COLLECTIVE IDENTITY, LEARNING, AND THE DEAF RIGHTS MOVEMENT

L'IDENTITÉ COLLECTIVE, L'APPRENTISSAGE, ET LE MOUVEMENT SOCIAL DES DROITS DES SOURDS

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Social movement learning, as a research area, brings together the scholarly discourses on social movements and learning. The concept of collective identity is well suited for the analysis of social movement learning since learning is an integral component of this new social movement perspective. The criteria for the collective identity concept, as theorized by Alberto Melucci, include cognitive knowledge, a network of active relationships, and emotional engagement, while the analytical components include three axes along the continuums of solidarity and aggregation, maintenance and breaching of limits, and consensus and conflict. This paper will take a case study approach to apply the theory of collective identity and the dimensions of learning to a catalyst in the Deaf rights movement, namely the Deaf President Now protest at Gallaudet University in Washington, DC. The intersections of collective identity and learning within social movements will also be analyzed in relationship to social and legislative changes.

Keywords: social movement, learning, collective identity, Deaf rights movement, Gallaudet University, Deaf President Now

L'apprentissage des mouvements sociaux en tant que champ de recherche rassemble les discours scholastiques variés sur les mouvements sociaux et l'apprentissage lui-même. Le concept de l'identité collective est pertinent à l'analyse de l'apprentissage des mouvements sociaux vu que l'apprentissage est une partie intégrale de la nouvelle perspective sur les mouvements sociaux. Selon les théories d'Alberto Melucci, les critères requis pour le concept d'une identité collective incluent la connaissance cognitive, un réseau d'amitiés et relations actives, et une implication émotionnelle, tandis que les parties analytiques de ce concept incluent trois axes qui se trouvent sur les continuums de solidarité et l'agrégation ; la protection et le surpassement des limites ; et les décisions consensuelles et le conflit. Ce discours abordera non seulement la théorie de l'identité collective, mais aussi les dimensions de l'apprentissage en analysant des cas spécifiques, surtout la manifestation « Deaf President Now ! » (*Pour un Président Sourd !)* à l'Université Gallaudet à Washington, DC. Le carrefour entre l'identité collective et l'apprentissage qui se trouve en milieu d'un mouvement social sera analysé en relation avec l'évolution sociale et législative.

Mots clés : l'apprentissage des mouvements sociaux, l'identité collective, Alberto Melucci, mouvement vers les droits des personnes Sourdes

Introduction

Deaf students at Gallaudet University in Washington, DC, USA protested for the selection of a Deaf president in 1988, and won the historic event with the installation of the first Deaf president in the university's 124 years of existence. Dr. I. King Jordon then presided in the role of president for 18 years until 2006. This turning point in Gallaudet University's history demonstrated the power of the Deaf rights movement. To better understand this historical phenomenon, this article investigates interconnections among social movement theory, dimensions of learning, and policies within the disability rights movement, specifically the Deaf rights movement. The following three questions will provide the directions for this enquiry: How does the collective identity model within social movement theory describe and explain the process and progress of the Deaf rights movement? How do the identified types and dimensions of learning influence policy development and social change to advance the disability rights movement? How does collective identity and learning influence policy developments and social changes? By investigating these questions, this article will reveal factors necessary for a societal change that values difference and disability rights.

This article will begin with a discussion of the collective identity model and the protest at Gallaudet University. The social movement theoretical framework will be drawn from Alberto Melucci's (1996) *Challenging Codes: Collective Action in the Information Age.* This framework will be applied to the Gallaudet University case study. Following this discussion on social movement theory and application, this article will then review social movement learning, its application to the case study, and how learning may have taken place. The various types and dimensions of learning will be investigated. Finally, the last section will discuss collective identity and learning, and how these factors affect social policy development.

Theorizing Collective Identity and Social Movement Learning

Alberto Melucci, a professor of Cultural Sociology and Clinical Psychology, argues that the prevailing social theories in the 1990s did not provide sufficient explanation for the social movement phenomenon:

> only a theory of *collective action* can provide a meaningful basis for the analysis of social movements. A discipline that sets out to study social movements can accomplish its task meaningfully only if it starts out from a theory that can account for the specificity and autonomy of social *action,* and can give a foundation to its collective character as something different from the sum total of aggregate individual behaviours (1996, p. 14, emphasis in the original).

He wanted to develop a new theory to analyze the collective dimensions of social behaviour, which was, at the time of his writing, perceived as a "homogeneous, unified reality" (p. 5). Thus, his new perspective resulted in his introduction of the term "new social movement" (p. 5) into sociological literature. This view was in contrast with the dominant social movement theories of the period, which were based on historical forms of class conflict.

According to Melucci, "[c]ollective identity is a concept, an analytical tool and not datum or an essence, a 'thing' with a 'real' essence" (1996, p. 77). This framework does not address reality but rather is an instrument or lens through which to read reality or analyze phenomena. Firstly, the process of collective identity involves cognitive definitions; rituals, practices, and cultural artefacts; and cognitive levels constructed through interactions. Secondly, the process of collective identity also refers to a network of active relationships between actors who interact, communicate, influence, negotiate, and make decisions. Forms of organization, models of leadership, communicative channels, and technologies of communication are constitutive parts of this relationship. Finally, emotional investment is an integral factor and is required of a collective identity so that people might feel themselves part of a common unity: "[p]assions and feelings, love and hate, faith and fear are all part of a body acting collectively, particularly in those areas of social life that are less institutionalized, such as social movements" (p. 71).

The benefits of a theory of collective identity are numerous. Collective identity brings a conceptual lens to collective action and a dynamic view of it, while attending to the discourses within the system of collective action (i.e., processes of mobilization, organizational structure, and models of leadership) and outside the system (i.e., relationships with competitors, allies, adversaries, political systems, and political controls). Collective identity contributes to the understanding of the influence of culture, especially in differentiated systems. Collective actors are perceived as "always plural, ambivalent, often contradictory" (Melucci, 1996, p. 78) rather than homogeneous. As a new social movement theory, collective identity provides a different orientation to the different layers of a given society. Melucci emphasises that the most important concept of collective identity is the plurality of analyses, along different axes, which he identifies as continuums along three axes such as solidarity and aggregation, maintenance of limits and breaching of limits, and consensus and conflict (p. 26). An application of these axes will be discussed in the Gallaudet University case study in this paper.

The development of this concept stemmed from gaps in the social movement theories leaving "still unexplored theoretical space: it concerns how actors *construct* their action" (Melucci, 1996, p. 16, emphasis in the original). While this new social movement theory focuses on collective identity, Melucci indicates that he built on the traditions of Marxism, which "taught us that collective action cannot be analysed without addressing its relationship to a 'structural' (or, better, 'structured') field of relationships which provides resources and constraints for the action itself" (p. 17). A collective identity can provide the knowledge, experience, and context to build a foundation that supports social change to more readily reduce barriers for disabled persons in the future. Drawing from Marx's call for workers to unite, disabled persons can also assemble together to address the dominant ideology of non-disabled worldviews and disabling social structures that can result in marginalization and oppression. Melucci also built his concept of collective identity from resource mobilization theory:

> collective action does not result from the aggregation of atomized individuals. Rather it must be seen as the outcome of complex processes of interaction mediated by certain networks of belonging. Collective action, therefore, is not unstructured behaviour in the sense that it would not obey any logic of rationality. It involves an articulated structure of relations,

circuits of interaction and influence, and alternative forms of behaviour (p. 18).

From the social movement perspective, proponents of resource mobilization theory address the actual use of resources, opportunity structures, and entrepreneurs (McCarthy & Zald, 2003) but do not fully address the collective actions of the actors. Since Melucci's publication, researchers have taken up the collective identity concept to investigate advancements and applications of this new social movement theory. Kilgore (1999) based her collective learning theory on the establishment of a collective development that includes collective identity, group consciousness, solidarity, and organization. Boström (2004) supported the description of collective identities, and indicated that different actors who may have similar conceptions of the world provide for common identification and solidarity within a social movement; this notion has applied to the environmental movement in Sweden. Thus, collective identity as a new social movement theory is being discussed and expanded upon to explain the phenomena of social movements.

From the perspective of the disability rights movement, the social model of disability (Oliver, 1990; UPIAS, 1976) has been widely adopted as a theoretical framework that explains the marginalization of disabled persons. According to the social model of disability, society sets up barriers that include attitudes, policies, physical facilities, technology, learning environments, work opportunities, and cultural representations; however, it does not explain explicitly the role of the disabled person, nor does it explain the need for collective action or identity in the quest for social change. Rather than explaining why disabled persons are marginalized and/or oppressed, collective identity supports how collective action occurs, which then can provide the knowledge, experience, and context to build a foundation for continued social change to reduce barriers for disabled persons in the future. The social model of disability has been critiqued for not having a sufficient explanation of the disabled person's embodiment within the disability rights movement and his/her relations to society, which have resulted in researchers offering alternative theories to supplement the social model of disability. For example, Peters, Gabel, and Symeonidou (2009) argue for a need for a collective consciousness and common vision as vital components in the acts of resistance. They recommend a paradigm shift from disability as constructed by society to one that constructs "Disability with a big 'D'" (Peters et al., 2009, p. 544)--constituting of a matrix of language, practices, body effects, disposition, and aspirations--which is better positioned to support transformation and social change rather than just explaining marginalization and/or oppression as in the social model of disability. Resistance takes the form of collective tactics and strategies that can be utilized to overcome marginalization and/or oppression. Peters et al.'s study supports the shift away from the social model of disability toward the need for a new model when social change is the sought after result.

Putnam (2005) also supports the need for an identity model to influence social change, and theorized the potential of a political disability identity comprised of different domains: self-worth, pride, discrimination, common cause, policy alternative, and engagement in political action. Self-worth is the belief that a disabled person has the same value and productive contribution to society as a non-disabled person. Pride is the belief that impairment is part of the continuum of human difference, and not inherently

negative. Discrimination is the belief that disabled persons are negatively stereotyped and treated differently compared to non-disabled persons. Common cause is the belief that disabled persons share common experiences and that the negative experiences could be modified through a common political agenda. Policy alternatives are the beliefs that opportunities to reduce or remove barriers can be influenced by public policy. The final domain, engagement in political action, is the belief that disabled persons can form a political constituency group, and their engagement in political action can result in effective policy change. All six domains support the collective identity model such that common cause, policy alternatives, and engagement in political action facilitate the development of a network of collective actors within and external to themselves. Specifically, self-worth, pride, and discrimination support Melucci's argument for emotional investment as an integral factor in the emergence of a collective identity.

While the concept of collective identity does take into account the complexities within collective identity and action, there are limits to this theory. Other models can better explain the complexities of the antagonist. Namely, the political process (McAdam, Tarrow, & Tilly, 2001) and the multi-institutional (Armstrong & Bernstein, 2008) models can provide insights into locations of domination and power. Despite these limitations, the collective identity concept brings a new analytical tool to social movement theory and will be discussed within the scope of this paper. The rigour of this collective identity concept will be investigated in relationship to the disability rights movement, and specifically the Deaf rights movement. The following section will highlight the critical incidences at Gallaudet University in 1988, and then the concept of collective identity will be applied to analyze the Deaf rights movement.

The Deaf Rights Protest at Gallaudet University

The Deaf community at Gallaudet University in Washington, DC successfully rallied students, faculty, and alumni to install their first Deaf president in 1988. Shapiro's (1993) book *No Pity* highlights the protest of the Deaf community at Gallaudet University as one of the key events spurring the passage of the *Americans with Disabilities Act* (ADA) in 1990. The start of events began in 1987 when the current president Jerry Lee announced that he would be leaving the university. In March 1988, Deaf students at Gallaudet University demanded the selection of the first Deaf president in 124 years. Hundreds of Deaf students signed the 'Deaf President Now' petition. Early in March, three individuals were short-listed as potential presidential candidates: I. King Jordon, Deaf since young adulthood, was the popular dean of the college of Arts and Sciences; Harvey Corson, Deaf since birth, was the president of the Louisiana residential school; and Elizabeth Zinser, the only hearing candidate, was an administrator from the University of North Carolina. Against the prevailing demands of the protest, the board of trustees announced Elizabeth Zinser as the new president of Gallaudet University on Sunday, March 6. The announcement angered students assembled at the main gates for the news, and sparked a spontaneous protest march through downtown Washington. On Monday, March 7, 1988, over 500 students blocked the gates to the campus with cars and buses to shut down the university. The whole protest lasted one week. Eventually, the trustees succumbed to the protestors' demands, which included choosing Jordon as Gallaudet University's first Deaf president on March 13, 1988.

In the collective identity criteria, the network of active relationships between actors is a valuable unit of analysis, along with the three axes of continuums such as solidarity and aggregation, maintenance of limits and breaching of limits, and consensus and conflict (Melucci, 1996). The collective actors were the students, staff, and faculty who protested against the installation of a non-Deaf president and rallied for the first Deaf president. Six alumni gathered in February 1988 to discuss the selection of the new president of Gallaudet University. Their experiences with the hearing world and their knowledge of the civil rights movement gave them the impetus to gather the support of students, faculty, and alumni to rally for Gallaudet University's first Deaf president. John Yeh, one of the alumni entrepreneurs, funded the costs for the thousands of fliers and buttons. The student president, Greg Hilbok, was the national spokesperson for the protest. Their leadership and resources developed solidarity and consensus among the Deaf community for an inaugural Deaf president as the new leader of Gallaudet University.

The protest aimed at breaking down the limits imposed by the hearing community. This historic event also created a network of active relationships external to campus groups, and gathered the support of the local business community, which brought in food baskets and offered pro bono legal representation. Over 70 interpreters offered their services. In total, over 1,500 students, faculty, and alumni participated in the protest (Shapiro, 1993). Participants included adults and children, persons with and without impairments, and students and educators. Additionally, students from other Deaf schools from Georgia to California demonstrated on their campuses and sent letters of support. Thus, the development of the active relationships within and outside of the campus group galvanized individuals to build solidarity to take collective action and changed the history of Gallaudet University. Along the analytical axis of maintenance and breach of limits, the protest catalyzed change on campus and around the country to reduce and remove barriers for the Deaf community. These actions created a consensus among the collective actors, and demonstrated the application of another analytical axis that spans the endpoints from consensus to conflict.

Within the network of active relationships, leadership is also analyzed. Dr. I. King Jordon became the first Deaf president at Gallaudet University, which is committed to higher education for Deaf and hearing impaired students. His leadership style was identified as catalytic: "by becoming president of Gallaudet University, he unknowingly became not only the leader and spokesperson for the Deaf community, but for all persons with disabilities" (Kamm-Larew, Stanford, Greenem, Heacox, & Hodge, 2008, p. 361). Jordon's trademark phrase was "Deaf people can do anything but hear!" (p. 363). As a change agent, Jordon was able to set high expectations and inspire the Deaf community to self-actualization through his effective communication skills and role-modelling. As a Deaf individual, Jordon embodied the potential and success for the Deaf individuals on campus and the broader community. His historic presidency and his 18-year term contributed to the building of solidarity to advance the Deaf rights movement. The next section will investigate the learning that took place at Gallaudet University using the collective identity theory, which along with a network of active relationships, includes cognitive knowledge and emotional investment.

Social Movement Learning and the Deaf Rights Movement

In recalling Melucci's concept of collective identity, learning is integral to his theory: "[c]ollective identity is a learning process which leads to the formation and maintenance of a unified empirical actor that we can call a 'social movement'" (1996, p. 75). While Melucci (1996) identified the cognitive dimension to include knowledge, rituals, practices, cultural artefacts, and interactions, Boström (2004) identifies a narrower scope that includes knowledge, meaning making, and rules. Melucci also identifies a cognitive side to the collective actor who is increasingly self-reflexive and chooses how to define him/herself, and coined this action as "identization" (p. 77). In addition to cognitive learning, the collective experience involves people's feelings and emotions, and is a complementary dimension to any analysis. Thus, emotional learning is integral to Melucci's criteria for collective identity.

The concept of learning that can be gained through social movements was also advanced by Hall and Turay (2006). They support Melucci's concepts that both cognitive and emotional learning can be found in social movements, and have coined the phrase "social movement learning" (p. 5). They define social movement learning as "learning by persons who are part of any social movement" (p. 5) and "learning by persons outside of the social movement as a result of the actions taken or simply by the existence of social movements" (p. 5). Learning within social movements can be informal, or more organized and intentional through coordinated educational activities. The benefit of social movement learning is emphasized in Hall and Turay's conclusion to their field report: "An understanding of motivation and learning that happens in and because of social movements would dramatically expand our understanding, teaching, learning and education in society as a whole" (p. 24).

The protest began with the cognitive dimension of learning whereby the alumni gathered to talk about the Deaf community and their experiences in the hearing world. Over the 124 years of history, Gallaudet University already had six hearing presidents. In February 1988, students and recent graduates discussed the need to rally for a Deaf president while the selection committee for a new president proceeded. The group decided to sponsor a rally among students, faculty, and alumni, with a clear message of "It's time!" on thousands of fliers, and "DEAF PRESIDENT NOW" imprinted on thousands of blue-and-yellow buttons. Their discussions culminated in the protest for a Deaf president. The Deaf community understood the sign language, its history especially within Gallaudet University, and how the system works in the selection for the new president. Following the announcement of the new hearing president, their resultant emotions drew out the need for a spontaneous protest march against discrimination. Collective learning resulted from their collective identities as signified through the power of sign language, and the demands used for negotiation. Along with the sign language-- the dominant language for protestors--the "Deaf applause" with hands waving over the head was a new cultural symbol used by the protestors and widely transmitted by personal photographs, newspapers, and television (Barnatt & Scotch, 2002). The four demands included 1) a Deaf president, 2) resignation of the chair of the board of trustees, 3) 51% of the board of trustees were to be Deaf, and 4) no reprisals against the protestors. These texts were transcribed repeatedly onto protest signs and communicated by the student leaders to the broader community (Barnatt & Scotch, 2002; Shapiro, 1993). When the board of trustees agreed to all the terms, these results

suggest that the protestors underwent informal learning processes and effectively transmitted the knowledge and values, which resulted in a collective gain for the Deaf community at Gallaudet University.

This rally brought the civil rights theme to the campus. One professor spoke and said, "This is an historical event. You could call this the first deaf civil rights activity" (Shapiro, 1993, p. 77). The protest was deemed a touchstone event. The Deaf community raised the consciousness of the nation through an ideology that embraced civil rights. Within this ideology, the protestors used the framework of "Deaf President Now (DPN)" as a message to galvanize the Deaf community, the general public, and the media. The visual impact of the protesters and their use of sign language signalling "Deaf Power" was captured on television and newspapers across the country. The campaign consisted of material resources such as fliers, buttons, letters, petitions, and media coverage such as newspaper and television. The combination of the blue-and-yellow buttons, the protest signs, letters, and sign language contributed to the cognitive dimension of informal learning of the collective actors. These formed the culture and cultural artefacts of the Deaf community.

Embedded within Melucci's (1996) theory is the emotional dimension of learning, which he identifies as "a constituent part of any analysis which takes seriously the task to understand 'action' not merely behaviour (p. 81). Melucci describes this emotional investment as part of "antagonist social conflicts" (p. 81), which analyzes the emotional relationships between actors and their adversaries. In a scenario where there is a reciprocal direct control, small group confrontations may arise but careful monitoring of the situation can reduce the risk of an aggressive clash or allow for an acceptable and limited loss. However, when the lack of control is perceived, and there is no longer the chance of a limited loss, aggression prevails, and results in an "uncontrolled ambivalence [which] emerges once again and triggers the mechanism whereby aggression is directed towards the adversary" (p. 83). The ambivalence is the love/aggression emotion that is directed toward the object. In the Gallaudet University case study, the target of the aggression was the presidency. The protest aimed both to secure a Deaf president while at the same time to refuse the recognition of the selected hearing president. The collective actors in the protest symbolized the tension between the Deaf and the hearing constituents. The aggression was directed at the administration and was actualized through their core repertoires including a protest march, a rally, a barricade, the burning effigies of the elected hearing president and the chair of the board of trustee, and negotiations with the board of trustees.

These repertoires demonstrate the emotional investment and actions of the collective actors. This emotional investment is essential to the collective identity, which is articulated by Melucci (1996) as follows:

> Collective identity, the constructive of a 'we', is then a necessity also for the emotional balance of social actors involved in conflicts. The possibility of referring to a love-object ('Us' against 'Them') is a strong and preliminary condition for collective action, as it continuously reduces ambivalence and fuels actions for positive energies. Collective actors need to constantly draw from this emotional background in order to feed their action, to make sense of it, to calculate risks and benefits (p. 83).

Furthermore, Melucci reminds us that when we face change, we need to renew and renegotiate the individual and group bonds to ensure that there is a deep emotional commitment to the collective "we" in order for the whole to mobilize toward a particular goal.

Leadership is an integral factor in the emotional investments of the actors within a social movement. Melucci (1996) indicates that a critical role of the leader is to "maintain and reinforce the identity of the group" by furnishing "incentives of solidarity, projecting an image of the group with which the members can identify with and from which they can extract affective gratification" (p. 340). Jordon, as he embodied Deafness, used his position as president to strengthen the connections among the Deaf community to enhance programs, services, and hiring practices at Gallaudet University. His role and commitment strengthened the bonds for affective attachment to the goals of the protest, the university, and the Deaf community.

Both the cognitive and emotional dimensions of learning are drawn into the construct of a collective identity when shared values, networks, and trust are discussed. Additionally, the concept of social capital "focuses on the development of shared norms, networks, and trust which enables people to work together for common purposes" (Arai, Hutchinson, Pedlar, Lord, & Sheppard, 2008, p. 2) and emerges through a social movement. The knowledge of and the adherence to social capital contribute to the collective identity of disabled persons, which translates into the emphasis on the quality of life, empowerment, self-determination, and an independent living philosophy, and moves away from the traditional rehabilitation goals of parent and professional driven organizations. Thus, "social capital is a useful concept for understanding new social movements and their ability to mobilize policy change and create opportunities for individuals to define their own lives through participation in the policy process" (Arai et al., p. 5). Jerry Covell, a student leader at Gallaudet University, expressed his thoughts on the DPN protest and the collective emotions: "DPN generated much pride, empowerment and feelings of "can do" attitude in the deaf community…All kinds of dreams hopes, desires, and expectations surged as a result of DPN" (Gallaudet University, 2010, unpaginated). The shared knowledge, values, and emotions among the collective actors and in their relationships to the external group, especially the Gallaudet University's board of trustees, resulted in successful demands after a mere week long protest.

Collective Identity, Learning, and Social Policy Development

The DPN campaign resulted in social and legislative changes. The USA saw a flurry of bills passed that promoted the rights of Deaf and other disabled persons. According to the DPN website (Gallaudet University, 2010), the US Congress passed more bills in a five-year period between DPN (1988) and 1993 promoting the rights and access for Deaf people than in the country's 216 years of existence. For example, the *Telecommunications Accessibility Enhancement Act* (TAEA) was passed in 1988, and the *Americans with Disabilities Act* (ADA) was passed in 1990 (Gallaudet University, 2010). The TAEA ensured that the telecommunications system was fully accessible for Deaf, hard-of-hearing, and speech-impaired individuals. The ADA was passed to protect disabled persons including Deaf persons from discrimination based on their impairment. As Shapiro notes, "The Americans with Disabilities Act was introduced two months after

the Gallaudet protest and, for a law with such sweep and so many enemies, took a rocket course toward passage" (1993, p. 75). DPN, as part of the Deaf and civil rights movement, demonstrated the positive and progressive impact of social movement learning on policy development which resulted in legislative changes for the betterment of society. Although DPN was not framed as part of the disability rights movement by the protestors, its success may have provided impetus for the rise in disability protests which occurred after 1988 (Barnatt & Scotch, 2002).

Cultural artefacts such as letters written in support of the DPN protest and the Deaf rights movement have been archived onto the Gallaudet University website. The Student Body Government wrote to the collegiate faculty, and invited them to join them in the protest: "The specific objectives of this rally are to make known our contention that it is high time a deaf individual be designated to lead this institution and increase public awareness of this view" (Gallaudet University, 2010, unpaginated). Reverend Jesse Jackson wrote to the students of Gallaudet University to provide them with support:

> Indeed, when the chairperson of the Board states that 'deaf people are not ready to function in a hearing world,' and when a hearing candidate is selected over several qualified deaf candidates, it is no surprise that the students of Gallaudet have joined together in protest…The problem is that not that the students do not hear. The problem is that the hearing world does not listen (Gallaudet University, 2010, unpaginated).

He signed his letter "in solidarity". While there were also many senators who sent letters, then vice-president George Bush wrote to the Presidential Search Committee and strongly supported the protest for change: "Accordingly, as an entity funded by the Federal government, Gallaudet has a responsibility to set an example and thus to appoint a President who is not only qualified but who is also deaf" (Gallaudet University, 2010, unpaginated).

These letters provide data on the three criteria of the collective identity concept, which consist of a network of active relationships, cognitive learning, and emotional investments. The protest reached prominent leaders in congress and in society, and is an indicator of the network of active relationships being created through collective action and their collective identity. The letters themselves provide additional information, meaning, and support for the protestors, and thus represent the informal cognitive and emotional dimensions of learning being exchanged at the highest levels of social policy discussions and administration.

Collective Identity for Social Change

The victory of the Gallaudet University protest was a civil rights event for the Deaf and hearing impaired, and in its message, eventually integrated with other disability organizations to strengthen the legislation of the ADA. Since DPN at Gallaudet University, many protests occurred at schools around the US to demand Deaf superintendents and senior administrators, resulting in the greater population of Deaf administrators in the educational system. This followed the successful four demands from the DPN protest, which resulted in the resignation of the newly appointed president and appointment of a Deaf president; the resignation of the chair of the board of

trustees; the appointment of a Deaf majority within the board of trustees; and no reprisals to the protestors (Barnatt & Scotch, 2002; Shapiro, 1993). The success of the DPN paved the way for other protests within the Deaf community: prior to DPN, 34.5% or 19 out of the 55 protests were Deaf related; following DPN, 65.5% or 36 out of the 55 were Deaf related protests (Barnatt & Scotch, 2002). The protest at Gallaudet University along with other factors may have also led to the increase from 23.8% pre-DPN to 76.2% in the non-Deaf disability related protests (Barnatt & Scotch, 2002).

The DPN was framed as a civil rights issue and not necessarily a disability rights one. This was due to the current context at the time when the disability rights movement was still at a nascent stage, and the DPN instigators who were students and alumni were strongly influenced by the civil rights movement. An image of a protest sign from the DPN portrays the contextual knowledge and values of the times, and the following is a transcription of two such signs based on a photograph that captured protestors in action and holding up placards reading: "Jews, Catholics, Blacks, Women, Now its time for deaf" and "Deaf President Now! Give him a chance" (Barnatt & Scotch, 2002, p. 200). In a follow-up study that compared the protests in Canada and the US between 1970 and 2005 using data from public documents such as newspapers, Canadian protests were related to services while the American protests were rights-based. Canadian protests were impairment-specific while the American protestors represented multiple disabilities, or "cross-disability" ones (Barnatt, 2008, p. 5). This article did indicate influences in the rise in protests. In both Canada and the US, the early disability activists stated that they were affected by the civil rights movement and the women's rights movements, as well as prominent protests such as the 1977 Rehabilitation Act, the 1988 Deaf President Now protest, and the 1990 American Disabilities Act. These summaries indicate that informal learning took place to influence the thoughts and actions of the early disability rights activists.

The success of DPN had a global impact. To sustain the positive impact, Gallaudet University hosted the Deaf Way I (1989) and Deaf Way II (2002) gatherings with over 10,000 participants from around the world (Gallaudet University, 2010, unpaginated). President Jordon implemented these international gatherings to "celebrate deaf culture and heritage and diversity…and will show how the world has changed since DPN" (Gallaudet University, 2010, unpaginated). DPN also influenced collegiate programs at the international level. Japan, Sweden, and South Africa established collegiate programs for Deaf students. These actions strengthened the collective identity of the Deaf community.

The collective identity and actions that transformed Gallaudet University and beyond her campus boundaries emphasized the applicability of Melucci's new social movement theory. The evolution of the social model of disability and the thoughts of one of its originators support the need for a collective identity for social change:

> individuals must transform themselves through collective action, not be transformed by others who know what's best for them or what's best for society. Empowerment is a collective process of transformation on which the powerless embark as part of the struggle to resist the oppression of others, as part of their demands to be included, and/or to articulate their own views of the world (Oliver, 2010, p. 16).

Empowerment, transformation, and resistance to oppression--these are words and phrases that demonstrate the emotional investment required for collective identity and eventually collective action to change the social context to reduce oppressions. In the Gallaudet University case study, the Deaf community and disabled persons in general began to achieve their rightful place in society as they learned to be collective actors. In thinking through social change, Melucci (1996) wrote, "[k]eeping open the space for difference is a condition for inventing the present--for allowing society to openly address its fundamental dilemmas and for installing in its present constitution a manageable coexistence of its tensions" (p. 10). Whether the contexts are educational institutions, workplaces, or everyday living spaces, differences will exist and can co-exist with changes in attitudes toward disability. Embracing rather than resisting difference is a potential mantra toward social change. Thus, the concept of collective identity provides a theoretical and analytical model for both social movements and social movement learning to understand the present and to create conditions for sustainability in the pursuit of social transformation and policy changes. Finally, in reflecting through this comprehensive collective identity model and the pivotal protests of DPN, social justice can result through the synergistic interactions of collective identity and learning though social movements, or social movement learning.

Conclusion

To conclude, three research questions directed the basis of this article: How does the collective identity model within social movement theory describe and explain the process and progress of the Deaf rights movement? How do the identified types and dimensions of learning influence policy development and social change to advance the disability rights movement? How does collective identity and learning influence policy developments and social changes? The application of Melucci's new social movement theory as in the concept of collective identity provided a constructive and detailed framework for the analysis of the Deaf rights movement as exemplified by the case study of the DPN protest at Gallaudet University. Melucci's collective identity concept is in alignment with the investigation of social movement learning since its foundational criteria includes cognitive learning, a network of active relationships, and emotional engagement.

In critically analyzing the historical Gallaudet University protest, collective identity was vital to the collective action. Collective identity was advanced through the cognitive, social, and emotional dimensions of learning to gather support from students, colleagues, media, trustees, and politicians to subvert the dominant understanding of the abilities of the Deaf community and to influence social change at the local level on the Gallaudet campus, at the national level through the ADA legislation, and at the international level through the implementation of educational programs designed specifically for Deaf students. Learning from the past provides hope and strategy for future social change. In contexts where there are barriers for disabled persons, the concepts of collective identity and social movement learning can be explored, extracted, and applied to open up current spaces and to welcome diversity for a more equitable world.

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