Refereed Article

The Nature of Adult Learning in Social Movements

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Abstract

This qualitative case study addresses the characteristics of learning in social movements in terms of learning content and learning format. Social movement activists in a local environmental organization were interviewed. The study showed that the types of learning content that activists in this movement learned consisted of three areas: deep understanding of the background, ways to become politically effective, and the nature and social significance of social movement involvement. The learning process in this social movement was differentiated from learning in school settings in that learning was structured by the need for immediate application, and they learned informally, incidentally, and as a whole, collectively.

The Nature of Adult Learning in Social Movements

Eduard Lindeman (1945) viewed adult education as an agency for social progress and "the most reliable instrument for social actionists" (p. 11). This traditional view has encouraged contemporary adult education to maintain an active role in social movements, for adult learning has always been an integral part of social movements. When people come together for a collective social action, they bring composites of skills and knowledge with them and then share these assets for the common cause. This practice inevitably and naturally prompts learning growth among participants. For instance, scientists can possess scientific knowledge,

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but they have little knowledge about political maneuvering. However, specific methods that manifest themselves often depend on broader social contexts; the context determines how learning will occur. For example, at one time, adult educators were expected to play a key role in building a better society by teaching illiterate people English, thereby letting them exercise their voting rights; later, adult educators helped social movement activists understand the educational components of social movement activities.

Over the years, the methods and forms of learning in social movements have changed. For example, the Occupy Wall Street movement ("Occupy Wall Street," n.d.) constructed some interesting social movement models that are quite different from the Highlander education model (Adams & Horton, 1975). The latter was top-down with planned learning modules, whereas the former does not have a leader or preset educational activities. Modern communication technology such as the Internet have accelerated these changes (Klein, 2002) as well as the nature of social movements.

Adult education scholars have encouraged adult educators to become involved in social justice movements, study the traits of the learning processes in social movements, and explore the characteristics of knowledge constructed through social movements. In this sense, the purpose of this study was to understand how adults learn in the process of participating in a social movement. In order to accomplish this, two broad questions were posed: what is the content of the learning in social movements and how is learning during social movements different from other types of adult learning?

Literature Review

The literature clearly shows that adult education is rooted in social justice movements and has contributed to social changes; however, the relationship between adult education and social movements has changed over time.

To begin, Lindeman distinguished adult education from other learning activities in that the purpose of adult education was to address social and democratic struggles (Lindeman, 1926/1961). In this sense, Lindeman believed that democracy depended on "the capacity of the people for generating social movements expressive of their needs," and as a result, "every social-action group should … be an adult education group" and similarly, "all successful adult-education groups sooner or later be-

come social-action groups" (Lindeman, 1945, p. 11). Lindeman's philosophy of adult education corresponded to the social context of the early 20th century, during which time, labor movements were in their heyday. In this progressive era, adult education was called upon to "address the inequities and injustice imposed on women and blacks, counter the domination of factory owners, or provide educational opportunities to the disadvantaged" (Stubblefield & Keane, 1994, p. 221). Many labor colleges emerged as independent educational agencies (Stubblefield & Keane, 1994); those labor colleges, a form of adult education, were strong weapons for social justice movements.

In the 1960s, new collective efforts, which fit neither the Marxist class struggle model nor the model of traditional labor movements, emerged in western societies which were termed new social movements (NSM) (Melucci, 1984), while the class-based social movements came to be called old social movements (OSM). Adult educators paid great attention to NSMs. A group of scholars highlighted them as educational spaces, focusing on the theoretical foundations of NSMs as learning sites. Finger (1989) argued that social change occurs through the transformation of individuals; as a result, the concept of adult education was embedded in the NSM's concept of adult transformation. Welton (1995) suggested that NSMs were privileged sites for emancipatory praxis, because NSMs were "interpreted primarily as defenses of the threatened lifeworld and ecosystem" (p. 152). Highlighting social movements as learning sites provided new ways to include social movements in adult education. However, some scholars argued that simply defining social movements as learning sites does not fully explain the relationship between adult education and social movements.

Another group of adult education scholars focused on the informal and collective nature of the learning process that occurs within NSMs. These scholars examined the types of learning that take place for participants in social movements, how learning supports social movements, and what people learn from social movements. Foley (1999) explored the informal learning processes that occur through participation in social practice and political struggle, referring to it as "learning in the struggle" (p. 39). His framework of learning in the struggle, based on Marxist tradition, contributed to the field of adult education by emphasizing the incidental and informal nature of social movement learning, pointing out the importance of the relationship between education and the emancipatory struggle and highlighting the ambiguous and contested nature of learning in social movements. Kilgore (1999) drew on collective learning theory

to understand learning in social movements, viewing the group itself as a learner and arguing that the relationship between individual and group learning should be reexamined. This argument provided a new horizon of learning in social movements; however, as yet, no empirical research has supported this perspective.

Additionally, a number of adult educators have investigated the knowledge construction process in social movements. These scholars have explored the traits of knowledge created through social movements and the ways knowledge is constructed in the processes of social movements. For example, Cunningham (2000) regarded social movements as a major source of alternative knowledge production. Hill (2004) explored the nature of knowledge constructed through social movements and found that this knowledge has features of "fugitive knowledge" (p. 228) in that it is not included in the range of official knowledge, which is controlled by government and professional intellectuals.

In recent decades, social movements demonstrating many different aspects of previous social movements have emerged: grass roots and bottom-up movements. The first exemplar event was the anti-WTO protest that occurred in Seattle in 2000; the Occupy Wall Street movement is a currently active example. These decentralized, multi-headed types of movements were not adequately included or addressed in the previous framework; additionally, Hill (2008) has argued that in recent years another wave of social movements impacting adult learning and education —the "Convergence Movement," has emerged. The convergence movement embraced Internet technology, as demonstrated in the key role information sharing through the Internet played in the street protests (Klein, 2002). In particular, it introduced a new form of resistance employing hacking, for instance. Compared to the learning in OSMs or NSMs, learning in this type of movement reveals different characteristics originating from its postmodern nature (Hill, 2008); however, as Hill argued, "few have explored the intersection of adult learning and social justice from a contemporary postmodern frame (p. 90)."

Research Methodology

This qualitative research study utilized interviews to explore the experiences of participants in a local social movement in terms of learning. Research participants were from Protect Elica Island (PEI, pseudonym), an environmental social movement organization located in the southeastern United States that focuses on state wide political and environmental

issues. Details about the organization, research participants, data collection, and data analysis are included in the next section.

The Case of Protect Elica Island

The data used in this study are all drawn from participants in a social movement designed to protect Elica Island (pseudonym). Elica Island is located in the southeastern United States. The island, which was public land, had kept its beautiful natural beaches for a long time, but the government tried to introduce a redevelopment plan for the island, replacing old hotels with condominiums and timeshares in the mid-2000s. Some residents of the island initiated a survey to collect visitors' opinions about the redevelopment plan. At the same time, others who have some level of personal attachment to Elica Island learned about the redevelopment plan for the island through different sources. The individual initiative actions connected these individuals to each other, and finally, they organized the non-profit volunteer organization, PEI. They developed a website that includes details of the redevelopment plans, the history and legal information about the island, attractive pictures of the island, and individual endeavors for and about the island such as poetry and songs. The organization took a variety of actions, including writing letters to editors and op-eds, posting comments on blogs, presenting at various organizations, and submitting legislative bills, in order to advertise the redevelopment plan and draw attention to the issue. The organization grew to more than 10,000 supporters from numerous states, winning three prestigious awards for exemplary social movement organizations. Thanks to this organizational effort, the original redevelopment plan became obsolete, and the government finally initiated introducing a conservation plan for the island. Participants still continue their watchdog activities regarding upcoming political and environmental issues concerning Elica Island.

Data Collection

Interview participants were identified through a network sampling (Roulston, 2010) of acquaintances who knew other individuals participating in environmental activism. The researcher contacted activists, who had been recommended via email and asked if they would like to participate or if they could nominate others who might want to do so. Once a participant was identified, that participant recommended another person working in the same social movement, with this process continuing until five people were found to participate in the interviews.

An in-depth semi-structured interview format was used. Five participants were asked about their motivations for participation, roles in the movement, learning experiences, and self-identified differences of learning in the social movements based on the interview guide. Four individual face-to-face interviews were conducted in a cafeteria or in a university, with the fifth conducted by phone. Each interview took approximately one and a half hours and was digitally recorded, transcribed verbatim, and coded for themes.

Data Analysis

The constant comparative method (Charmaz, 2006; Glaser & Strauss, 1967) was used to understand the content and learning process of social movement learning. Initially, the researcher went through an open reading to become familiar with the data but ultimately addressed two research questions. Meaningful incidents and actions were named and coded. Then, by comparing and contrasting within each participant's transcript and across the five participants' transcripts, the researcher grouped those codes into six categories. All proper nouns including participants' names, the organization's name, and geographical names were replaced with pseudonyms.

Findings

In terms of learning content, four themes emerged: background of the issue, how to become politically effective, the nature of social movement involvement, and the significance of social movement involvement. With regard to the learning process, three themes were found through constant comparative analysis: intrinsic motivation, informal learning, and collective learning.

What Did They Learn From Their Participation in the Social Movement?

Three different types of learning content emerged. The first category of learning content in this particular social movement was knowledge and relevant facts about the island, which supported their collective activities against the redevelopment plan. The second category was about how to become politically effective by knowing how the political system works and employing better strategies for publicizing their messages. The last type of learning content consisted of the lessons learned from

their reflections: the nature of collective actions and the significance of social movement involvements in democracy.

We learned about the background of the issue. PEI participants learned about Elica Island while participating in survey data collection, writing letters, presenting and submitting bills, and performing other activist actions. The participants did not decide to participate in the movement because they knew everything about the issues. They began participating because of their own initial motivations, such as the purpose for the conservation effort and their personal relationships with the island; then, in the process of working with the organization, they learned historical, environmental, and political information related to the issues and the movement.

First, they had to know about how the state's citizens felt about the island and the redevelopment plan, so they collected opinions from visitors. They distributed a simple questionnaire asking for comments on visitors' feelings regarding the island and the redevelopment plan. Before the survey, Mark and the other residents shared negative "feelings" toward the redevelopment plan, but these statements were not meaningful until they were confirmed by the public opinion survey; the state's citizens did not want to see luxurious condominiums on the island. This public opinion, which is local knowledge, was then denied and disregarded by the Elica Island Authority (EIA).

> *Six or so other very prominent figures of the [majority] party all came out and made very exaggerated statements about "oh, what a mess Elica Island is. Nobody wants to go there any more, it's so run down and it's so disgusting. We owe it to the people of the State to fix that place up." [Rather,] many of the people in the state are giving completely different messages. They were saying that Elica Island is a beautiful place because it's natural. (Mark)*

Consequently, participants started learning about and collecting official information on the island: the history, related laws, and environmental significance of the island. For example, Olivia researched the history of Elica Island and found many historical and legal facts supporting the organization's actions:

> *[A local university] has a collection of papers donated by Paul Smith (pseudonym), the Governor who bought Elica Island. […]*

> *Mark asked me to go down and to do research at the state archives on laws and records that had been kept regarding Elica Island. (Olivia)*

When they spent extended time in the university library, they were not only learning about the island, but they were also constructing knowledge of the island as they "selected" knowledge useful to the movement and developed a valid story supporting their actions. Furthermore, they fought against the official understanding of the island (Hill, 2003) by providing local knowledge as well as relevant official knowledge. Sometimes this type of knowledge played a key role in achieving their cause.

> *We found out that a good chunk of that development project was in an area that was governed by the State Shore Protection Act, which says you cannot have any type of commercial activity within the area along the beach, unless you get a permit first from the Department of Natural Resources. The law also says that if the permit is granted the public has a chance to challenge that decision in court. We let it be known that if the Department of Natural Resources gave Biltmore a permit to destroy Elica's main public beach, we would take them to court. [...]Biltmore and EIA got together and said that this isn't worth it, "we can't drag this thing out for ten years and we don't want a chance of losing it". So, they dumped, abandoned the project. (Mark).*

Also, as they learned more about the island, they were even more motivated to continue their activity. Mark met a doctoral student who was conducting research related to Elica Island's ecology who supported the movement.

> *We learned a lot of subjects that we never knew much about before: coast ecology, environment, I mean I knew the sea turtles here, but I never had to learn whole about sea turtle nesting and dangers they faced, how plans for building some beachfront would really discourage sea turtles from nesting at Elica Island. (Mark)*

In short, social movement participants learned about the cultural, historical, and geographical background of their social cause. An indi-

vidual who had never thought about the history of the island researched the topic, a person who did not know about the ecological significance of the island learned about it, and a person who was not interested in environmental laws had to learn about them for the sake of the issue. Then, they used this specific information to further their cause.

We learned how to become politically effective. The second category is involved in the protesting process, and it has two aspects: 1) learning about how the political system works and 2) learning about how to effectively and successfully publicize their messages. In the early stages of this movement, the activists had to realize the conflict between what they had taken for granted about power and money and how in reality power and money operate together. According to Mark, the bill about a new development plan for Elica Island, which was designed by the PEI group and strongly supported by many state citizens and senators, was rejected as a result of a call from the Lieutenant Governor, one of "the big players" (Mark). Tara also learned that in this instance, the actual politics did not work in the way that was assumed it would work.

> These are the tools that we have: letter writing, lobbying, and protests. And so, within that, we just have to do it if you believe in it. So, but I did learn that there is a lot of brokering going on. I don't tell you who this was, but one of the representatives did say, "Well, I voted the way that you wanted me to vote, but it cost me. Now, the bill that I'm going to introduce will not get passed." It's a trade. (Tara)

Additionally, in the process of this movement, the activists experienced a number of incidents that showed how hidden connections and capital influenced the political decision-making process. Mary reported a case in which a film company was permitted to shoot in an environmentally protected area of the island.

> [A film company], were filming a couple of scenes from an upcoming XYZ movie on Elica [...] They came into Elica and the EIA has told no one but entered with a secret agreement to have them essentially destroy a five-acre stretch of the beach, of the dunes, it's not so much of the beach but the dunes which is within the shore protection zone. (Mary)

Learning about this kind of political situation was a depressing experience for those activists, and this aspect is an example of a part of learning in social movements.

You can start out being really idealistic, you know, you know the people behind you, the citizens of the state, for example, don't want to see this happen on Elica Island and they have spoken loudly, clearly from across the state and the country in fact. But the EIA in this case has been able to pretty much do what it wants, not entirely but pretty much in spite of that. [I had to] learn that it's really hard to fight that kind of bureaucracy power influence. (Mary)

Given this learning about how the political system works and despite this depressing realization, those activists learned better strategies for spreading the word and their arguments. Through a number of unsuccessful media publications, in regard to cost, Mark learned about building relationships with newspaper reporters and Tara reported the significance of a good framing of their message.

If you have solid facts about issues and with a little bit of emotional punch, then that's important. For example, most people, the big thing on EI is the, um, the turtle issue. And, the more building you have on a coastal island, the less likely it is that the turtles are gonna come next year… that plucks people's heart strings. So, you learn a bit about how to frame your message more effectively so that maybe people will read it. (Tara).

Additionally, they learned more helpful approaches to convincing senators and having influence through trial and error. Lisa, who registered as a lobbyist in the second year of the movement, acquired the knowledge necessary for her lobbyist activities, and Tara mentioned that she learned about more effective means in political situations.

We learned how to approach them [legislators], we learned the best kinds of information to give them, we learned how to produce handouts and things that would get their attention. (Lisa)

Although pursuing effective means to achieve a specific end, they also reflected on the reasons why they were acting in order not to distort

their ends. In other words, they were seeking "effective" means; how-
ever, ultimately, honesty and responsibility to the public were assumed
in their activities. Because Mark was the leader of this organization, he
emphasized this aspect.

> *Yeah, actually there are many times when it would be to our ad-*
> *vantage to stretch the truth, in order to make point, and we would*
> *probably gain more attention and win more supporters and profit*
> *for our cause, ultimately, but it's a wrong thing to do, that's not our*
> *ideas or values as an organization. We set out as an organization*
> *to give people accurate information because we thought they want*
> *to get it, accurate information from EIA. I'm not about to commit*
> *the same mistake, the same error, just because I think I'm serving a*
> *better cause than the EIA. (Mark)*

In short, they learned how to become politically effective for this
cause. They learned how the political system actually operates, as well
as how to make their cause work in this given political system.

**We learned the nature and significance of social movement in-
volvement.** While participating in a social movement, they not only
learned about these objectives: as they learned about the background of
the issue and the means to be effective in this political operation, activ-
ists also learned about the nature of collective actions and the signifi-
cance of their involvement in social change.

Activists learned about how to keep the organization effective.
Mary called attention to learning how to keep the group energized, Oliv-
ia pointed out that social movement activists should not be satisfied with
one small victory, and Tara put an emphasis on continuous endeavors to
make changes.

> *I've learned that in order to affect change, or to be successful, that*
> *you cannot give up. You have to keep pressing and you have to keep*
> *pressing. You have to keep letting them know that you're not going*
> *to let this go. (Tara)*

Furthermore, the participants learned about the significance of their
activities for social change. Despite frustrating experiences from poli-
tics, instead of giving up, the PEI activists put more effort into learning

skills and knowledge in order to be more effective; as a result, they made progress in their cause. Mark appreciated that their efforts had made a difference when saying,

> *I can tell you if our organization wasn't around, all three of those things [successful outcomes] wouldn't have happened. (Mark)*

Throughout their diverse encouraging and discouraging experiences, the participants reflected on the dynamic relationship between their activities and outcomes; as a result, activists realized the significance of their activity of political involvement and hope.

> *[…] that's made us much more aware of how important non-profit organizations are who are trying to, you know, protect the public interests and do the right thing for conservation and environment and wildlife. And they all struggle to make ends meet, you know, especially in this economy. […] So, we're certainly more aware of the importance of involvement. (Mark)*

Mary provided an example that showed how lessons learned from this particular social movement could be extended to other situations. For example, she used the PEI case in teaching the importance of environmental preservation and citizens' political participation.

> *What I've been doing — I did and I'm actually updating it — is a PowerPoint for kids about Elica. […] The point is to explain to students what their responsibilities are in a democratic society in regards to their public lands and then set up Elica Island as a case study, and, hopefully to encourage students to debate: in this case, what're your rights, what are your responsibilities as a citizen? (Mary)*

In conclusion, the activists learned three types of content from their participation: background information related to the island and the issue, how to become politically effective, and the nature and significance of their social movement involvement for democracy. The first two types of learning were intentionally processed for the organizational activities, whereas the final type of learning was acquired as a byproduct of and after their organizational activities. In other words, the first two types of

learning were in the preparation for the movement while the last was a movement participation outcome.

In What Ways Was Learning During The Social Movement Different?

Research participants not only mentioned lessons learned from this social movement, but they also stressed that the process was different from their learning experiences in schools. Specifically, three themes were identified: motivation, an informal process, and the collective aspect of social movement learning.

We were intrinsically and practically motivated. The research participants stated that social movement learning was different in terms of motivation in that the participants' motivation for learning was intrinsic and internal.

> *Whether Elica Island gets developed or doesn't is not gonna make me lose my job tomorrow, or get my job, or get a bad grade or anything like that. It's really a different kind of motivation. It's something that comes from inside: you know, wanting to see the right thing done. (Lisa)*

Similarly, other participants pointed to a different learning motivation in this social movement, a more practical application. They learned not because they were supposed to learn in these contexts, but because they needed information and skills to apply to their social actions.

> *So, learning goes beyond the acquisition of the knowledge, but in order to be truly learned, it has to be put into action. [...] the learning part had to do with reading, attending meetings, acquiring information about what the Biltmore Company planned to do, about the history of the island and what it was meant to be, about the island itself and where things were, visitation, the natural habitat, all that information, which ... is totally useless, unless I use it in speaking to representatives, in trying to get other people involved in the movement, in writing letters. (Tara)*

Overall, participants reported that their motivations for learning during social movements originated in practical purposes; however,

"practical" here does not mean that this knowledge was useful because it could be exchanged for other values. Rather, the knowledge obtained in this social movement was valuable because they could use it for the cause. As Mark stated, this aspect made learning outcomes in social movements more rewarding than other learning outcomes because the outcome included a direct impact on social change.

We learned informally and incidentally. In addition to intrinsic and practical-application-oriented motivation, learning in social movements was different in that it was informal and incidental. Activists learned "by doing" (Tara), and through "trial and error" (Mark).

> *It has been unstructured, in other words, almost all of the learning things taking place here, just because of the things we've tried to do to advance our cause. We didn't really start out with a plan. Like we're saying before, we kind of learned as we went along. Sometimes there's trial and error, and sometimes there's other means. So, this has been a very creative learning experience. (Mark)*

The informal aspect of learning is widely reported in workplace education. According to Marsick and Watkins (2001), informal learning indicates learning that may be intended but not highly structured, and incidental learning means a byproduct of activities that are not educationally intended. These two aspects of informal and incidental learning are clearly evidenced in the participants' interviews presented above.

Additionally, activists pointed out the advantages of informal learning: autonomy or self-regulation. Olivia compared social movement learning to school learning that is based on a textbook unit. As a former English teacher, Olivia recalled a situation that even though a student might want to read more about a topic than just the information presented in the textbook, when the textbook unit ended, the student had to stop learning about that topic and move to the next learning unit.

> *The best part about this [is that] if I'm interested in something through a social movement, I can do it. Nobody's telling me I can't spend all day researching coal-fired power plants. Nobody's telling me I can't spend all day in the archives, digging up whatever needs to be dug up on the Elica Island. So, you have a lot more liberty to pursue knowledge that interests you. (Olivia)*

In summary, the learning process in a social movement was informal and incidental. Activists appreciated this characteristic of learning in a social movement because this gave them autonomy in and self-regulation of their learning.

We learned collectively as a whole. Finally, interviewees pointed out that each individual's contribution made the organization work as a whole and created meaning as a whole. In other words, they perceived the organization itself as a learning unit at some point in their participation.

> *I didn't collect all those [information posted on the website]. Mark and his wife have done a huge amount of them, and Lisa, um, there are lots of people who have contributed – and Mary – by getting the open government, the Open Records Act, and they have requested this. So, there are many people who have contributed to getting all that stuff out. (Olivia)*

As demonstrated by Mary and Olivia, their individual learning consisted of the PEI's organizational learning. This learning did not remain at the instrumental level because there was a shared cause: saving the island. As Mary said:

> *What I've learned is it feels really good to be a part of a group that's all working. Because I submitted a request, someone else submitted another request, um, then, we share all the information, more people came in, you know, sort of like a group effort. (Mary)*

Thus, each individual participant played a partial role; however, those partial efforts consisted of an organizational endeavor, and participants observed how the whole organization, which each took a part in promoting, grew and extended. The organization received great attention and support from the public, which made the social movement activities meaningful and successful after all.

> *We were shocked by the depth of feeling and support for Elica Island. When we started this, we thought we might get a couple of hundred people who would agree to um… what we ended up was thousands and thousands of people. (Mark)*

It's been a tremendous growth experience. I've never been a part of anything that I saw grow like that [...] to see how fast it grew and how big it grew from that was just amazing. (Lisa)

From their collaborative activities, the participants built a sense of belonging and membership in the PEI movement.

It's kind of neat in a way, it's a kind of camaraderie, a feeling of solidarity, and that is a, that's something within a social movement, so it's good to have that feeling of solidarity, that, that helps you to continue, especially in the face of you know, a lot of challenges, having to do with money, politics, bureaucracy, that kind of thing. So, that's, you know, another thing to remember as a group. (Mary)

To summarize how they learned in this social movement, three themes emerged: an internal and intrinsic learning motivation, an informal learning process, and a collective learning process. Participants' learning motivation originated more internally and thus the practical usefulness was assumed in learning, which made them feel more rewarded and valued by the learning. This process was informal, as it was not planned in advance, which provided participants, as learners, with independence in their learning. Finally, not only did each person in the social movement learn, but the organization as a collective single unit learned.

Discussions and Implications

The findings about learning content align to a great extent with Habermas's (1978) communicative action theory. According to Habermas, knowledge is used in three ways: as technical, practical, and emancipatory interest. What the participants learned from this social movement is consistent with this framework. Background information about the issue was collected for a technical-empirical interest, and then participants learned how to win the media battle and be politically effective for the purpose of communicative action. From those technical and communicative actions, participants finally learned the significance of their political involvement for preserving the island by reflecting back on their part in a successful project. However, little attention has been paid to learning content in social movements by adult educators: this circumstance might be due to the fact that learning content is naturally de-

termined by the particular issue of social movements. However, learning can be greatly facilitated if activists pay careful attention to these three particular dimensions: background of the issue, opponents and means, and reflection on their activities. The particular learning content found in this study can be extended in a more general sense. The background information about the social cause is placed at the core of the social movement learning, and then the second category of learning content is described as 1) relevant agencies regarding the issue and 2) interaction between those agencies and their social cause. Following, the collaborative activities within the organization would learn about the social movement's social interaction and social impact. Although this model needs to be tested in other social movement contexts, based on findings from this study, social movement learning could be better facilitated.

Additionally, Habermas's communicative action theory (1978) has its relevance to adult learning in terms of learning sites. Welton (1995) viewed social movements as an area in which communicative actions occur and adult learning is inevitable in truly valid communications. This study not only confirmed that social movement is a great source of adult learning, it also extended its significance with regard to recent practices in social movement. To be specific, persuading and testing the validity of their cause through valid communication (Habermas, 1978) is the key of the communicative action theory; moreover, this aspect has become more important in current social movements compared to the past when we did not have such interactive communication tools as the Internet and the media. For example, the PEI activists drew more attention to the issue through spontaneous reactions to online news articles and actively advertised their activity through their website and social networking services such as Facebook, which included all relevant information about their movement and arguments. The organization's website presented background, knowledge and evidence that supported the organization's activities. What the participants did in the process of the social movement (in this case, their continued communicative actions) comprised their social movement.

Such communicative actions are necessarily associated with adult learning. This study revealed that the learning content became more crucial in this social movement, as the form of social movement has changed from street protests to an intellectual contest through reasoning, testing the validity of a position, and having an answer for each argument. The answers to the questions of who has a more reasonable argu-

ment can persuade more people through communication, and can obtain more support from the public, using modern communication technology, have become much more significant to social movements.

The PEI website not only included technical information, but it also represented the knowledge constructed in the movement. This occurred because the knowledge construction process itself was their activity. Street protests or picketing were not the primary means they used to promote their cause. Rather, their major methods were collecting public opinions, providing reasons, arguing with the developers, and exhibiting their collective ideas to legislators through a variety of measures. These processes were all well documented on their website as well as on their Facebook page. They exchanged similar and different ideas on the redevelopment plan online, thereby influencing the bill registration process. In an old social movement, the educational element was one of the social movement activities; however, the construction and dissemination of their own knowledge, which is an alternative knowledge against the mainstream's understanding, became a majority of their social movement activities. This finding is consistent with previous research (Cunningham, 2000; Hill, 2004). Hill (2004) found that while authorities usually employ 'codified knowledge' in order to reproduce the status quo, grassroots efforts construct 'fugitive knowledge' that allow them to avoid authorities' regulation. In this study, however, social movement activists relied heavily on both local and codified knowledge, which worked in ways to overcome the situation rather than to avoid their regulation.

With regard to learning motivation, this study found a missing point in the current adult learning literature: little research focusing on adults' learning motivation has been conducted recently and what exists is limited to learning in formal settings such as colleges, literacy programs, and community center education programs. This study reported that adults' learning motivation in the social movement was intrinsic and practically oriented.

The significance of this finding can be better understood by the economic concepts of use-value and exchange-value (Marx et al., 1990). Marx argued that there are two types of values: use-value and exchange-value. Use-value is the value of the thing or entity itself, such as a commodity, whereas exchange-value does not have a value in itself, but it has value only when it mediates exchange, for example, capital (i.e., money). Adult learning can hold both values, depending on the situation: if a student pursues a degree to get a better paying job through the

degree, his or her education had exchange-value. In contrast, if a learner participates in an art class in order to decorate her house, her learning has use-value. Therefore, education can have both uses, depending for the most part on the learner's motivation. According to Marx, pursuing exchange-value alone represents a form of alienation in a capitalist society. If the same rationale were applied to education, alienation would occur when education were used only for an exchange-value. This study provided a possibility and example of understanding adult learners' intrinsic motivation in relation to a practical application.

Findings related to an informal learning process are markedly consistent with the adult education literature; however, the possibility and necessity of a new framework for informal learning is also prompted. Although the informal and incidental aspects reveal positive characteristics of learning during a social movement, informal learning occurs in a variety of settings, and in particular, in those places where people learn from practice. Therefore, most informal learning literature is oriented to learning in workplaces (see Eraut, 2004; Marsick & Watkins, 1992, 2001; Skule, 2004). In the field of radical adult education, Foley (1999) suggested a theory of learning in struggle and emphasized the informal nature of the learning process in struggles. However, Foley argued that, "[a] critique of capitalism must be at the heart of emancipatory adult education theory" (p.138). Thus, the informal learning process is not unique enough by itself to reveal the characteristics of learning in social movements. According to Foley, when the informal learning process is merged into critiques of capitalism along with collective action, then it consists of learning in struggles. In this study, a critique of capitalism was not a part of this social movement. However, this case shares a significant amount of the learning characteristics described in Foley's theory. This study finding is consistent with Foley's theory only to the extent that learning content that uncovers unjust social aspects is a part of social movement learning.

According to Kilgore (1999), collective learning is "a process that occurs among two or more diverse people in which taken-as-shared meanings (including a vision of social justice) are constructed and acted upon by the group" (p.191). Kilgore argued that "[a] theory of collective development and learning involves both individual and group components (p. 196)," and one of the group components includes solidarity. Solidarity is "a general feeling of unity or affinity among members of a group (p. 196)," and it promotes participants' continuation in the collective learning process. The research participants also reported how

a sense of solidarity worked for them. However, a collective identity, another group component, was not observed as strongly as Kilgore described. Kilgore's study was situated in NSM contexts, whereas this PEI effort was not limited to NSM; rather, this case reveals convergence movement features such as anti-identity because this group did not gather in order to build a new inclusive perspective but to protest against a redevelopment plan.

Conclusion

This study intended to understand the characteristics of learning in social movements through two general questions: what do social movement participants learn in social movements and how do they learn in social movements. From a review of the literature, it was found that the previous literature in adult education paid little attention to learning content in social movements and that there are several streams of approaches to social movement learning in adult education. Findings indicated that three dimensions of learning content existed in social movement learning and that three learning characteristics described the social movement learning process.

Social movements are an important part of democracy. Although they often arise with a confused sense of leadership, there are certain realities that any social movement organization must face. One is that adult learning has to be an important part of the social movement. From this study, it was found that learning takes a number of different forms. For one, people have to learn about content: the background of what they are doing, getting their facts straight, stretching their learning. This is a teachable moment for activists because this is knowledge for action as opposed to knowledge for knowledge's sake. The second is that activists need to learn how to communicate both within the organization and with broader audiences. Finally, reflection on their activities should follow actions so that participants can continue to be energized and motivated.

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