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# The role of transformative events for collective identity formation for social movements: The case of the WTO Seattle protest and Global Justice Movement

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# **The role of transformative events for collective identity formation for social movements**

The case of the WTO Seattle protest and Global Justice Movement

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## 1. Introduction

On November 30<sup>th</sup> of the year 1999, the streets of Seattle filled with thousands of people protesting against the World Trade Organization (Murphy, 2004, p. 27). ‘The Battle of Seattle’ was part of the Global Justice Movement, protesting against anti-environmentalist, undemocratic and business-centric organizations (Smith, 2001, p. 1). The Global Justice Movement is known as one of the largest and most diverse movements in terms of participants (Ness, 2015, p. 1455). This diversity is puzzling because, while the movement showed great success, it was missing a key component which is known to have a significant effect on social movements; collective identity.

The importance of collective identity for social movements has long been established (Fominaya, 2018; Gamson, 1991; Holland, et al., 2008; Melucci, 1995; Snow, 2001; van Zomeren et al., 2008). Creating a collective identity is a crucial task for a social movement in order to sustain because participation and a sense of community leading to people feeling more empowered (Gamson, 1991; van Stekelenburg, 2013). It is understood as the feeling of a cognitive, moral and emotional connection with a collective (Poletta & Jasper, 2001, p. 285). The connection with a collective motivates people to take action, making a social movement more successful when there is a strong sense of collective identity. This cohesion is generally easier to generate with identity-based movements such as the feminist and Black Power movements (Fominaya, 2018, p. 437). However, not all movements have a set collective identity prior to a movement establishing, making them relevant to research.

In this thesis the formation of collective identity will be researched using the case of the Global Justice Movement. The Global Justice Movement is known as one of the largest movements and recognized to include a wide variety of participants (Ness, 2015, p. 1455). Yet, without prior established collective identity, the movement managed to create one, making it an interesting case to research. This puzzle is of great scientific significance, as finding out how collective identity emerged for this movement will give a better understanding on how to create a collective identity outside of identity based movements, broadening the literature. This translates to how to effectively do so in real world examples making it socially significant as well (Hardnack, 2020, p. 138). This thesis, will argue that the transformative event of the 1999 WTO protest in Seattle was a great contributor to the creation of a collective identity for the Global Justice Movement using process tracing. Thus, the research question which will be analysed in this thesis is:

*How and when do movement collective identities form for autonomous movements?*

## 2. Literature review

In this literature review definitions and debates regarding collective identity will be analysed. First a discussion on the conceptualization of collective identity will be laid out, critically reviewing limitations of conceptualizations. Secondly, a new angle on how to view and research collective identity will be reviewed regarding the visibility and robustness of collective identity. Lastly, literature regarding the Global Justice Movement will be assessed.

Collective identity is known to have an essential role for social movements due to its ability to empower people to participate and create a greater sense of solidarity (Fominaya, 2018; van Zomeren et al., 2008). Collective identity gives people a sense of ‘we-ness’, creating a feelings and motivations to take action for each other and for the movement (Hunt & Bendford, 2004, p. 440). This shared identification and sense of purpose are a definite need for a social movement to sustain (Fominaya, 2018, p. 430). Collective identity is defined as ‘an individual’s cognitive, moral, and emotional connection with a broader community, category, practice, or institution’ (Poletta & Jasper, 2001, p. 285). However, there is a debate within the conceptualization of collective identity regarding where collective is located. On the one hand, collective identity can be defined as being intrinsic to a person (Poletta & Jasper, 2001, p. 285), on the other hand, it can be referred to as an observable phenomenon, characterized by actions (Whittier, 1995, p. 16). This distinction between an individual’s connection with a community and the interactions between people which form a collective identity are high in contrast. However, Fominaya (2018, p. 431) suggests that both are essential to defining collective identity. “[Collective identity] cannot exist unless individuals hold it within their self-conceptions. But unless it is expressed through action and interaction, it cannot be generated in the first place, nor can it be constructed, maintained, or developed over time” (p. 431).

An issue with defining collective identity in this manner arises when considering how people classify the movement they claim to be a part of (Fominaya, 2018, p. 431). Members could have different perceptions of the same movement. Furthermore, definitions of a movement, and thus a collective identity, can change over time (p. 431). How people view a collective they are part of, is not a stable factor, making the definition of collective identity volatile. However, Melucci (1995) argues otherwise. He states that agreement on the definition of a movement is not necessary. It is possible to feel a sense of collectiveness without a shared agreement (p. 45). A collective identity is something that is produced over time and through deliberation within social networks, thus conflicting interests can contribute to the formation of this identity (p. 44).

Furthermore, Melucci (1995, p. 43) argues that collective identity should not be seen as a given, socially located, characteristic, but as a process, viewed from a constructivist point of view. It is a factor that needs to be explained, rather than it being an explanatory factor. Melucci's (1995) position contrasts to the 'visible' analysis, agreeing that collective identity needs to be observable, for example through badges and flags (Fominaya, 2018, p. 438). Melucci (1995) rejects the view that collective identity is a set characteristic that is decided by the social location of a group, for example a middle-class woman (Fominaya, 2018, p. 430). This point of view is supported by Gamson (1991), who argues that there is a distinction to be made between a given collective identity based upon social location and one that is reflexively created through deliberation (Fominaya, 2018, p. 432). Thus, collective identity is not a fixed characteristic of a social movement. It is created through deliberation and negotiation by a movement's members (Melucci, 1995, p. 45).

Collective identity is generally easy to spot as it is expressed through visible features such as buttons or symbols, however there are some exceptions to this rule. Some movements prefer to remain autonomous from any form of structure (Fominaya, 2018, p. 437). Autonomous movements, such as the Occupy movement, aim to refrain from any form of organizational structures or identities (p. 437). Paradoxically, the rejection of acronyms, flags, or any form of organization in itself is an identifying characteristic of autonomous movements, even though the movement did not want to be characterized (p. 438). Social movements are more than just a flag or a button. Commitment and solidarity need to be felt. Movement attributes do not need to be visible at all times and can also be emotional or latent in character (p. 446). Affect is of great importance for conceiving a collective identity, as it has emotional significance for people and makes them feel like they belong and this is not always easy to portray (Hazy & Silberstang, 2009, p. 450).

There is a gap in the literature regarding autonomous movements (Fominaya, 2018, p. 438). Autonomous movements, such as the Global Justice Movement, are rarely given the same amount of attention as identity-based movements (p. 438). Without a predetermined socially located identity, social movements can still form a collective identity, which should be analysed as a process instead of a given identity (Melucci, 1995; Gamson, 1991). Collective identity can change over time as new meanings are given to it (Melucci, 1995, p. 43). Research needs to divert their attention from identity commonalities to a process-based view of collective identity (Fominaya, 2018, p. 438). A process-based approach, allows for a better understanding of how collective identities are formed, giving us insights into why and how actors work together

within a social movement (p. 441). Differences between actors could lead to fragmentation, however, mostly in the case of autonomous movements, these differences can be bridged in forming a collective identity. Collective identity cannot be described by one symbol or slogan, it can change meanings over time, and thus can only be researched through a process model (p. 441).

With the aim of filling the gap in the literature regarding process-based analysis, this thesis proposes a process model for the emergence of a collective identity, specifically regarding the case of the Global Justice Movement. Literature regarding the Global Justice Movement is extensive (Ness, 2015; Murphy, 2004; Smith, 2001). It is agreed that the Global Justice Movement covers a broad range of topics, yet, despite the different identities, the movement was able to cultivate a solidary identity emphasising its global character (Ness, 2015, p. 1455; Smith, 2001, p. 5). The WTO protest in Seattle played an essential role for the Global Justice Movement as it caused a great increase in support (Murphy, 2004, p. 28). The WTO protest created a foundation for the movement to be able to host a diverse set of identities and get them to create one collective identity (p. 39). However, how exactly that identity is constructed is a lesser researched facet of the Global Justice Movement and autonomous movements in general. Therefore, this thesis will do so by answering the research question ‘How and when do collective identities form for autonomous movements?’.

### **3. Theoretical framework**

In this section, theories on collective identity formation will be analysed. Upon reading about the topic of collective identity formation, it became clear that it is possible to bundle them up in three main theories. First framing will be explained, then the importance of assembly and boundary setting, and lastly, transformative events will be explained, leading to the hypothesis.

#### *3.1 Framing*

It has been shown that a collective identity can be formed without prior existing identities (Poletta & Jasper, 2001, p. 291). A possible way in which movements can form collective identities is through framing. “Frames are interpretive packages that activists develop to mobilize potential adherents and constituents” (p. 291). This top-down approach is aimed at convincing potential participants of their fight for injustice and of the effectiveness of joining the social movement (Olson, 1965, p. 55; Murphy, 2004, p. 37). The framing process consists of two main steps: identifying the theme for which collective action is needed and connecting

peoples personal identities with the collective identity (Adler, 2012, p. 295). Identities are made clear through oppositional framing, creating a distinction between ‘us’ and ‘them’, (Adler, 2019, p. 296; Poletta & Jasper, 2001, p. 291). This is in contrast to prefigurative frames, where the aims of the movement are articulated through portraying a common vision for the future (Adler, 2012, p. 297). Frames are action oriented, as they mean to inspire action and legitimize actions (p. 295). Framing is one of the leading theories in explaining participation in social movements. In framing, creating an identity is part of the process, thus can be an explanatory factor for collective identity formation.

### *3.2 Assembly*

Fominaya (2010, p. 397) argues that assembly and face-to-face interactions are crucial to collective identity formation. Especially for autonomous movements, collective identity is important to establish, as they do not have identity- or ideology-based commonalities to depend on. Thus, assemblies are at the core of movement identity formation (p. 397). At assemblies, latent as well as visible attributes of collective identity emerge, leading to a growing sense of community and solidarity. Networks, which are built at assemblies, are used to facilitate future protest, as well as maintain connections with co-participants. In line with Fominaya (2010), Hazy and Silberstang (2009, p. 455) argue for a model in which micro-enactments cause collective identity emergence from the bottom up. These interactions between members of a group influence plans of action and meanings given to them (p. 452). Micro-enactments are for example displays of acceptance, negotiation, questioning or synthesizing. Programs of action keep being adjusted and perfected by micro-enactments, which solidifies the collective identity. Adler (2012) takes it a step further and argues that a set place for collective rituals to be held is a great contributor to collective identity building. A set place to assemble leads to easier maintenance of cohesion, both symbolically as well as practically (p. 300). Thus, assembly and face-to-face interactions are central theories explaining the formation of collective identity.

### *3.3 Boundary-setting*

Boundary-setting is another explanation for collective identity formation (Poletta & Jasper, 2001, p. 298). Boundary-setting is a tool that helps establish differences between the movement and the opposing group (Taylor and Whittier, 1992, p. 111). These boundaries allow for more awareness of commonalities between members as well as making the distinction between ‘us’, the protesters, and ‘them’, the oppressors, clear. Boundary formation does not only occur towards an opposing identity, but also within a social movement (Hunt & Bendford, 2004, p.



443). Activists also attempt to make boundaries to distinguish a social movement organization from other organizations within the movement. Once these boundaries are set, members are likely to enforce them, for example through gossip or censorship of uncooperative members (p. 443). Thus, boundary-setting is an explanatory factor for collective identity in creating a collective view of the distinction between members and the opposition (Poletta & Jasper, 2001, p. 298). The distinction making between 'us' and 'them' both influences the assessment of the enemy and enforces the internal collective identity (p. 292).

As explained above, there are many factors influencing collective identity emergence. Framing, assembly and boundary-setting all have an influence on collective identity. I would like to take a deeper dive into the effect of transformative events and how these can influence collective identity formation through the above mentioned mechanisms.

### *3.4 Transformative events*

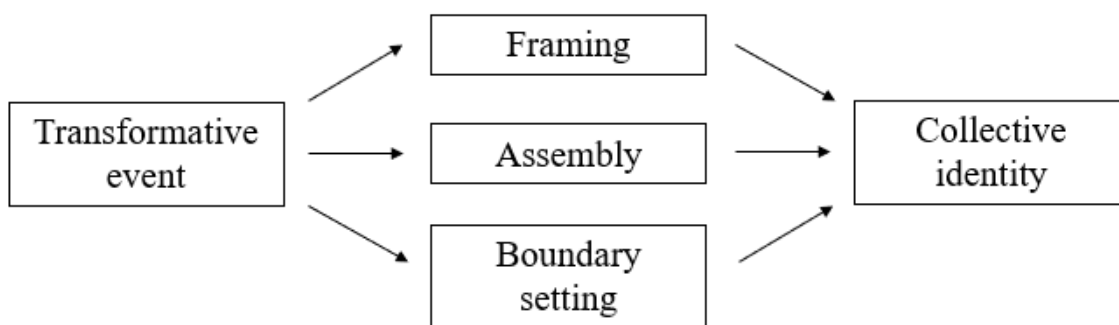
Moral shocks can lead to people mobilizing and forming a collective (Olson, 1965, p. 56). For example, when people encounter a photograph of a tortured animal, people are likely to mobilize due to the shock (Jasper, 1997). Moral shocks can be a catalyst for a transformative event. However, law chance, economic regression or repression can also be a causal factor (Olson, 1965, p. 56). For example, strong repression of a protest can lead to public uprising and a sudden increase or decrease in mobilization (Hess & Martin, 2006, p. 249). Transformative events are radical turning points for a social movement, leading to an increase in mobilization and strongly influencing the trajectory of a social movement (Morris, 2000, p. 452). Thus, for example public outrage can occur toward the oppressor for using violent repression methods, leading to an increase in support and participation (Hess & Martin, 2006, p. 249). Feelings of 'us' being attacked, leading to a sudden increase in participants demonstrates increased solidarity and collective identity. Therefore, I will argue for the importance of a transformative event for the formation of a collective identity.

### *3.5 Hypothesis*

Following from the above-mentioned theories, the hypothesis of this thesis proposes that transformative events strengthen the mechanisms explaining collective identity formation. At the occurrence of a transformative event, more micro-enactments are bound to occur at the big assemblies, leading to more synthesis, negotiation and overall, a stronger or faster formation of collective identities (Fominaya, 2018; Hazy & Silberstang, 2009). Furthermore, framing can benefit largely from transformative events. Actors can use a transformative event,

such as state repression, to justify their movement even more and create greater support for their aims (Olson, 1965). When a protest encounters violent repression from a government, this transformative event can lead to an increase of feelings of solidarity and collective identity (Adler, 2019). Similarly, boundary-setting is facilitated by a transformative event because it often allows for a sudden clarity about who are ‘we’ and who are ‘we’ fighting against (Taylor & Whittier, 1992). Transformative events seem to be a causal factor for the amplification of these three effects. Thus, I hypothesize that transformative events are an overarching explanation for the theoretical explanations of collective identity formation and propose the model as illustrated in Figure 1. Therefore, the hypothesis of this study is:

*Transformative events amplify the effect of framing, assembly and boundary-setting for collective identity formation.*



**Figure 1** Causal mechanism

#### 4. Methodology

In this section, the method of analysis, case selection and types of data for this research will be laid out. To be able to answer the research question of how collective identity is formed, the method of process tracing will be used. Process tracing is a suitable research method for answering how questions aimed at figuring out a causal mechanism as it allows for great detail (Bennet, 2010, p. 2). The method of process tracing is not prone to subjectivity, thus, increasing internal validity (Schimmelfenning, 2014, p. 4). Furthermore, it can help address the question whether X causes Y or the other way around by closely tracing the steps of the process (Bennet, 2010, p. 3). A single case will be analysed in this thesis as it allows for a deeper dive into the phenomenon of collective identity formation (Halperin & Health, 2017, p. 217). A single case

study is able to provide a richer description of the causal mechanism. Furthermore, process tracing is typically used for within-case qualitative analyses (Collier, 2011, p. 8). This within case analysis will be conducted on the 1999 WTO Seattle protest within the Global Justice Movement case.

#### *4.1 Case selection*

The Global Justice Movement is a relevant case because it is deviant from other cases in the realm of collective identity research. Social movements are often centred around a clear issue, such as nuclear energy, or a central identity, such as Black Power, whereas autonomous movements are more heterogenous in nature (Fominaya, 2018, p. 436). The Global Justice Movement is an autonomous movement because it rejects institutional structure and supports a horizontal organization where participatory democracy and autonomy are key (p. 378). The broad range of participant identities such as environmentalists, labour organizations, animal rights activists and many more, is what makes it a deviant case (Ness, 2015, p. 1456). A deviant case is relevant to research because it allows for broadening of current literature on collective identity, questioning of existing theories and building new ones. Where it makes sense for an identity-based movement to form a collective identity, autonomous movements like the Global Justice Movement makes us question what the essential parts of collective identity formation are when no prior set collective identity is present. Furthermore, the case of the Global Justice Movement is relevant because of its social significance regarding the global issues of human rights it concerned. The movement greatly impacted society all over the world and especially the scale of this movement makes it a really interesting case to research (Ness, 2015, p. 1455).

To understand the role of a transformative event for collective identity formation, the WTO Seattle protest has been selected. The Global Justice Movement existed for a few years before the 'Battle of Seattle' and previous protests in Berlin and Chiapas against cooperations had been held, however, the movement gained a great amount of attention in 1999 (Ness, 2015, p. 1460). The WTO protest is one of the most notable protests for its great size and effect on society (Murphy, 2004, p. 27). It can be seen as a transformative event because over the course of a few days it caused a sudden increase visibility for the movement and proved to be a radical turning point in the amount of support which it got, partially due to the heavy repression the movement faced (Morris, 2000; Hess & Martin, 2006). The protest is estimated to have mobilized up to 50,000 people on the streets of Seattle (Ness, 2015, p. 1456). This sudden increase in mobilization is an indicator for it being a transformative event (Hess & Martin, 2006, p. 249).

Thus the criteria of an heterogeneous movement with a transformative event have been met with the case of the Global Justice Movement.

#### *4.2 Operationalization and data collection*

In order to pursue a process tracing analysis, diagnostic pieces of evidence are used to find causal mechanisms within a case (Bennet, 2010, p. 2). This thesis will examine secondary sources on the WTO protest and Global Justice Movement in general, the documentary 'This is what democracy looks like' by Friedberg and Rowley (2000), the Global Justice Movement website and various sources from the news and archives. The great amount of available secondary sources regarding both the WTO protest and global justice movements in general allows for a detailed analysis of the causal mechanism behind collective identity formation.

The independent variable of this thesis is a transformative event. A transformative event is identifiable as an event which causes a sudden increase or decrease in mobilization (Morris, 2000, p. 452). The WTO protest is such a radical turning point for the Global Justice Movement. The dependent variable of this thesis is collective identity formation. This is more difficult to measure due to the process based approach which is argued for (Melucci, 1995; Gamson, 1991). The main indicators for collective identity emergence are feelings of collectiveness however, these are subjective and internal. Aspects of collective identity which are more identifiable are signs of the development of a collective self-consciousness such as the use of the words 'us' and 'we' (Bakuniak, & Nowak, 1987, p. 404). Furthermore, shared grievances and expectations demonstrate solidarity and indicate a collective identity (Pfaff, 1996, p. 425).

The analysis will follow the three causal mechanisms causing collective identity formation, framing, assembly and boundary-setting, through the lens of a transformative event. Framing will be analysed using evidence of framing in the WTO protest. For example, the documentary by Jill Friedberg and Rick Rowley (2000) will be used to form a detailed understanding of how the transformative event of the WTO protest led to the framing of the movement, thus creating a collective identity. A documentary is used as it better visualizes aspects, which are more difficult to find in literature, such as slogans and settings. Alongside the documentary, secondary literature will be used to further answer the research question and figure out the role of the transformative event of the WTO protest in affecting the framing process. Similarly, assembly, the process where visible attributes as well as latent ones, such as feelings of solidarity, are formed will be analysed using secondary literature (Fominaya, 2018, p. 397). Indicators pointing towards assembly are groups of people coming together to protest or educate

for example. Mostly secondary literature and news articles explaining what was done at assemblies will help answer the research question, alongside the Friedberg and Rowley (2000) documentary. These pieces of evidence will support the causal mechanism of the effect of assemblies on collective identity formation at a transformative event such as the WTO protest. Evidence for boundary-setting will also be sought for using secondary literature, archival documents and the documentary. Boundary-setting is done at transformative events by clearly defining the enemy. Signs of a clear 'us' versus 'them' will be used as evidence for boundary-setting. Thus, the main sources of data which will be used as evidence for the causal mechanisms are secondary literature, the Friedberg and Rowley (2000) documentary, news articles and other sources from the Seattle City Archives.

## **5. Analysis**

The analysis will start by giving more context to the Global Justice Movement and WTO protest in order to better grasp the analysis. Then the three mechanisms mentioned in the theoretical framework, framing, assembly and boundary-setting, will be analysed with their effect on collective identity. The analysis will conclude with the aftermath of the Global Justice Movement and a discussion of the results on the role of the WTO protest in collective identity formation for the movement.

### *5.1 Background on the Global Justice Movement and WTO protest*

The Global Justice Movement is a movement which aims to combat the undermining of national sovereignty, exploitation of the Global South, human rights negligence and environmental injustice through the form of protest, one of which is the WTO protest (Murphy, 2004, p. 27). The World Trade Organization is an intergovernmental organization which manages international trade. Periodically, trade ministers come together to negotiate on relevant issues (Murphy, 2004, p. 29). One of these negotiations was hosted in Seattle in November of 1999 (Seattle Post-Intelligencer, 1999). The Seattle Round hosted 133 countries' representatives, as the Seattle Times (1999) said "It will be quite a show". The issues on the table in the negotiation round related to biotechnology, intellectual property rights, the 'Forest Product Agreement' and the 'Multilateral Agreement on Investments' (Murphy, 2004, p. 29). Global Justice activists were mostly concerned about the lack of attention for social and environmental issues. As Western states were strongly advocating for an expansion of the WTO scope and cooperate globalization, countries of the Global South opposed this oppressive and exploitative idea

(Smith, 2001, p. 3). Over the course of the protest, it grew to a great number of 50,000 participants (Ness, 2015, p. 1456). The sudden increase of mobilization and change of trajectory of the movement led to the WTO protest becoming a transformative event (Morris, 2000, p. 452).

The WTO protest faced heavy repression from the local authorities, which also contributed to its classification as a transformative event (Hess & Martin, 2006, p. 249). As a reaction to the uprising of the Global Justice Movement in Seattle, backlash from the government appeared, aiming to reassert their power and gain back control over the movement (Hunt & Bendford, 2004, p. 449). The Mayor of Seattle issued a civil emergency order on November 30<sup>th</sup> (Schell, 1999). Local authorities took measures to disperse and stop the protest, including forcibly dragging people away, using teargas, creating a no-protest zone in downtown Seattle, and the installation of a curfew (Murphy, 2004; Jung, 1999, Friedberg & Rowley, 2000; Schell, 1999). These measures led to public outrage, with increased mobilisation and support for the movement fighting for democratization and incorporation of other values apart from making profit into institutions such as the WTO and IMF (Smith, 2001, p. 3; Hess & Martin, 2006, 249). A diverse set of participants emerged, including extra-movement actors such as churches and professional networks, making the protest notably void of social divide. (Levi & Murphy, 2006, p. 652; Smith, 2001, p. 4).

The protest was successful in gaining global attention for the Global Justice Movement. In particular, delegates from developing member states began to criticize the WTO (Friedberg & Rowley, 2000). This led to the cancellation of new millennium rounds, cementing a success for the Global Justice Movement. The Global Justice Movement was especially successful in raising awareness about the trading system and its consequences for a global society (Johnson, 2019). After the WTO protest, the Global Justice Movement persevered with more protests around the world.

## *5.2 Framing*

In order to conceive a collective identity, activists can develop a frame aimed to legitimize the movement and gaining support (Poletta & Jasper, 2001, p. 291). Framing is a process which exists out of two parts, identifying the issue on which a movement focusses and connecting people to said collective aim (Adler, 2012, p. 295). Evidence of framing depends on the type of framing. For example, prefigurative framing, in which protesters demonstrate a society which the movement aims for, can be found in artistic expressions of protesters as well as slogans.

Other evidence indicating framing is reflexivity in the creation of frames, visible in the explicit mentioning of who ‘we’ is (Gamson, 1991, p. 42). This thesis argues that a transformative event is an amplifier of the mechanism of framing for collective identity emergence. Therefore, theoretically, the indicators for framing should be found in greater numbers at a transformative event.

The Global Justice Movement, as the name suggests, emphasises its global identity (Murphy, 2004, p. 37). This was especially apparent at the WTO protest, as many people from all over the world, workers, environmentalists, human rights activists, united to fight against imperialistic globalization (Friedberg & Rowley, 2000). At the WTO protest, the collective identity was reflexively formed by deliberately deciding who ‘we’ are (Gamson, 1991, p. 42; Murphy & Pfaff, 2005, p. 154; Fominaya, 2010, p. 379). Conscious attempts were made to develop frames which blamed the social and environmental issues to the WTO, legitimizing it as a target for the protest (Murphy, 2004, p. 38). The actively developed frame the movement adopted, aimed at democratizing institutions, social and ecological protection, equality and more (Hardnack, 2020, p. 145). Meanwhile, U.S. media outlets framed the protesters as freaks and disruptive (Boykoff, 2006, p. 201). The reflexivity of the Global Justice framing and collective identity building is seen in how expressively the identity was mentioned and how it was part of internal discourse. Signs of explicit mentioning of a collective were visible in the documentary (Friedberg & Rowley, 2000). Examples of quotes where a collective ‘us’ is referenced are:

“Cooperations are threatening to further erode our sovereignty and make it impossible for our children to experience true freedom. We rise up and we say no.” (05:06)

“We have the right to peacefully assembly in our streets, our city and our planet” (31:39)

“We had been shot at, we had been gassed, we came back with a lot of fear” (26:03)

Within the collective identity in Seattle, there was still room for personal and group identities to have autonomy, proving the importance of balancing framing a collective identity while allowing for individual identities to exist (Hazy & Silberstang, 2009, p. 461; Murphy & Pfaff, 2005, p. 164). A ‘dual identity approach’ employed, as it allows for the inclusion of all identities while still emphasising one collective identity (p. 461; Dovidio et al., 1998). Thus, instead of subordinating personal and group identities, the WTO protest allowed for an incorporation of all identities, making the movement less vulnerable to dissolution due to inner conflict as the likelihood of dissolution is higher when personal identities are made subordinate to the

collective identity due to possible in-group bias (Tajfel & Turner, 1979, p. 60). For example, labour unions on the second day of protest chose not to interfere in the 'no protest zone' and protested elsewhere in the city (Friedberg & Rowley, 2000, 23:03). While still being part of the bigger protest, the labour unions and other social movement organizations were able to protest in their own way. At the WTO protest specifically, many identities were included whereby the overall global identity of the movement was highlighted, therefore succeeding in the task of bridging sociocultural identities which is essential for collective identity formation (Gamson, 1991, p. 41; Murphy, 2004, p. 37). "The rubric is the same, but within each of our movements we can shape and articulate our freedom while being aware about other people" (Friedberg & Rowley, 2000, 33:59)

Furthermore, framing is demonstrated at the WTO protest by tagging, the visible side of the framing process, the signs, slogans, songs etc. (Hazy & Silberstang, 2009, p. 450; Boal & Schultz, 2007). Demonstrating these symbolic presentations indicates a group identity and allows people distinguish themselves among groups. The projection of a common identity allows for a common understanding of the movements goals, opportunities and challenges (p. 450). Tagging is a part of 'symbolic mobilization' whereby activists of the Global Justice Movement aimed to include symbols into their frame (Smith, 2001, p. 12). For example, on the first day of WTO protest, a group of people was seen on the streets in trash bags and their arms connected in tubes screaming "whose streets? Our streets!" (Friedberg & Rowley, 2000, 2:12). Likewise, people were dressed as butterflies to represent the freedom they strive for, which is part of prefigurative framing (Adler, 2019, p. 297). Along with chants and signs, other art forms such as songs, magazines and films were used to express the demands of the movement. Prefigurative framing is also visible in the way people cooperated, accepting all participants and striving for equality, locking their arms together to physically resemble a unity (Friedberg & Rowley, 2000, 08:56). Marches were organized coming from the north and the south of the city, both headed towards downtown symbolizing the oppressed people from the Global North and South uniting against capitalism (Friedberg & Rowley, 2000, 04:50). "The oppressed people of the South and the oppressed people of the North came together to march against U.S. Imperialism" (04:17). This demonstrated that despite their individual differences, the Global North and South came together as one collective for the same goals. These examples of visible features of the WTO protest demonstrate how framing, next to the top-down legitimizing of the movement, is also done by the protesters themselves.



As the theory suggests, framing at the WTO protest was done through explicitly gearing towards a global audience, while accepting differentiation within the movement, which was visible in speeches, slogans, magazines and more. By collectively legitimizing the WTO as a target for the protest a consensus on a goal was achieved. These visible and reflexive top-down processes at the WTO protest can be used as evidence for the mechanism of framing at the WTO protest being a key part of collective identity formation for the global justice movement.

### *5.3 Assembly*

Assembly is a mechanism in which a better understanding of collective identity is formed by face-to-face interactions (Fominaya, 2010, p. 397). Indicators of assembly for social movements are marches, teach-ins or other occasions where members of a protest come together. At a transformative event, radical shift in a movement's trajectory, more people are bound to come together and mobilize (Morris, 2000, p. 452). Therefore, at the transformative event, evidence is found in the size and frequency of assemblies, as well as the number of interactions.

The most prevalent form of assembly which occurred at the WTO protest is in the form of marches. People marched all around the city, blocking the entrances to the building where the WTO planned to have the millennium round (Friedberg & Rowley, 2000). At these marches micro-enactments and face-to-face interaction are present, enabling discussions about the movement's goals and the creation of emotional bonds (Hazy & Silberstang, 2009, p. 452). The marches were a type of assemblies where all participants united and were able to bond over their shared concerns about trade liberalization, increasing solidarity (Vidal, 1999). An unplanned point of assembly where a collective identity for the WTO protest was really conveyed, was where arrested people were situated. Friedberg & Rowley, 2000, 53:01). Bystanders brought the arrested food and water, and a true sense of community was created with the aim of "getting our people out" (55:12). Likewise, in jail, people bonded over the common goals they had and their willingness to fight for a cause.

These face-to-face interactions are important for collective identity in creating a sense of commitment and belonging (Fominaya, 2010, p. 377). For example, one of the members of the labour union, explained how he was emotionally invested, because he recognized people from the streets and saw them get arrested, feeling as if it was really 'one of them' (Friedberg & Rowley, 2000). "When [workers] saw people that they had marched with on Tuesday, that they had developed relationships with on Tuesday, being beaten and being gassed." (41:20). These

sentiments of solidarity towards unjustly treated co-participants motivated people to get back into the city. This example shows evidence for the importance of face-to-face interactions and network building. Networks allow for an easier recruitment of people into a movement and makes peoples return to a movement more likely (James & Poulson, 1995, p. 508). Especially the moral shock of the police violence at the WTO protest enhanced the motivation to participate. Therefore, the combination of the transformative event and the connections which were formed to the protest created a stronger sense of solidarity and unity for the Global Justice Movement. These increased interactions were important to keep cohesion and alignment in tactics (Friedberg & Rowley, 2000, 20:15). Furthermore, face-to-face interactions were important because through these newly obtained networks people knew about plans for the upcoming days (26:19). Thus, assemblies were not only emotionally functional, but also facilitated the practicalities of the WTO protest.

Educational assemblies, another central element of the WTO protest, such as panel discussions and speaker events were organized to teach the public about the effects of economic globalization (Smith, 2001, p. 12). These ‘teach-ins’ are essential to building and strengthening the movement identity as it allows for integration of multiple identities and the obtaining of a collective understanding of the movement’s identity (Gamson, 1991, p. 42). The frequency of these educational, as well as other campaigning events, peaked in the week of the WTO protest to a total 191 events, proving that the WTO protest lead to an increase in assemblies (Murphy & Pfaff, 2005, p. 166). At the biggest of which, 50,000 people gathered in the Memorial Stadium to rally for workers all around the world (Friedberg & Rowley, 2000, 13:57). At these assemblies, the common objective of the Global Justice Movement is conveyed to the masses, allowing for a better understanding of their collective identity.

To conclude, due to the increase in assemblies and interactions at the WTO protest, more networks were built increasing feelings of solidarity to one another and a greater sense of belonging was created at in Seattle. As expected from the theory, evidence on assembly enforcing the collective identity has been found in examples of teach-ins and at marches. Thus, the WTO protest allowed for more assemblies and interactions, leading to stronger collective identity formation.

#### *5.4 Boundary-setting*

Boundary-setting is done to mark the social territory of a group by emphasizing differences on cognitive, behavioural and affective levels (Hunt & Bendford, 2004, p. 442). Evidence of

boundary-setting can be found in slogans distinguishing between ‘us’ and ‘them’ and social behaviour.

This distinction between ‘us’, the anti WTO protesters, and ‘them’, the WTO, is conveyed in the signs for example, many saying “NO WTO” (Smith, 2001, p. 3). Distinctions between participants and the opposers were made in slogans such as “whose streets? Our streets!” (Friedberg & Rowley, 2000, 2:12). The collective identity of the protesters is expressed here, as it shows clearly who the collective is and what they stand for, as well as who they are against. Another often used slogan is “People before profits”, emphasizing that profit seeking cooperations are the malefactor (Friedberg & Rowley, 2000, 05:55). However, figuring out who ‘they’, the oppressors, are at the WTO protest specifically, is more complicated. As the police became more violent, the protesters’ anger was aimed more toward the government. Where the protest started against the WTO and other economic organisations undermining equality and human rights, during the course of it, the focus began to shift to the physical oppressor during the protest.

In formulating the analysis, it becomes unclear whether the boundary-setting of the Global Justice Movement occurred before, during, or after the transformative event. The protesters collectively agreed to make the WTO their target and protesters knew who they were protesting against (Friedberg & Rowley, 2000). The Global Justice Movement, as is stated on their website (n.d.), has always stood for global justice for all and respect to the earth. This boundary between profit-seeking cooperations and protesters has been set before the protest arose. However, the boundary was made visible in the above-mentioned ways at the protest.

Furthermore, boundary-setting is done within the Global Justice Movement. Social movement organizations, such as the labour union, distinguish themselves at the WTO protest from for example, the environmentalists (Hunt & Bendford, 2004, p. 444). Internal identities were not subordinate to the Global identity but were accepted within the movement. For example, labour unions had their own teach-in (Friedberg & Rowley, 2000). Other people were welcome regardless, but differentiation was made by giving within-movement organizations the opportunity to organize for themselves. This also allowed for a differentiation in tactics, as some groups were willing to act in civil disobedience, whereas others preferred to stick to peacefully assembling.

To conclude, boundary-setting at the WTO protest was, as theory suggests, mostly visible in chants and signs as a clear distinction between ‘us’, the protesters representing the oppressed,

and ‘them’ the WTO and other cooperations who prioritize profits over people. Even though, boundaries may have been set before the protest began, the collective identity of the protesters was reinforced by clearly distinguishing between the oppressor and ‘us’ at the protest.

### *5.5 Collective identity and the aftermath of the Global Justice Movement*

As established in the literature review, collective identity is a process, not an end product (Gamson, 1991; Melucci, 1998). Therefore, the building process of the Global Justice Movement’s collective identity is never finished. In the Friedberg and Rowley documentary (2000), a sense of collectiveness was able to be picked up. This is a feeling which is not easily described in an analytic manner, but can be seen in how a group or members of a group define themselves and express their feelings of solidarity and unity. The most prevalent example of expressions of a collective identity is the use of ‘us’ and ‘we’, but it is also visible in the solidarity which is shown to the arrested people of the protest, motivating other people to rejoin the next day and give aid to the co-protesters. The mechanisms of framing, assembly and boundary-setting all demonstrated an increase in collective identity for the Global Justice movement. At the WTO protest many pieces of evidence for these mechanisms supporting collective identity formation have been found. At the protest, frames are made to legitimize the protest and visualized through the process of tagging, increasing feelings of solidarity and unity. An increased amount of assemblies occurred, allowing for increased face-to-face interactions and educational assemblies, reinforcing the collective identity and increasing a collective agreement on the identity. Boundary setting at the WTO protest was less prevalent as the ‘enemy’ was established prior to the protest. However, the process of boundary setting did allow for reinforcement of the ‘us’ versus ‘them’ distinction, thus reinforcing the collective identity. The three mechanisms are interlinked as well. For example, boundary-setting can be seen as a part of oppositional framing and at assemblies, prefigurative framing is enacted through forms of art (Adler, 2019, p. 296). At assemblies, boundaries can also be expressed and frames are conveyed to the public. At the transformative event of the WTO protest all three of these mechanisms were present more frequently and interacted with each other, making them explanatory factors for the formation of collective identity at the WTO protest.

An alternative explanation could be that due to the strong collective identity of the protesters, the transformative event of repression occurred, inverting the causal mechanism. “It’s okay to protest if you are small and weak but once to turn into a mass movement it is not okay” (Friedberg & Rowley, 2000, 42:36). However, it was the police brutality which motivated protesters to join in solidarity with the movement (Hess & Martin, 2006, p. 249). Even though

the protest had already grown to a great size, leading to repression as a response, the trajectory of the movement upwards was a reaction to the repression, making the WTO protest a transformative event (Ness, 2015, p. 1456).

The WTO protest was the first of the Global Justice Movement to gain such a great amount of publicity and be successful in gearing attention towards social and environmental issues. “The cry is now being heard around the world.” (Vidal, 1999). Many other protests were organized all over the world for the same cause. For example, the demonstration against the International Monetary Fund in Washington in 2000 or the protest against the World Economic Forum in Melbourne also generated attention toward the aims of the Global Justice Movement (Ness, 2015, p. 1461). With the movement’s aim remaining “To make the world work for 100% of humanity in the shortest possible time through spontaneous cooperation, without ecological offense or the disadvantage of anyone” (Global Justice Movement, n.d.). From 2001 onwards, national security became a more relevant concern, thus global justice proponents geared more towards peace protests and anti-war activism, demonstrating how a collective identity is not set, but is prone to change over-time (Ness, 2015, p. 1456). However, the movement the Global Justice Movement primarily stuck to its original frame that economic progress of one country should not be at the expense of others or the environment (p. 1456). For example in Genoa, over 200,000 people came together again to demand global justice (p. 1498). This protest can also be seen as a transformative event or even a moral shock due to the violent repression of the government. In the more recent years of the movement, meetings of cooperations and international organizations comes prepared with plans to escort the delegates and prevent disruptions. This development alongside the added focus of anti-war protests has changed the Global Justice Movement’s tactics and identity (p. 1469).

## **6. Conclusion**

In order to answer the research question, how and when collective identity is formed for autonomous movements, multiple mechanisms have been analysed. Firstly, in the analysis, evidence was found of framing contributing to collective identity in expressions of who ‘we’ are and through visible attributes which were demonstrated at the protest. Therefore, through framing, the WTO protest contributed to the formation and strengthening of the collective identity of the Global Justice Movement. Secondly, due to the repression and increased amount of protesters at the transformative event, more assemblies and face-to-face interactions took place, facilitating the collective identity formation process. Here, the strongest evidence was found for the increase of the power of assemblies at the WTO protest and it leading to more

solidarity. Lastly, boundary-setting, even though the oppressor had already been identified prior to the WTO protest, was visible in evidence such as slogans and signs emphasizing the distinction between 'us' and 'them', reinforcing the collective identity of the Global Justice movement by recognizing and repeating who 'we' are and who 'we' are fighting against. Thus, at the WTO protest, these three processes are amplified in number due to the sudden increase in mobilization, leading to a greater sense of solidarity and collective identity, therefore not rejecting the hypothesis. Therefore, I can conclude that collective identity is formed through framing, assembly and boundary-setting and these mechanisms are especially prevalent at a transformative event due to the sudden increase in mobilization amplifying its effects.

As established in the literature review, a process based approach has been taken to analyse collective identity. As was proven in the last section of the analysis, the Global Justice Movement has undergone some change, focusing on anti-war activism as well, and will continue to undergo changes, thus complementing previous research. Despite collective identity being an instable factor for a social movement, this research is relevant for social movements with heterogenous identities aiming to generate a collective identity.

However, this research is limited in its generalizability. Even though a broad range of sources has been used, documentaries, newspapers, archival documents, websites and secondary literature, as well as the detailed description lead to an increased internal validity, the external validity of the process tracing method is quite low (Schimmelfenning, 2014, p. 6). Future research on this topic should focus on different methods such as surveys or interviews. Especially because collective identity is a feeling, these methods would better be able to capture the true sentiments of participants. Furthermore, future research should dive into other cases, aside from the mainstream Western ones. The great amount of sources and literature available on the Global Justice Movement helped in analysing the movement, however a non-Western focus in the realm of collective identity would be beneficial for the broadening of the scope of literature.

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