroff and

Comaroff 2023), the first being the Lost Generation (1880–1900) who were characterised by feeling "disillusioned and disconnected from the values and traditions of the past, and because they were often struggling to find their place in a rapidly changing world" (Haas 2024). Gen Z activists in the youth climate justice movement are the seventh named generation, and their children will be seventh-generation descendants of the world in which Eunice Foote (1856) presented her findings to the American Association for the Advancement of Science that carbon-dioxide was a heat-trapping gas (see also Ortiz and Jackson 2022).

Just as it may feel impossible to imagine the world of seven generations past—without lightening-fast communication let alone lightbulbs—everyday life seven generations into the future feels wildly inconceivable. Still, there is no doubt it will be unrecognisable to those of us alive today. If "business as usual" prevails, scientists predict that global mean temperatures in 2200 will rise a devastating 3°C to 4°C (5° to 7° Fahrenheit) compared to today, decimating the rich diversity of species and ecosystems that make up our world (Lyon et al. 2021; Marsa 2015). Young climate justice activists are striving for a different kind of unrecognisable future—one in which the destruction of ecosystems, disconnection from nature, generational division, and growing social isolation and individualism tied to the Industrial Revolution give way to a new era of life-affirming, justice-driven regeneration, reconnection, and repair. Considering themselves and all who are alive today to be the "last generation" able to avert catastrophic climate degeneration, the young activists in this study underscored the need for adults to respond to, and work alongside young people in co-generating a better world.

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Conflicts of Interest

The author declares no conflicts of interest.

Data Availability Statement

Research data are not shared.

Endnotes

[1] Responding to the demands of young climate justice activists, in this article, I use terminology for climate change that is more precise and vivid. These terms include climate breakdown, climate emergency, climate crisis, and climate degradation (Carrington 2019).

[2] Notably, by broader societal standards, 'young adults' over age 18 in the US are still categorised as young people through their late twenties and early thirties and make up a significant contingent within the youth climate justice movement.

[3] For an in-depth examination of how these young activists define climate justice, factors motivating their activism, see Trott (2024b).

[4] Two ways of defining generations are used in this article's conclusion. In the first example, generations are estimated to be 25 years in duration and measured from the start of the Industrial Revolution (circa 1760) to the midpoint of the Baby Boomer generation (1955). Later, I refer to named generations, which encompass variable time spans based on cultural and technological shifts that shaped the shared experiences of age cohorts (Comaroff and Comaroff 2023).

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