

August 2015

Defining the 99%: A Rhetorical Critique of the Occupy Wall Street Movement

Molly Forgey

University of Nevada, Las Vegas, forgeym2@unlv.nevada.edu

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalscholarship.unlv.edu/thesesdissertations>

 Part of the [Communication Commons](#), and the [Rhetoric Commons](#)

Repository Citation

Forgey, Molly, "Defining the 99%: A Rhetorical Critique of the Occupy Wall Street Movement" (2015). *UNLV Theses, Dissertations, Professional Papers, and Capstones*. 2473.

<https://digitalscholarship.unlv.edu/thesesdissertations/2473>

This Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by Digital Scholarship@UNLV. It has been accepted for inclusion in UNLV Theses, Dissertations, Professional Papers, and Capstones by an authorized administrator of Digital Scholarship@UNLV. For more information, please contact digitalscholarship@unlv.edu.

DEFINING THE 99%: A RHETORICAL CRITIQUE OF THE OCCUPY WALL
STREET MOVEMENT

by

Molly Belle Forgey

Bachelor of Arts – Communication Studies
University of Nevada, Las Vegas
2013

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the

Master of Arts – Communication Studies

Department of Communication Studies
College of Urban Affairs
The Graduate College

University of Nevada, Las Vegas
August 2015

Copyright by Molly B. Forgey, 2015

All Rights Reserved

Thesis Approval

The Graduate College
The University of Nevada, Las Vegas

July 17, 2015

This thesis prepared by

Molly B. Forgey

entitled

Defining the 99%: A Rhetorical Critique of the Occupy Wall Street Movement

is approved in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts – Communication Studies
Department of Communication Studies

David Henry, Ph.D.
Examination Committee Chair

Kathryn Hausbeck Korgan, Ph.D.
Graduate College Interim Dean

Sara VanderHaagen, Ph.D.
Examination Committee Member

Tara G. McManus, Ph.D.
Examination Committee Member

Robert Futrell, Ph.D.
Graduate College Faculty Representative

Abstract

Defining the 99%: A Rhetorical Critique of the Occupy Wall Street Movement

by

Molly Belle Forgey

Dr. David Henry, Examination Committee Chair
Chair and Sanford Berman Professor
Department of Communication Studies
University of Nevada, Las Vegas

Social actors assume a large task when attempting to legitimize their movement and motivate participation. For Occupy Wall Street (OWS) dissidents this task was even greater given that their grievances lie both with government and with large corporations, two of the most influential entities in the United States. Such obstacles sparked an interest in studying the language strategies OWS rhetors employed when attempting to define the movement. This thesis examines these strategies in order to discover how the movement was framed, and how framing processes relate to the collective's identity. The discourse analyzed includes the initial call to action published in *Adbusters* magazine, the OWS manifesto, and four slogans that emerged during the occupation of Zucotti Park in New York City.

Acknowledgements

As a graduate student I was very aware of and sometimes overwhelmed with the amount of time and dedication writing a Master's thesis required. It was not until recently, however, that I realized how much of my family's, advisor's and friends' time my thesis also consumed. Without their support I know I would not have been able to complete one of the most difficult challenges of my educational career. Thus, I would like to acknowledge those that helped make this achievement possible. My mother and father sacrificed a lot to ensure that I was always taken care of, of course growing up, but even while I struggled with finding a path in life that best suited me. Once I began graduate school, you two always offered me warm meals after going hours without remembering to eat, a hug when I just needed to stop moving, and most importantly, you both endured—without complaint—some of the scariest mood swings I have ever experienced. To my boyfriend, Gabe Short, who has been equally as supportive, I thank you. You were extremely understanding during the hours and days I spent with my laptop and books instead of with you. I also appreciate that you always stood beside my decisions and encouraged me to follow my dreams.

I most definitely need to acknowledge my best friend, Jasmine Upton. I know you never quite understood why someone would make the decision to start graduate school or take on the extremely taxing schedule I have, but you never once doubted my abilities to make it through. You always had the most encouraging things to say that helped me stay focused and remember my own strength. To my two closest friends, Hector Jeter and Aaron Combs, I also thank you both. I know my studies took away some valuable time that could have been spent with you all, but you were always very understanding. Hector,

thank you for the pick-me-ups and laughs, they definitely made the bleak days brighter. Aaron, thank you for all of your praise. You always make me feel confident and remind me of my potential to accomplish great things.

Graduate school also required me to spend much more time on campus than I did as an undergraduate. Although the long drive and traffic made the commute often unbearable, spending the majority of my time with my officemates and cohort made it so much less painful. Travis Trickey, thank you for all of your guidance my first semester. You made teaching and writing papers so much less daunting and really helped me to relax in moments of intense anxiety. Caitlin Saladino, you will always be like a mother to me. My mentality the last two years have always been “what would Caitlin do?” You have been such an amazing role model to me, you are truly a unique specimen. Colby Miyose, the hours we have spent discussing assignments, hegemony, rhetoric, and any other topic that came up have been some of the most entertaining conversations I have had. I was so lucky to have you across the hall to bounce ideas off of, complain to, and laugh with. I know you will do great things in your life. Scarlett Schmidt, you have been like a sister to me. I can always pick your brain or ask you a question about virtually anything and you always have an answer. I would love to spend a day in your head. You are so creative and thoughtful. You always know how to make me smile. Christian Bato, you are so much fun to pick on. Thank you for being my punching bag, even though you did throw a few punches yourself. You are one person that has always been able to get me to laugh at myself. Even though I despised you for being a know-it-all, I actually learned a lot from you. I also really appreciate our conversations, it is really refreshing to have meaningful and insightful conversations. Sarah Beth Shaw, Nita Jones and Kacey

Ballard, thank you for spending weekends with me and helping me get through my last semester. Taking miniature breaks while writing papers made the process much less gruesome.

My mentors in the last two years shaped the educator and researcher I am today, and to you all, I am eternally grateful. William Belk, I hope one day I am half the professor you are. You are so smart and have taught me some of the most vital skills I will take with me and can use in any career path I choose. You always took the time to teach me, you allowed me to bounce ideas off of you, you listened to me complain and drone on about being exhausted, and you taught me how to be empathetic and understanding. Most importantly, you always treated me like an equal. Dr. VanderHaagen, you were one the first professors I opened up to and you answered any and all questions I had about school or life in general. You always saw potential in me and took the time to make sure I always reached it. Dr. McManus, you are one of the most supportive professors I have ever had. You always made me feel better when I was either stressed out or upset about something. You could make me feel better because I could tell you had faith in me as a student. Dr. Thompson, I can honestly say I would not be where I am today if it were not for you. You saw the potential in me when I was an undergraduate and made me feel confident enough to apply to the program and apply myself as a student. Dr. Futrell, I enjoyed coming to your seminar every night and you always made me feel welcome in the Sociology department. Thank you so much for your help during this project and providing me with a new perspective on social movements. Finally, I must thank Dr. Henry, my amazing advisor. I probably spent way too much time in your office, but you never let me once feel as though I were a burden. Although

the amount of ink you left on my drafts nearly brought me tears, the time you took to edit my work allowed me to excel as a writer and researcher. You always made me feel comfortable enough to come to you in moments of panic and I am extremely appreciative of that. My final project would not be what it is now without you.

Dedication

I would like to dedicate my thesis to my family and my boyfriend. I always refer to my mother as a saint because, well, she is. I have been able to accomplish some of my most difficult challenges because of you. You always put my needs first, you were always there when I needed something, and you are always so proud of me. I hope I grow up to be as helpful, kind, and happy as you. Dad, you are the perfect person to laugh with. You somehow manage to treat me like your little girl and a respected adult at the same time. I know I always push your patience but you always bend over backwards to make sure I am taken care of. I appreciate the amount of times you have tried to understand what exactly it is I study, it shows me how much you care. Hearing you boast about me to your friends and knowing how proud of me you are made getting through this Master's program completely worth it. You two are the best parents anyone could ask for; you both are amazing role models. Allyson, thank you for always supporting me and telling me how proud you were of me. All I ever wanted was my big sister's approval. Emily, my beautiful little niece, I hope that I can inspire you to reach your dreams and achieve any goal you set for yourself. Even though right now you say you want to be a mermaid when you grow up, I know you can achieve whatever goals you set for yourself. I am sure that if anyone could become a mermaid, it would be you. Thank you for always making me laugh and dancing with me. Hunter, my chunky baby nephew, I also hope to inspire you to be whatever you want to be. Playing with you has been one of the most amazing stress relievers.

Gabe, thank you for being honest with me, listening to me practice presentations or read papers out loud and helping me calm down when I became overwhelmed. I know

you sacrificed a lot these last few years and that means so much to me. I could not have asked for a better cheerleader. You never once doubted my abilities even when I doubted myself. I know writing my thesis would have been much more difficult without you by my side and my family there to support me. I am so honored and lucky to call you all my family.

Table of Contents

Abstract	iii
Acknowledgements	iv
Dedication	viii
Chapter One: Introduction	1
Occupy Wall Street.....	3
Previous Studies of OWS.....	7
Literature Review.....	13
Rationale	22
Organization of Thesis.....	25
Chapter Two: The Occupy Narrative	30
The Financial Crisis of 2008.....	32
Establishing a Response to Economic Injustice.....	37
Responding to Injustice.....	45
<i>Corruption and Immorality in Government</i>	46
<i>Articulating Progress and Solidarity</i>	52
Conclusion	59
Chapter Three: A Rhetorical Critique of Social Movement Framing	65
Defining the Political Situation.....	68
Framing Collective Identity	79
Identifying With a Diverse Audience	87
Limits of OWS’s Rhetoric	91
Conclusion	96
Chapter Four: Conclusion	104
OWS’s Road to Framing Identity	106
Communicating Democratically	114
Limitations and Future Directions	119
Conclusion	122
Bibliography	127
Curriculum Vita	133

Chapter One: Introduction

Scholars value critical thinking. The constant inquiry that supports critical thinking, however, often swiftly declines around age six and continues to do so into our adulthood. As our natural inclination to ask questions fades, we tend to accept things at face value or accept understandings we learn from others. David Zarefsky notes this downward trend as he describes the public's lack of meaningful debate and deliberation regarding matters of the public.¹ In a society that perpetuates constant competition for our attention, we must not forget the power and importance of inquiry. As John Dewey observes, "Public policy cannot be generated unless it be informed by knowledge, and this knowledge does not exist except when there is systematic, thorough, and well-equipped search and record."² In taking Dewey's advice, citizens must become aware, through search and record, of the ways citizens attempt to frame public issues. We can regain the health of the public sphere and strengthen our critical thinking abilities by closely examining the methods of protest language as they define political situations within the public sphere.³

The purpose of this chapter is to introduce the objects of analysis for this thesis, the methods for evaluating the objects, and the purpose for performing such critique. The project analyzes protesters' discourse in the Occupy Wall Street (OWS) movement of 2011 as articulated in the group's first call to action in the *Adbusters* magazine, the organization's manifesto, and popular slogans that emerged throughout the New York City campsite. The aim is to understand how the use of language contributed to defining the political situation. The term "political situation" is used in reference to Edward Schiappa's claim that descriptions of a situation function persuasively and focus our

attention in one direction rather than another.⁴ By referring to the political aspects of the situation at hand, I focus specifically on how such descriptions frame audience perception of OWS demonstrators and their protest purposes. Before beginning this examination, a narrative of the movement's emergence is first offered. Organizing the thesis by first providing this narrative allows for a complete understanding of the actors involved in contributing to the New York demonstrations, the events that catalyzed the movement, and the varying ideologies that drove the movement to its creation. Thus, chapter two provides a narrative of the OWS activism while closely exploring the rhetorical strategies apparent throughout protest discourse. Chapter three then advances a rhetorical examination of the framing methods consistently apparent in protesters' rhetoric. Such study works to discover the ways in which defining the political situation also functioned as an appeal for identification and in turn influenced the collective's identity. The central argument of this thesis is that although OWS actors engaged in the necessary efforts to define the movement and identify with a diverse audience, an absence of clarity regarding the opposition limited the movement's capacity to unite in pursuit of a specific course of action.

To begin the analysis, this chapter reviews the most pertinent research previously performed regarding OWS. That body of work not only illuminates findings from different disciplines and scholars, but presents readers with an ongoing conversation to which this project aims to contribute. Scholars have analyzed the movement from micro and macro levels which leaves open a unique niche between those levels. Ultimately this project explores the ways discourse from a macro level may help to understand the idiosyncrasies of OWS's demonstrations. Thus, the chapter begins by briefly previewing

the context of the movement and the objects of analysis. A review of pertinent previous research regarding OWS then follows. Next, a discussion of the theories guiding the final project is advanced. Finally, the chapter concludes with an overview of the remainder of the thesis.

Occupy Wall Street

According to the National Bureau of Economic Research, nearly half of American households experienced financial distress following the financial crisis of 2008.

Unemployment rates, being more than two months behind on mortgage payments, or owning a home that is valued lower than their mortgage contributed to this distress.⁵ The cause of the crisis, according to economic experts, was a result of the “private sector’s drive for short-term profit.”⁶ There were great discrepancies, however, between who politicians and journalists attribution of blame. In 2011, New York City Mayor Michael Bloomberg claimed that Congress forced banks to provide mortgages to those who could not afford the loans. Journalists deemed this “the Big lie,” claiming that responsibility for the crisis lay with private banks.⁷ Lenders eventually received exemption and in the years following the economic decline various media and politicians continued publicly to shift blame.⁸ Both the exemption and constant transfer of blame may have contributed to the frustration felt not only among New Yorkers, but by the entire nation as well. This frustration ultimately became an overwhelming feeling of a lack of democracy and required a public response.

The name “Occupy Wall Street” became well known as the group’s presence grew throughout the nation and across the borders of several other countries. Their grievances were heard in over 100 U.S. cities and 1,500 international cities.⁹ Protest

efforts continue, but for the purposes of narrowing focus, the scope of the project concentrates on the occupation of Zucotti Park in lower Manhattan. Specifically, discourse originating during this two month residence constitutes one of the exemplars analyzed in the final project. Kalle Lasn, through his early attempts to gain public attention and protest participation, was credited as the founder of the OWS project.¹⁰ Lasn helped initiate the demonstrations with a piece published in *Adbusters*, the magazine he founded based out of Vancouver, Canada. The magazine is described on the website as a group of “artists, activists, writers, pranksters, students, educators, and entrepreneurs who want to advance the new social activist movement of the information age.”¹¹ Micah White, *Adbusters*’ senior editor, wrote the call to action and advocated for a gathering of at least 20,000 people in one location, hoping to establish one simple demand. He wanted the appeal to be created collectively, but also focused on the current lack of democracy attributable to corporate corruption. White wrote that one demand was already being considered because it encapsulated the “national mood.” This called for “Barack Obama [to] ordain a Presidential Commission tasked with ending the influence money has over our representatives in Washington. It's time for DEMOCRACY NOT CORPORATOCRACY, we're doomed without it.”¹² The magazine targeted subscribers via e-mail to gain support and rally potential participants for a large demonstration. Their following grew swiftly and their first demonstration took place, after months of planning, in Zucotti Park on September 17, 2011. Organizers chose Zucotti Park because it was a privately owned public space that was to remain open to the public 24 hours a day.¹³ The park’s availability allowed protesters to move in essentially full time and camp. Camping

in the park and creating their own environment became the group's primary method of protest along with chanting, marching, and sign-holding.

Lasn, as founder, and senior editor White also had the help of Google software engineer Justine Tunney. Although these three are credited with facilitating demonstrations and gathering participants, their website occupywallst.org clearly states that OWS remain a "leaderless and leader-full movement."¹⁴ The group refers here to their philosophy of not recognizing a single leader or group of leaders, and their choice to utilize a process of rotating facilitators to manage their general assembly. White originally drafted a letter to President Obama reciting a list of grievances. This list reflected his initial call to action and included demands such as holding big businesses responsible for the 2008 economic crisis, and the establishment of a Presidential commission to investigate political corruption. This list, however, was ultimately deemed too specific. The general assembly decided eventually to create a vague declaration of grievances in order to appear more inclusive to those who felt taken advantage of by large corporations and political corruption. This less specific manifesto read, "Exercise your right to peaceably assemble; occupy public space; create a process to address the problems we face; and generate solutions accessible to everyone."¹⁵ Their declaration was much less detailed, but portrayed the movement's purpose as broad and aimed toward serving the needs of a more diverse population of citizens.

Despite their attempt to uphold vague demands, the demonstrations focused on a few primary issues. The financial crisis was of high concern as was the power of large corporations to dictate the market. During initial protests, demonstrators felt that their interests were not being represented adequately in government. There was an increased

feeling of inequality in terms of taxes and many supporters of OWS were dissatisfied with large corporations' tax contributions. They felt, additionally, that there was a need for an improved democratic system.¹⁶ As their core issues expanded and became much more inclusive, so did their slogans and chants. Their website displays the phrase, "We are the 99%" as their chief slogan.¹⁷ In addition, their website's homepage reads, "We kick the ass of the ruling class" underneath the group's name. Additional slogans used by protesters include, "represent the 99%," "Banks got bailed out, we got sold out," "You are the 99%," "End the wars and tax the rich," and "Our message is clear, read the fine print."¹⁸

The rhetoric of OWS demonstrations in Zucotti Park as an object of analysis includes the protesters' use of slogans, the group's public manifesto used to define the political situation in which they protested, and the initial call to action published in *Adbusters*. This analysis focuses on protesters' use of the common phrase, "We are the 99%," but also includes three other popular slogans displayed on signs throughout the campsite such as "The government did this," "This is what democracy looks like," and "We the people." Due to the ephemeral nature of chants, the project attends solely to these common slogans because of their appearance on signs held by protesters. Although OWS's public communication is the sole focus of this project, the media's initial response to the New York campsite reflects some of the ways the movement's framing methods were perceived.

The demonstrations in the park gained media attention, but at the birth of the movement, national coverage was minimal. The majority of stories following the first few days and weeks of the protest came from local papers such as *New York Daily News*,

*New York Times, Newark Star-Ledger, Long Island Newsday, and Wall Street Journal.*¹⁹

International media outlets also followed the protests prior to corporate media. Outlets such as *Asia News Monitor*²⁰ and *The Guardian*²¹ were among those covering the demonstrations before the first U.S. national newspaper, *The Washington Post*, did so.²² Once corporate media covered the protests, their descriptions were somewhat dismissive. Many national stories referred to protesters as hippies and hipsters and described a lack of drive and purpose. Conservatives also assessed the demonstrations negatively. Governor Mitt Romney referred to their methods as dangerous, Rush Limbaugh described riots, and Glenn Beck equated OWS demonstrations to actions that preceded Nazi Germany.²³ Liberal leaning media such as MSNBC, in contrast, focused on the arrests in front of the New York Stock Exchange and on the police brutality that protesters faced during their eviction from the park.²⁴ Regardless of the various angles taken by mainstream media, however, together their descriptions define the methods, efforts and purpose of OWS in New York City. These responses embody some of the struggles OWS faced when attempting to define the political situation that they were protesting and help to understand the positive and negative outcomes of their framing methods.

Previous Studies of OWS

Significant research in a number of disciplines examines linguistic and mediated aspects of the OWS demonstrations in New York City, across the U.S., and around the world. This chapter focuses primarily on the research done on the Zucotti Park demonstrations. This work ranges from the demographics of protesters, to the role of social media in demonstration organization, to the international mobility sparked in the New York City demonstrations. Scholars studying the OWS come to varying conclusions

about the efficacy of the movement. Sociologist Todd Gitlin, for instance, makes the conscious choice to refer to the group's efforts as a moment rather than a movement due to the inability to achieve substantial reform. Gitlin does, however, make note of the impact the demonstrations had on Presidential elections and swaying the public's "political centre of gravity toward the left."²⁵ His assessment of OWS focuses solely on the first six weeks of demonstrations and, therefore, should be considered limited. Craig Calhoun, also a sociologist, notes this limitation and offers more praise of the group's efforts. Calhoun refers to the campsites in Zucotti Park as "an especially resonant symbolic tactic" that turned the strangerhood among the protesters into a more organized and "enduring evocation of the people."²⁶

Calhoun describes the broadcast media's role in framing the events that took place in Zucotti Park. He claims the media did not pay the demonstrations much attention and focused, rather, on the police involvement with demonstrators. This is due possibly in part to the media's involvement with the corporations that OWS aimed to discredit. This lack of attention, Calhoun claims, "Limited the further development of the moment into a movement."²⁷ The media coverage turned the demonstrations into a mere "dramatic performance before audiences and cameras."²⁸ According to Kevin DeLuca, Sean Lawson, and Ye Sun, initial coverage of the events colored protesters as, "hippies and flakes," which in turn framed the demonstration as "frivolous and aimless."²⁹ It is not atypical for protesters to be framed as unruly or radical, but the attitude the mass media took when describing OWS demonstrators created a framework for understanding participants as socially deviant and incompetent.³⁰

Additional critical evaluations of the OWS demonstrations focused on the demographics of participants in relation to the slogan, “We are the 99%.” Miranda Brady and Derek Antoine note that the demonstrations in Zucotti Park inspired those of all class standing to join the efforts, but were still inherently exclusive towards varying ethnicities. The inspiration for those to join stemmed from their popular rallying slogan, but mere acknowledgement of inclusion was not enough to engage minority citizens and persuade them to join. The authors claim that the slogan, “We are the 99%” promoted economic struggle but only includes “expanded perspectives of white privilege,” because the 99% previously benefitted from institutions that previously worked to disenfranchise minorities.³¹ The popular slogan in part encouraged the development of the Decolonize Wall Street movement, separate from the OWS efforts. The language strategy became a critique of the OWS efforts and established an alternate movement. Although Decolonize Wall Street is recognized as a separate entity, the group frequently attended Occupy campsites.³² Therefore, the slogan language, although intending to be inclusive, became exclusionary among minority participants. The strategy to utilize a slogan that invited participants from all strata nonetheless became a signifier of the Zucotti Park demonstration’s purpose.

Other examinations of the movement aimed to discover the cultural influence of OWS. Thus, a 2014 issue of *Communication and Critical Cultural Studies* focused solely on the communication strategies employed in Zucotti Park as they constructed a unique culture in the park and analyzed the impact these strategies made on the overarching social movement culture. This issue included six individual articles that focused on aspects of the protests ranging from the creation and use of the People’s Mic, to the use

of visual art during demonstrations, to the use of social media to communicate their purpose and recruit adherents, to the implementation of other technological interfaces that make and mediate political communication. These articles acknowledge understandings of OWS that paint the movement as a political failure and aim to establish a new understanding of the movement as a cultural experiment. Jack Bratich, the editor of this issue, categorizes the composite of research as “fragments, observations, probes, and apps” with approaches that vary among “historical/ archival, conceptual, autoethnographic, [and] speculative.”³³

The variety in approaches enabled a vast range of findings that explain some of the intricacies of OWS. For example, Sarah Sharma focused on demonstrators’ use of time and space as it related to their solidarity. More so than merely analyzing time spent, the author explores time at night was spent within a political context and operated as a form of social power. Sharma contends that at night, new demands and grievances emerged for the first time offering a unique opportunity for open communication. She explains how both day and night reflected different aspects of the organization and how each time of day were utilized. Regarding the spatial nature of the demonstration, Occupiers spent the night in the park as a symbolic expression of their grievances and the diversity of the individuals that came together represented an intersection of a range of social differences. Examining this aspect of OWS lends to a deeper understanding of social movements as more than a mass gathering, but the way such mass articulates the multiple perspectives that comprises it.³⁴ Maintaining a focus on OWS’s unique characteristics, Anna Feigenbaum examines rhetorical strategies she categorizes as “other media.” She argues that resistive strategies such as the use of tents and tear gas make and

mediate political communication just as much as the practices already recognized as social movement tactics. Thus, her research aims to fill an absence in literature that demonstrates the power of such media to express resistance and reinforce OWS's message.³⁵

Lilian Radovac and Marco Deseriis each explore aspects of the People's Mic employed by protesters when the law restricted their use of electronic sound devices such as megaphones. This tactic, although not invented by Occupiers, became a nuanced method of demonstrating their commitment to amplifying all voices. This human microphone embodied the combination of action and speech and in requiring a large amount of participants to be successful, allowed citizens, despite the state's restrictions, "to engage in politics [in a way] that is rooted in direct democracy," according to Radovac.³⁶ Deseriis amplifies the component of engaging in the People's Mic that demonstrates protesters' ability to communicate in a slow-paced and choral nature. In addition, he addresses the aspect of open communication this practice emphasizes in a democratic and unscripted environment. His approach explores how individuals' voices come together to articulate messages that, by way of the People's mic, come to represent the movement's overall message.³⁷ Together, these two articles illuminate the ways OWS incorporated democratic means of disseminating their message and the way this method influenced the movement's communicative strategies. That these particular articles solely examine OWS creates a conversation of the unique characteristics of the movement and illustrates the variety of rhetorical strategies employed by Occupiers. This project aims to add to this conversation but in a converse way. Rather than examining the ways in which individuals contribute to the creation of the texts, this thesis inspects how publicly

disseminated messages represent and construct the way a diverse population of activists are portrayed.

The current thesis also responds to an ongoing discussion of OWS within the Political Science discipline. In the book *Occupying Political Science*, scholars collaborate to create a body of research illustrating the way Political Science theory can improve by learning from OWS. Similar to the communication journal reviewed previously, this book is also a composite of scholars' own experiences and observations from Zucotti Park demonstrations. The articles compiled in this publication center around the theme of democracy and attempt to explain various facets of the movement that intend to uphold democratic characteristics. This includes their 99% identity, their nonviolent principles, maintaining a consensus, and the occupation of public space. What these works accomplish is a detailed account of both the successful and ineffective tactics employed in the park. For example, Susan Kang examines the ways in which demands and goals of the collective were negotiated at meetings during their occupation of the park. Her observations underscore the difficulties that arose when perspectives clashed and a consensus regarding grievances and a plan of action could not be met.³⁸ Conversely, Emily Welty analyzes how the method of framing the opposition allowed for the movement to uphold nonviolent practices. Although such framing was quite fluid, this enabled the opposition to become more generally the capitalistic ideology. However, defining the opposition so broadly required protesters to develop new tactics which the author categorizes as artistic forms of resistance.³⁹ Both essays utilize ethnographic observations to examine broadly the strategies and tactics employed by demonstrators while in the park. These analyses lend to understandings of micro-level practices and

their influence on the progression of the movement. This project adds to this research specifically by understanding how macro-level discourse plays a role in Occupiers' defining of strategies and the practices enacted. Other works in this edited collection also respond to similar aspects of OWS but the niche carved out by Kang and Welty's research influenced the course of this project.

Literature Review

Scholars from multiple disciplines theorize about the subject of social movements, which scholarship varies greatly. Theorists differ in their definition of what constitutes dissent and what events can be categorized as a social movement. Theorists also take varied approaches to examining collective activity. For the purposes of this project, a brief overview of how scholars define the term "social movement," as well as their approaches to critical work, is warranted.

Early attempts to define social movements provide rhetoricians with very clear understandings of the phenomenon. Leland Griffin describes the term in regards to three necessary variables. The first is people's dissatisfaction with "some aspect of their environment," the second is the desire to create a change within the environment, and finally, the efforts for this change must experience an outcome of either success or failure. Students of rhetoric, Griffin maintains, must concern themselves with efforts that attempt to effectuate change. This may pertain to many different types of movements, but scholars should isolate the movement to be studied and break it down into its briefest parts. Once the briefest moments of a larger movement have been examined, researchers are in a better position to understand the broader scope. In order to cope with studying a large movement, three developmental stages solicit notice. These phases include a point

of inception, a moment of rhetorical crisis when a societal balance is dismantled, and a period of consummation when efforts have desisted. Griffin claims that one aspect of evaluating a movement is based on the effectiveness of both collective and individual discourse in terms of the ends projected by the speaker.⁴⁰ Choosing criteria for an evaluation of the phenomenon should only consist of theories contemporaneous with the time of the events. This way, leaders and participants can be judged based on the theories available to them. Finally, synthesizing material of collective action should be done so as “to convey the quality of dynamism, the sense of action, chronologically; and even chapters essentially topical will be chronological in development.” The overarching goal of such criticism, according to Griffin, is to discover rhetorical patterns throughout the action under investigation.⁴¹

Nearly two decades after Griffin’s pioneering work, Herbert W. Simons provided an extensive, more detailed list of requirements that allow one to classify collective action, specifically reformist and revolutionary acts. He also described in detail the necessary components of a persuasive social movement, as well as the rhetorical requirements and problems leaders face. Although the OWS demonstrations do not have a singular leader, the group appointed different individuals as leaders and rotated the leadership functions or responsibilities among participants. The requirements leaders are challenged with, according to Simons, include attracting and maintaining an organized group, securing adoption of their “product”—such as a specific ideology or change—by the larger structure or establishment, and reacting appropriately to the establishment’s resistance.⁴² Simons holds that the problems leaders may encounter can vary. Further resistance from an establishment due to use of questionable means such as violence,

needing to address supporters in a generalized or exaggerated manner so as to gain support within and outside the movement, discrepancies between organizational efficiency and membership needs, needing to fit role expectations even when they are not consistent with role definitions, and adapting to several audiences at once are all examples of possible problems. Among these requirements and problems, he offers rhetorical strategies amidst the “intricate web of conflicting demands” a leader may experience.⁴³ He identifies moderate, intermediate, and militant types of strategies. Moderate refers to peaceful persuasion that emulates an identity of interests that are somewhere between those of the movement and those of the larger structure. Militant strategies are considered antithetical to moderate and represent a clash of identities. Such tactics aim to change the actions of a primary target as a prerequisite for a change of attitudes. Engaging in intermediate strategies is an attempt to engage in both moderate and militant tactics without experiencing their respective disadvantages or the inherent problems that result. Regardless of the strategy employed, a leader should aim to articulate overarching principles while managing discrepancies and inconsistencies that come from organizing collective action.⁴⁴

Through Simons’ description of persuasion from this context, he provides a general understanding of collective behavior as a unit of study that includes leaders, followers, an audience, an argument, rhetorical acts, and rhetorical acts with possible intentions. These variables can potentially differ greatly depending on the surrounding circumstances. Ultimately he defines a social movement as “an uninstitutionalized collectivity that mobilizes for action to implement a program for the reconstitution of

social norms or values.”⁴⁵ This general description aids scholars in evaluating and understanding collective action.

Michael McGee offers a much more abstract but still helpful perspective on social movements. McGee contends that past theorists approached social movements as a phenomenon rather than as a set of meanings.⁴⁶ In his view, a theory of social movements must “determine the identity and meaning of the consciousness which inspires us, as citizens and scholars, to seek and see ‘movement’ when we look at historical facts.”⁴⁷ Criticism of movements, therefore, requires scholars to discover and verify the meaning of the language or series of words present during these moments of consciousness. Although this description and method appear vague, Celeste Condit adopts this approach in her close examination of the language strategies apparent throughout the abortion controversy from 1960 to 1985. Condit’s examination reveals the power of language to affect audiences through the meanings ascribed to particular terms and how those meanings have the potential to evolve over time. Condit first identifies seven stages of the abortion controversy, then demonstrates that the meaning of particular words such as “choice,” “life,” and “family” differed based on the groups using the word and the context in which they were spoken.⁴⁸ Condit argues that the language choices used in popular texts shaped public opinion on the issue of legalizing abortion.⁴⁹ Although Condit traces the meanings of these terms over time and this project focuses solely on the meanings implied throughout OWS’s various rhetorical strategies within a static time and place, her research combines with McGee’s to yield insight into how meanings are dependent upon the speaker and surrounding conditions.

Scholars such as McGee and Condit offer an alternative approach to the study of social movements by critically evaluating particular language strategies. A similar focus can be made on protesters' language use and on the ways media outlets cover demonstrations. In *Defining Reality*, Edward Schiappa describes the ability of language choice to define a situation. Schiappa claims that framing language used in the public sphere can potentially define whole situations. Each attempt to define a context through language is inherently persuasive, partial, and encourages a "different set of attitudes and actions among hearers."⁵⁰ Defining a public issue as a problem or a crisis, for example, can dramatize the issue and increase its importance to the audience, as well as to policymakers. Conversely, he maintains, using language to describe a public issue can also downplay its importance and result in neglect or inaction by policymakers.⁵¹ Ultimately, the language used to describe issues of the public sphere can possibly shape public opinion as well as influence government resolution of that issue. Thus, the protesters' language regarding their purpose may shape audience understandings of the issue at hand. For example, the initial call to action refers to political activity with banks as corruption therefore dramatizing the financial collapse. Additionally, this document mentions a current "corporatocracy" in place of a democracy which can influence citizen's attitudes towards government practices.

Upon the increase in political activism in the 1960s, "mass protest," according to Robert Denton, "became a meaningful way to express discontent and articulate ideology." Demonstrators began engaging in strategies such as marching, shouting, and singing to express their grievances.⁵² John Bowers, Donovan Ochs, Richard Jensen, and David Schulz describe slogans as a method of increasing solidification among agitation

groups. Solidification in the context of collective activity refers to tactics that reinforce unification among agitation groups and can be crucial to the efficacy of a movement.⁵³ Given the importance of solidification, slogans such as “We are the 99%” and “We the people” represent attempts for unification among OWS protesters. Denton also describes the value of the use of such language. Movement and campaign advocates use slogans to evoke specific impressions and emotional responses, and such slogans can be considered social symbols. The ambiguity of these symbols results in a polysemic quality. The particular use of the slogan can then create a fixed meaning that enables the users to act and become the justification for that action.⁵⁴ On this perspective, the slogan “This is what democracy looks like” displayed throughout the campsite not only attempted to define the political system that is sought by citizens, but also justified their participation in the protests. In addition, the context of social movements or political campaigns encourages competition of social symbols from those on both sides of a conflict. The winner of this inherent competition, according to the influential political scientist and communication theorist Harold Lasswell, is likely the party that “better expresses or more effectively manages collective attitudes” through their system of symbols.⁵⁵

Sociologists Robert Benford and David Snow and Communication Studies scholar Robert Entman each theorize about the power of framing. Both argue that, like defining a situation, framing consists of constructing reality. Benford and Snow focus on this phenomenon within the context of social movements and argue that collective actors become signifying agents that produce and sustain meanings for participants, potential participants, and antagonists. This method of meaning making does not occur within a vacuum and is thus entangled in meanings constructed in the media, by competing

groups, and by the state to name a few. Framing addresses the ways in which actors categorize events, their lives, and their space in relation to the rest of the world. This process, Benford and Snow define, results in collective action frames. These schemas are understood as “action-oriented sets of beliefs and meanings that inspire and legitimate the activities and campaigns of a social movement organization.”⁵⁶ The authors, along with various other scholars, theorize about the functions such frames serve, but the core tasks Benford and Snow identify as the necessary components of engaging in this defining process include diagnostic, prognostic, and motivational framing. The first involves identifying a problem and attributing blame. Prognostic requires agents to provide a solution to the issue as well as a rationale for that solution. Finally, motivational framing involves moving potential adherents to agency. This final task involves the use of appropriate vocabularies. Such vocabularies, the authors suggest, include terms that “provide compelling accounts for engaging in collective action and for sustaining their participation.”⁵⁷ Benford and Snow advocate further research on this mode of framing to discover the ways in which different vocabularies impact participation, identity processes, and other framing activities.

In a sense, Robert Entman’s work fills this request. As a Communication Studies scholar, Entman’s research hones in on the rhetorical strategies present throughout these meaning making practices. With this focus in mind, he contends that this process essentially involves selection and salience. He explains further that this is to “select some aspects of a perceived reality and make them more salient in a communicating text, in such a way as to promote a particular problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation, and/or treatment recommendation for the item described.”⁵⁸ This definition

aligns very closely with Benford and Snow's conception of the process, yet he explains that selection and salience occur by the presence or absence of particular terms, words, phrases, stereotype images, sources and sentences that support certain facts and judgments. He also asserts that framing occurs in at least four locations in the communication process: with the communicator, the text, the audience, and the surrounding culture. It is not always the case that the communicator's intentions are received, but their judgments influence work to create belief systems.⁵⁹ Thus, Benford and Snow's research aids in understanding the functions of frames within a social movement context and Entman's guides perceptions of the role of language within these functions.

As Benford and Snow suggest, the way in which reality is constructed by movement actors influences other actions and perceptions of an organization including their collective identity. In turn, David Snow and Doug McAdam categorize framing as identity work. The authors outline multiple ways personal identities merge with movement identities, but claim framing is one major method of linking these two entities. Identity work, the authors explain, essentially concerns "anything people do, individually or collectively, to give meaning to themselves or others." Thus, there is a broad range of phenomena to be considered such work. Snow and McAdam hold that framing processes constitute a form of identity construction because this act is an inherent feature of framing activities. To explain this relationship, the authors state that framing and frame disputes create interactional contexts where "identities are announced or renounced, avowed or disavowed, and embraced or rejected."⁶⁰ To understand how the discourse

analyzed in this project functions to frame the movement and to create a collective identity, OWS rhetoric is examined utilizing the theory of identification.

Kenneth Burke introduces the concept of identification in *A Rhetoric of Motives* as a necessary component of persuasion and as a goal in itself. As he explains, individuals are inherently at odds with one another which creates a sense of division. These differences establish the need for unity and identification. This is not to be confused with one becoming identical with another. One remains unique as an individual, but through what Burke terms consubstantiality, two persons can become substantially one. “Thus,” the author notes, one is “both joined and separate, at once a distinct substance and consubstantial with another.”⁶¹ The process does not occur by denying one’s individuality; rather, it is identifying shared commonalities that do not deny or ignore his or her distinctions. Consubstantiality is necessary for any way of life that can be achieved in acting together, because in doing so people have commonly shared ideas, attitudes, sensations, and perceptions. In addition to acting together, identification is communicated. Because of this aforementioned division, identification becomes a requirement for persuasion. One must confront the differences of the audience. If individuals were not divided, there would be no reason for identification. Burke holds that “Identification is compensatory to division.” If people were not divided by their differences, there would be no reason for a rhetorician to explain such unity. Conversely, if everyone were of the same substance, “absolute communication would be of man’s very essence.”⁶²

Communication Studies scholar Wendy Atkins-Sayre utilized Burke’s concept of identification in her own research aimed at discovering how People for the Ethical

Treatment of Animals (PETA) constructs advertisements that move people to change their perception of animals. Humans and animals have obvious differences and Atkins-Sayre contends that PETA articulated shared similarities through discursive and visual appeals. These appeals invited viewers to see similarities with animals, visually experience their world, and visually break down differences. These tactics were employed to create support for animal rights and convince individuals that they share a substance with animals. If focused on identity work, she suggests social movement actors must “articulate particular identities in order to invite individuals—supporters and others—to view themselves in a particular way.” Thus, it is not merely gaining the attention of an audience based on an identity appeal, such appeals must persuade the audience that there is a need to enact a change. Similar to the way Atkins-Sayre examined PETA’s attempts to influence people that they are consubstantial with animals through advertisements, this project seeks to discover how OWS rhetoric frames the movement in a way that not only allows individuals to identify with the movement’s cause, but influences them to become a part of that cause.

Rationale

Celeste Condit’s analysis of the language strategies utilized throughout the abortion controversy offers a distinct rationale for examining such strategies within a movement. She writes:

In public arenas of discourse—such as newspapers, magazines, the floor of congress, presidential speeches, television programs, or bureaucratic hearings—rhetors advance claims on “the nation” couched in terms of major values, suggesting that particular sentiments, policies, or laws are in

the general interest. To the extent that they are successful at convincing the public of the potential for general good, they are able to enact their will.⁶³

The vocabulary, or set of understandings, utilized in public discourse is integral to the process of convincing audiences. Terms that represent shared meanings can thus have identifiable effects.⁶⁴ The protesters' manifesto incorporated an understanding common to American discourse by asking one to "exercise rights" when attempting to provoke citizens to act against problems and generate solutions. Also, as slogans become utilized and popularized by protesters, their potential to define the political situation increases. In the case of New York protesters' use of the slogans "We are the 99%," "The government did this," "This is what democracy looks like," and "We the people," they not only attempt to frame a particular public issue and those deemed responsible for crisis, but also attempt to shape an understanding of demonstrators and their purpose of protest.

Zarefsky describes the salience of slogans in his explanation of the declining public sphere. The political discussion citizens are commonly exposed to, he writes, is made up primarily of "slogans, clichés, and sound bites."⁶⁵ As this exposure continues to grow, the importance of understanding their abilities to define a situation increases.

Patrick Coy, Lynne Woehrle, and Gregory Maney identify the use of the slogan "support the troops," as it shaped the public's opinion of soldiers and the U.S. military's involvement in war. The continued use of the slogan throughout several wars contributed to deep rooted beliefs and values of citizenship and soldiering embedded in the slogan. These beliefs and values, the authors argue, achieved two purposes: "to mobilize popular support for war and to stigmatize war opponents."⁶⁶ This analysis highlighted the power

slogans have in influencing public attitudes about conflict, how the use of the same slogan by different parties can influence different attitudes about the same conflict, and how the contention between different uses shapes movement discourse.⁶⁷ The use of particular terms and understandings by OWS demonstrators throughout their slogans as well as their declaration and call to action may also have the potential to influence values and attitudes about the economic crisis, but one must first discover how these terms define the crisis. Analyzing how their strategies are used in this political context promotes a deeper understanding of the potential uses of language during collective action. Framing processes also aid in constructing political opportunity. Benford and Snow refer to the potential for movement activists to interpret political events in a way that emphasizes either opportunity or constraint. Emphasizing opportunity thus enhances the possibility of stimulating actions that ultimately achieve social change.⁶⁸

Not only does this analysis of frames offer a new perspective of the OWS demonstrations, the project also provides an alternative approach to social movement criticism. The process of analyzing such frames incorporates a specific examination of the language used by protesters as seen throughout their call to action, declaration, and slogans. Studying collective action from a linguistic approach emphasizes McGee's theory of understanding movements as meaning rather than phenomena. Doing so with attention to the relationship between defining a situation and appeals to identification adds to the body of work examining the unique interplay of these two concepts. Focusing on meaning making allows for a range of insight including the influences of framing at the macro level to strategies at the micro level. Thus, as explained previously, this project attempts to add to previous research on OWS, but in a way that connects these two levels

of work. As Condit notes, there is a paucity of criticism that focuses on the linguistic strategies utilized throughout social movements. Analyzing the various uses of language in the context of a social movement, “indicates the value of diachronic, rather than synchronic investigation,” which adds “significantly to our theoretical understanding of the fascinating processes of human social change.”⁶⁹

Organization of Thesis

This project aims to analyze the discourse of the OWS movement in order to understand how the group attempted to define their purpose and the political situation in which they initiated protest. This is accomplished through a close examination of the language used throughout their initial call to action published in *Adbusters*, their manifesto, and the four slogans utilized by protesters, “We are the 99%,” “We the people,” “This is what democracy looks like,” and “The government did this.”

Chapter two provides the narrative of OWS including the economic context surrounding the movement’s emergence, the key individuals who aided in the organization’s creation, and their guiding principles when striving to enact social and political change. Included in this narrative is a close reading of the objects of analysis. Each form of discourse is inspected as a method of discovering the most salient themes. This chapter claims that OWS rhetors utilized their discourse to characterize corrupt government officials and immoral Wall Street executives as a public matter necessitating protest and to demonstrate how unification in a singular public space is a legitimate solution to this said ill.

Chapter three adds to this close reading by rhetorically examining the movement’s discourse. The analysis achieves three goals: discovering how actors use

particular language strategies to frame the movement, how these strategies also work as appeals for identification, and an evaluation of rhetors' capacity to establish a collective identity through these texts. With the use of framing theory and the concept of identification to examine these objects, the chapter argues that although actors employ the necessary tactics to frame the movement, actors' inability to articulate the opposition hindered the movement's capacity to unite in pursuit of a clear plan of action. The fourth and final chapter offers a summary of the project, limitations, recommendations for future research, and a demonstration of ways this thesis adds to rhetorical theory.

Endnotes

¹ David Zarefsky, "The Decline of Public Debate," *USA Today* (March 1998): 57.

² John Dewey, "Search for the Great Community," in *The Public and its Problems 1954* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 1954), 179.

³ This essay incorporates discussion of the public sphere throughout. Due to various conceptions of the term, I will define my use. Kevin DeLuca and Jennifer Peeples refer to the public sphere as "a social space wherein private citizens gather as a public body with the rights of assembly, association, and expression in order to form public opinion." The authors describe this definition as a derivative of Jurgen Habermas's in *Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*. I utilize this definition due to the authors' reference to the public sphere as a forum for the expression of public opinion and this project aims at examining how particular language use throughout the public sphere—in regards to collective action specifically—plays a role in shaping understandings of public issues. This definition comes from: Kevin DeLuca and Jennifer Peeples, "From Public Sphere to Public Screen: Democracy, Activism, and the 'Violence' of Seattle," *Critical Studies in Media Communication* 19, no. 2 (2002): 128.

⁴ Edward Schiappa, *Defining Reality: Definitions and the Politics of Meaning* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 2003), 152.

⁵ "The Effect of the Economic Crisis on Americans," *The National Bureau of Economic Research*, last updated August 2014, <http://www.nber.org/bah/2010no3/w16407.html>.

⁶ Steve Denning, "Lest We Forget: Why We Had a Financial Crisis," *Forbes* (Nov. 22, 2011) <http://www.forbes.com/sites/stevedenning/2011/11/22/5086/>.

⁷ Denning, "Lest We Forget."

⁸ Thomas Edsall, "Conservatives Seek to Shift Blame for Crisis onto Minority Housing Law," *Huffington Post* May 25, 2011. http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2008/10/01/conservatives-seek-to-shi_n_131020.html.

⁹ "Occupy Wall Street," *Occupywallst.org*, last modified August 22, 2014.

-
- ¹⁰ Mattathias Schwartz, "Pre-Occupied: The Origins and Future of Occupy Wall Street," *The New Yorker* Nov. 28, 2011. <http://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2011/11/28/pre-occupied?currentPage=all>.
- ¹¹ "About" *Adbusters.org*, last modified August 2014, Adbusters.org/about/.
- ¹² Micah White, "#OccupyWallStreet: A Shift in Revolutionary Tactics," *Adbusters* July 17, 2011. <https://www.adbusters.org/blogs/adbusters-blog/occupywallstreet.html>
- ¹³ Schwartz, "Pre-Occupied."
- ¹⁴ "About," *Occupywallst.org*, last modified August 22, 2014, Occupywallst.org/about.
- ¹⁵ Schwartz, "Pre-Occupied."
- ¹⁶ Jim Naureckas, "They Are the 1 Percent," *Extra!* Nov. 2011. Print.
- ¹⁷ <http://occupywallst.org/infotent/>
- ¹⁸ Jeffery S. Juris, "Reflections on #Occupy Everywhere: Social Media, Public Space, and Emerging Logics of Aggregation," *American Ethnologist* 39, no. 2 (2012): 259.
- ¹⁹ Naureckas, "They Are the 1 Percent," 7.
- ²⁰ "United States: Hundreds of Protesters set to 'Occupy' Wall Street," *Asia News Monitor* (Bangkok, Thailand) Sept. 20, 2011.
- ²¹ Paul Harris, "Occupy Wall Street: The Protesters Speak," *The Guardian* Sept. 21, 2011. <http://www.theguardian.com/world/blog/2011/sep/21/occupy-wall-street-protests>.
- ²² Naureckas, "They Are the 1 Percent," 7.
- ²³ Kevin DeLuca, Sean Lawson, and Ye Sun, "Occupy Wall Street on the Public Screens of Social Media: The Many Framings of the Birth of a Protest Movement," *Communication, Culture & Critique* 5 (2012): 483-84.
- ²⁴ Msnbc.com staff, "80 arrested at 'Occupy Wall Street' Protest," *NBC News* Sept. 24, 2011. http://www.nbcnews.com/id/44656667/ns/us_news-life/t/arrested-occupy-wall-street-protest/#.U_b9_ldWSo.
- ²⁵ Todd Gitlin, "Occupy's Predicament: The Moment and the Prospects for the Movement," *The British Journal of Sociology* 64, no. 1 (2013): 3.
- ²⁶ Craig Calhoun, "Occupy Wall Street in Perspective," *The British Journal of Sociology* 64, no. 1 (2013): 29.
- ²⁷ Calhoun, "Occupy Wall Street in Perspective," 32.
- ²⁸ Calhoun, "Occupy Wall Street in Perspective," 32.
- ²⁹ DeLuca, Lawson, and Sun, "Occupy Wall Street on the Public Screens of Social Media," 491.
- ³⁰ DeLuca, Lawson, and Sun, "Occupy Wall Street on the Public Screens of Social Media," 491.
- ³¹ Miranda Brady and Derek Antoine, "Decolonize Wall Street! Situating Indigenous Critiques of the Occupy Wall Street Movement," *American Communication Journal* 15, no. 1 (2013): 3.

-
- ³² Brady and Antoine, "Decolonize Wall Street!," 2.
- ³³ Jack Bratich, "Guest Editor's Introduction," *Communication and Critical/ Cultural Studies* 11, no. 1 (2014): 2.
- ³⁴ Sarah Sharma, "Because the Night Belongs to Lovers: Occupying the Time of Precarity," *Communication and Critical/ Cultural Studies* 11, no. 1 (2014): 6-7.
- ³⁵ Anna Feigenbaum, "Resistant Matters: Tents, Tear Gas and the 'Other Media' of Occupy," *Communication and Critical/ Cultural Studies* 11, no. 1 (2014): 22.
- ³⁶ Lilian Radovac, "Mic Check: Occupy Wall Street and the Space of Audition," *Communication and Critical/ Cultural Studies* 11, no. 1 (2014): 39-40.
- ³⁷ Marco Deseriis, "The People's Mic as a Medium in Its Own Right: A Pharmacological Reading," *Communication and Critical/ Cultural Studies* 11, no. 1 (2014): 43.
- ³⁸ Susan Kang, "Demands Belong to the 99%? The Conflict over Demands, Issues, and Goals in OWS," in *Occupying Political Science* eds. Emily Welty, Matthew Bolton, Meghana Nayak, and Christopher Malone (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013): 59-60.
- ³⁹ Emily Welty, "The Art of Nonviolence: The Adaptions and Improvisations of Occupy Wall Street," in *Occupying Political Science* eds. Emily Welty, Matthew Bolton, Meghana Nayak, and Christopher Malone (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013): 92-95.
- ⁴⁰ Leland Griffin, "The Rhetoric of Historical Movements," *The Quarterly Journal of Speech* 38, no. 2 (1952): 184, 185 & 187.
- ⁴¹ Griffin, "The Rhetoric of Historical Movements," 187-88.
- ⁴² Herbert W. Simons, "Requirements, Problems, and Strategies: A Theory of Persuasion for Social Movements," *The Quarterly Journal of Speech* 56, no. 1 (1970): 3-4.
- ⁴³ Simons, "Requirements, Problems, and Strategies," 7.
- ⁴⁴ Simons, "Requirements, Problems, and Strategies," 7-10.
- ⁴⁵ Simons, "Requirements, Problems, and Strategies," 3.
- ⁴⁶ Michael McGee, "'Social Movement': Phenomenon or Meaning," *Central States Speech Journal* 31, no. 4 (1980): 233.
- ⁴⁷ McGee, "'Social Movement,'" 242.
- ⁴⁸ Celeste Condit Railsback, "The Contemporary American Abortion Controversy: Stages in the Argument," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 70 (1984): 419.
- ⁴⁹ Celeste Condit, *Decoding Abortion Rhetoric* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1990), 166.
- ⁵⁰ Schiappa, *Defining Reality*, 152.
- ⁵¹ Schiappa, *Defining Reality*, 156.

-
- ⁵² Robert Denton, "The Rhetorical Functions of Slogans: Classifications and Characteristics," *Communication Quarterly* 28, no. 2 (1980): 10.
- ⁵³ John Bowers, Donovan Ochs, Richard Jensen, and David Schulz, *The Rhetoric of Agitation and Control*, Third Edition (Long Grove: Waveland Press, 2010), 33.
- ⁵⁴ Denton, "The Rhetorical Functions of Slogans," 12.
- ⁵⁵ H. D. Lasswell, as quoted in Denton, "The Rhetorical Functions of Slogans," 12.
- ⁵⁶ Robert Benford and David Snow, "Framing Processes and Social Movements: An Overview and Assessment," *Annual Review of Sociology* 26 (2000): 613-614.
- ⁵⁷ Benford and Snow, "Framing Processes and Social Movements," 617.
- ⁵⁸ Robert M. Entman, "Framing: Toward Clarification of a Fractured Paradigm," *Journal of Communication* 43, no. 4 (1993): 52.
- ⁵⁹ Entman, "Framing," 52-53.
- ⁶⁰ David A. Snow and Doug McAdam, "Identity Work Processes in the Context of Social Movements: Clarifying the Identity/ Movement Nexus," in *Self, Identity, and Social Movements* eds. Sheldon Stryker, Timothy J. Owens, and Robert W. White (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2000), 53-54.
- ⁶¹ Kenneth Burke, *A Rhetoric of Motives*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1950), 21.
- ⁶² Burke, *A Rhetoric of Motives*, 21-22.
- ⁶³ Condit, *Decoding Abortion Rhetoric*, 6.
- ⁶⁴ Condit, *Decoding Abortion Rhetoric*, 7.
- ⁶⁵ Zarefsky, "The Decline of Public Debate," 58.
- ⁶⁶ Patrick Coy, Lynne Woehrle, and Gregory Maney, "Discursive Legacies: The U.S. Peace Movement and 'Support the Troops,'" *Social Problems* 55, no. 2 (2008): 161-162.
- ⁶⁷ Coy, Woehrle, and Maney, "Discursive Legacies," 162.
- ⁶⁸ Benford and Snow, "Framing Processes and Social Movements," 631.
- ⁶⁹ Condit Railsback, "The Contemporary American Abortion Controversy," 419-420.

Chapter Two: The Occupy Narrative

An array of thoughts, perspectives, and opinions emerge when the name “Occupy Wall Street” is brought into conversation, for people understood the global movement differently. In terms of efficacy, the collective has been evaluated on various ends of a spectrum of success. Regarding their purpose, individuals struggled to grasp firmly the goals the movement worked to achieve. One consistent aspect of the movement is that the collective gained notoriety and became the topic of many conversations. Interestingly, this variety of perspectives was an integral component in the creation of the movement and its ability to persist. Beginning in New York City at the base of Manhattan, Occupy Wall Street (OWS) attracted all walks of life. Some participants identified themselves as anarchists, others were intrigued bystanders. As Sociologist Todd Gitlin observes, the ability to motivate young individuals of a digital era to come together in a physical space is a notable achievement.¹ Yet, like many of the prominent movements of America’s tumultuous past, OWS faced opposition and was required to overcome multiple challenges—some of which they were unable to defeat.

This chapter constructs a narrative of the events that OWS rhetors responded to and how that response ultimately led to the movement’s emergence. Specifically beginning with an explanation of the contemporaneous economic state and the result of the financial crisis on corporations, banks, and U.S. citizens an understanding of the context leading to the establishment of the movement is offered. The severity of the economic conditions combined with a passion for social change created a perfect cocktail for movement leaders. Thus, a biographical description of OWS founders, Kalle Lasn and Micah White, is also provided. This description introduces the founders’ ideologies and

perception of the American political system that influenced the collective's core principles. Included in this narrative are the steps actors took to initiate the OWS name and campsite and incite action. From there, the story of the Zucotti Park campout is recounted. This identifies the key actors, their contributions, and how the movement developed during their period of residence.

The discourse disseminated by the organization is then closely examined in order to amplify the most salient characteristics of their communication.² These characteristics reveal two distinct themes around which this examination is organized. First is the articulation of immoral and unethical practices in government that constitute a political system unworthy of being called a democracy. Rhetors assign Wall Street executives and politicians blame for the financial crisis and unequal distribution of wealth by asserting that money influenced significant government decisions. The second theme is the depiction of OWS as a movement aimed at achieving a more efficient, citizen-centered government through the occupation of public space. Actors' rationale for this strategy is emphasized the success occupying public space had in the recent Egyptian revolution and the demonstrations that took place contemporaneously in Spain. Rhetors reinforce the efficacy of their solution by highlighting the power of unity.

This analysis demonstrates rhetors' use of language to construct and support these themes. The discovery of the language patterns utilized throughout these themes lends to an overall understanding of the movement's use of discourse and is used again in chapter three to illustrate how defining a problem and solution work to frame OWS. The three forms of rhetoric explored include the movement's initial call to action authored by one of OWS's founders, Micah White, the collective's manifesto co-created by the General

Assembly, and four prominent slogans that originated at the campsite in Zucotti Park, site of OWS's emergence. The four slogans are "the government did this," "we the people," "we are the 99%," and "this is what democracy looks like." The events leading up to the movement's origin and these three methods of communication constitute the rhetorical experience studied.³ It is argued that OWS advocates describe corrupt and unjust government practices as a purpose for collective action. Additionally, actors motivate individuals to participate in demonstrations as a means to restore a morally efficient citizen-run democracy.

The Financial Crisis of 2008

Economists and citizens attempt to understand the magnitude of the financial crisis of 2008 by comparing it to the great depression that followed the 1929 market crash. Although the societal repercussions that followed the more recent crisis were not of the same degree of the great depression, the severity of the crash was of similar weight in the financial community.⁴ Specifically, the strongest and most powerful global investment firms were within an inch of bankruptcy. Companies such as Merrill Lynch, Fannie Mae, Royal Bank of Scotland, Bradford and Bingley, to name a few, were among such institutions. Lehman Brothers, however, was not as lucky and eventually required a government bailout. Firms began experiencing financial distress as early as February in 2008 and by December of that year, trillions of dollars were spent to avoid the collapse of the World Bank system.⁵ A global financial catastrophe of this magnitude is attributed to several interwoven factors from various levels of spending. This includes homeowners and mortgage purchases as well as investment conglomerates fueling their debt quandaries by buying out expensive companies.

In the simplest terms, economics experts David Hatherly and Gavin Kretschmar from the University of Edinburgh Business School explain the crisis as merely the expected result of spending more money than one possesses. Regarding actions taken globally at the time, the experts refer to financialization as the direct cause of such irresponsible spending. Financialization is the process of increased financial motives, markets, actors, and institutions within domestic and international economies by which profit increases occur through “financial channels rather than through trade and commodity production.”⁶ Such an economic system is often focused on the increase of power and growth of influence within the financial sector. The concerning aspect of financialization is how “gains (and losses) from wealth accumulation (capital) interfere with income flows in national economies.” The lack of sufficient regulation of a system that functions in this manner can lead to unclear accounting. Financial institutions practiced this insufficient accounting method beginning in the 1980s, ultimately leading to misconceptions of capital and income by investment shareholders. One popular example of a company that managed gains and losses similarly is Enron. A multiplication of companies managing their finances using this method ultimately played a critical role in the economic collapse felt globally.⁷

A lack of communication is also reported as a contributing factor. The regulation of income and capital were too far removed, as Hatherly and Kretschmar report, which influenced the inability for banks, their financial managers, and stakeholders to communicate efficiently. The absence of such networking created an impossible task for lawmakers and regulators to establish an acceptable and adequate system of checks and balances. This led to poor governing and the failure of large firms to manage their

finances created an opening for faulty loan acquisitions among homeowners. Plainly put, banks were unable to calculate risk correctly when approving loans.⁸ This faulty risk management, however, was neither felt nor understood until firms required the U.S. Federal Reserve to spend \$236 billion in March 2008 in order to keep the American banking system afloat. Other large banks also had to spend billions to bail out their hedge funds that could no longer survive. Smaller companies could not withstand the debt and began to perish throughout the following months.⁹

By September, many prominent banks and investment companies ran out of money to compensate for their losses. As a result, Hank Paulson, U.S. Secretary of Treasury and former CEO of Goldman Sachs, announced his plan to use hundreds of billions of taxpayer dollars to “buy up toxic assets.”¹⁰ This was not a simple solution nor an easy plan to create or implement, and by October, a plan still did not exist and more firms began falling deeper into the sinkhole that was their debt. The crisis was then in the hands of policymakers, who faced the task of rationalizing the use of taxpayer dollars to bail out banks and unblock a flow of cash. Without establishing a suitable plan, the world seemed destined to repeat the Great Depression. Congress reached an agreement to put a \$700 billion dollar bank bailout in place that both allowed banks to lend again and protect taxpayers from experiencing economic distress. The bill, however, did not make it through the House due to disagreement across party lines. This led to further panic among investors and caused them to continue hoarding whatever cash became available.¹¹

Finding a solution for the turmoil on Wall Street while protecting citizens was a focal concern by 2009. Investor folly was not, however, the only cause of the economic

collapse. Beginning in 1999, the housing market steadily climbed and became a profitable and safe investment opportunity. This made lending much less risky for banks providing mortgages and thus purchasing a home in the early 2000s became very easy even for subprime borrowers. Banks then began borrowing from other banks as a means to provide more loans and essentially profit even further from the market increase. As the housing market increased, the job market decreased and unemployment began to increase due to the credit crisis on Wall Street. With unemployment on the rise, the housing market then began to decline. This eventually led to the loss of jobs and homeowners' inability to afford their mortgages. This combination of factors constructed the perfect storm for an all-out economic catastrophe.¹²

Despite varying assertions about the origin of the financial crisis, Americans experienced the brunt of the aftermath. According to the National Bureau of Economic Research, forty percent of American households experienced financial distress following the financial crisis of 2008. Unemployment rates, being more than two months behind on mortgage payments, or owning a home valued lower than the mortgage contributed to this distress.¹³ Adding to this calamity was the inability to place responsibility and hold a person or group accountable. Finance experts related the cause of the crisis to the "private sector's drive for short-term profit."¹⁴ Politicians and journalists, however, attempted to place the blame on different parties. In 2011, New York City Mayor Michael Bloomberg claimed that Congress forced banks to provide mortgages to those who could not afford the loans. Journalists deemed this "the Big lie," claiming that responsibility for the crisis lay with private banks.¹⁵ As blame continued to shift years after the economic decline began, the stock market recovered and corporations started to profit again. Yet,

unemployment rates were still very prominent at about 7 percent nationwide and citizens' debt had not wavered.¹⁶

The protest efforts of OWS actors make clear that the disparity between corporations' and citizens' financial standing spawned overwhelming frustration among Americans. The Federal Reserve had acted to restore corporations' debts, yet the 2009 stimulus plan that eventually passed as an effort to aid directly American families did not adequately account for unemployment rates nor the shrinking economy and thus was not sufficient to appropriately serve their needs. Therefore, the placement of blame was the least of Americans' worries by 2011. Rather, the lack of government aid supporting the lower and middle classes in light of federal backing of corporations contributed greatly to citizens' grievances. Economics journalist for *The Atlantic*, Derek Thompson, argues that this discrepancy in aid was none other than Washington's fault. How funds are distributed is not necessarily one person's or group's choice. Rather, it is the system in place. "Washington's fiscal policy," he argues, "has been a tactical, statistical, philosophical, and moral failure."¹⁷ More specifically, he attributes the impotence to representatives in government and their more focused attention on the needs of the wealthy versus their constituents. Rather than pointing to a particular party, he charges the election process with fault. Due to the constant need for votes and support, politicians have become "telemarketers for the rich."¹⁸ This is a very distinct perspective on the trials that resulted from the crisis. The founders of Occupy Wall Street, however, embraced these sentiments and their frustration conclusively generated a social movement.

Establishing a Response to Economic Injustice

The name “Occupy Wall Street” became well known as the group’s presence grew in the United States and around the globe. Their demonstrations took place in over 100 U.S. cities and 1,500 international cities.¹⁹ Protest efforts continue, but it is important to understand how the occupation of Zucotti Park in lower Manhattan began, because the New York demonstrations constitute founders’ direct response to the economic crisis and those deemed responsible by founders. As explained in chapter one, Kalle Lasn was credited as the founder of the OWS project based on his part in initiating demonstrations through his piece published in *Adbusters*.²⁰ Lasn’s life work focused, and continues to focus, on the detrimental effects of capitalism in the U.S. and what he refers to as Neo-Classical Economics.

Some of his efforts as founder and editor of *Adbusters* include “TV Turnoff Week,” where he advocated for Americans to take a week off from viewing television, and “Buy Nothing Day,” where readers are persuaded not to succumb to consumer habits. Collectively, his campaigns adhere to what is regarded as culture-jamming, a subvertising. This is a method of creating a parody of well-known advertisements. Lasn created such ads for OWS when he first established the campaign.²¹ Although these ads helped create OWS’s name, he asserts that they do not reflect the movement’s sole purpose. His purpose in bringing awareness to the movement is to highlight three problems he finds most relevant to government and societal ills. First of these three is orthodox economics. Lasn claims that current economic practices have allowed for the financial ruin of 2008. Second, society has become selfish and overwhelmingly anxious due to the consumer culture fostered by capitalism. The final problem is that economic

growth has been fetishized despite the destructive side effects that follow such growth. Ultimately, he hopes to inspire the next generation to refuse the current economic establishment and achieve a scientific revolution in which a new batch of economists will emerge.²²

Micah White, *Adbusters'* former senior editor, wrote the movement's call to action which advocated for a gathering of at least 20,000 people to one location, hoping to secure one simple demand. White has been recognized by various outlets as one of the leading social activists of his generation. *Esquire* named him one of the 37 most influential leaders under 35 and CBS categorized him as one of today's most innovative leaders. He received his Ph.D. from the European Graduate School (EGS) in Switzerland, and currently resides in Oregon as founder of Boutique Activist Consultancy, an organization that aims to serve emerging social movements.

White is most passionate about social activism and public deliberation. In an editorial he wrote in *The Guardian*, he suggests that activism has been linked to marketing and consumption and thus lacks the necessary participation to enact significant social change. Clicktivism, he asserts, is digital activism that perpetuates a lazy mentality of political engagement. Rather than supporting powerful ideas and partaking in substantive activism, individuals sign online petitions and forward e-mails regarding public issues. Online campaigns ask too little of participants and create the illusion that digital activism has the potential to change the world. White's goals within the activist arena are to recapture the meaning of a genuine political movement and inspire what could be a new generation of activists. Doing so can potentially facilitate a "passionate, ideological and total critique of consumer society" that breeds effective digital activism.²³

This editorial was published just one year before White's publication in *Adbusters* imploring citizens to join the OWS movement.

Together, Lasn and White used their talents and connections to feed their activist passions and create a social movement that contested the capitalistic, neo-liberal practices they detested. After months of planning and discussing in early 2011, the two settled on a name, Occupy Wall Street, and a date on which they wanted the encampment to start, September 17th. White sent out an e-mail explaining the plans of the organization and within fifteen minutes, the e-mail reached various social networking sites and led Justine Tunney to register the website OccupyWallSt.org as their online headquarters. At the time, Tunney was a twenty-six year old software engineer for Google. She was quickly recognized as one of the movement's founders due to her operation and maintenance of the site.²⁴

White made an alliance with New Yorkers Against Budget Cuts (NYABC), an organization focused on protesting the cuts they felt resulted from the financial crisis. The two forces joined to begin planning the encampment set for the 17th. Their first meeting began on shaky ground, but they quickly became a cohesive group dedicated to meeting as a General Assembly. As Sociologist Todd Gitlin observed during his time at Zucotti Park, The General Assembly regularly met twice a day and constituted a group of participants that make decisions based on consensus and use hand gestures to convey feedback. Gitlin explains that this method mirrored movements dating back to the Civil Rights era.²⁵ Actors refer to the organization as a "leaderless and leader-full movement" due to the structure of their General Assembly which was comprised of an alternating group of individuals who lead discussion and construct plans only when in position to do

so. The early participants and founders of the movement made it very clear that they did not want to dictate operations and the events that would transpire during encampment. They wanted to leave such decisions up to movement participants.

In July, before the encampment began, Lasn and White decided the organization needed to construct a distinct message for occupiers. This resulted in the call to action authored by White and published in *Adbusters* later in the month pleading for participation and a collective effort to establish the movement's declaration. In this message, White suggested the idea of a Presidential commission determined to end economic influence over representatives, but ultimately left the demand in the hands of participants. Gitlin notes that upon his hearing of the call issued to occupy Wall Street, he was very skeptical about the action that would follow. He assumed this call was just another one of those "puffs of hope and cheerleading for good causes that blow through cyberspace several times a day." His skepticism was matched, he discovered, by participants who showed up first and stayed the longest. He found that joining the movement did not mean rally or march, but instead, just hang out. Although there were some rallies and marches, they did not occur regularly and there were very few named speakers.²⁶

What was termed the New York City General Assembly hosted regular meetings in August and those in attendance with activist experience began facilitating plans. One participant, who was a part of a subgroup of the assembly characterized as the Tactical Committee, took off in search of a place to set up camp. Zucotti Park, formerly known as Liberty Plaza Park, in Lower Manhattan was selected as the organization's official campsite. The rationale behind choosing such a park was based on its private ownership

status as a public park. Such property must be kept open to the public twenty-four hours a day for recreation purposes. Other public parks can be closed, but zoning laws of the park required the owner to keep the area open. In fear of officials discovering their plans, members only distributed information about the location by way of flyers rather than social media. Instead of referring to the park by name, maps of the location were distributed thirty minutes before their encampment commenced.²⁷

In a sit down interview with White, *The New Yorker* journalist Mattathias Schwartz asked the co-founder about the events that occurred when the campsite in Zucotti Park finally came to fruition after months of planning. According to his account, nearly one thousand people gathered by the afternoon of the first day and approximately three hundred stayed overnight. After a few weeks of occupying the park, the campsite grew in participants, tents, supplies, and organization. Sub-groups were organized in order to focus on an array of tasks and assign each participant a role in maintaining the camp. Such foci included cleanliness, food, safety and first aid, structures, and facilitation—even balance sheets from a finance group emerged. White believed that the success of the campsite, at this point, was attributed to the ambiguity of the movement's purpose. Because their mission was so vague, individuals with varying interests were drawn to join. Despite earlier efforts from White and Lasn to construct a detailed list of demands addressed to President Obama and published in *Adbusters*, no such manifesto was ever completed or released. The document drafted aimed at demanding that the President tighten regulations on banking, end high-frequency trading, arrest all of those responsible for the economic crash in 2008, and initiate a commission designed to

investigate political corruption.²⁸ Instead, the General Assembly issued a vague four line manifesto centered on the production of solutions accessible to everyone.

Once the national media began reporting on the activities taking place in Zucotti Park, the movement's capacity to maintain cohesiveness started to decline. This coverage, however, did not begin when the campsite first originated. Sociologist Craig Calhoun highlights the lack of attention paid by national media outlets to the movement during the first few weeks of actors' occupation of the park. He also notes that mainstream media did not begin reporting on protests until discussions of the movement on social media sparked their attention. Reporting reflected attempts to explain the movement to the broader public but resulted in obvious confusion regarding the movement's purpose, goals, and grievances.²⁹

Kaibin Xu, professor of Communication, expands on this aspect of new media coverage. In a content analysis examining media coverage of OWS beginning in September 2011, he asserts that the most widely used marginalization devices, or framing strategies, mainstream media engaged in when covering OWS were lawlessness, official sources, show, and ineffectual goals. Xu specifically analyzed articles published in *The New York Times* and *USA Today* due to their wide circulation and strong influence over U.S. national policy. When coding articles, the researcher aimed to uncover prominent themes and framing devices. The focal points of these published stories included deviant behaviors, police involvement, the theatrical activity that took place such as music and dancing, the unlikelihood of the movement achieving substantive changes, and these discussions were typically cited using testimony from police and government officials.

These marginalization devices, Xu argues, created an overall tone of public disapproval and underscored the negative impacts of the demonstration.³⁰

With a national spotlight, despite the depictions constructed by mainstream media, came more participants and this dynamic created challenges for the park dwellers. Without running water, heat, or electricity, the General Assembly had to make sure their new home was stable enough for the influx of participants and needed to make sure their protest efforts were not only being achieved, but adequately addressed the needs of the movement. The choice to make decisions solely based upon consensus became increasingly difficult and the efficacy of their meetings added to that adversity. Those with louder voices and more social activism experience tended to speak more and get their message across with less strife. The General Assembly established a nine-tenths rule when stalemates occurred, but this process would only go into effect when an advocate from each side of a debate explained their stance. Even with such process in place, those with more radical objections tended to have the most time to speak.³¹ Political Scientist Susan Kang, in her ethnographic work regarding OWS in Zucotti Park, also witnessed a weak implementation of consensus among the General Assembly. Based on her interviews with participants, decisions were primarily made by the same group. The Assembly became something like an inner circle where if one member did not agree with a proposal, the group would not pass it. Despite the agreement that change in government was necessary, Kang holds that conflict arose due to discrepancies between actors' ideas regarding how this change should be implemented.³²

The diversity among participants—in education level, experience, age, careers, etc.—was both beneficial and detrimental to the continued persistence of the movement.

As Gitlin explains, the park became a place for ideas and leaders to emerge. Having a physical space to do so lent to the organization's capability to communicate face-to-face and foster attention to their grievances. This large and heterogeneous presence in the park served as a symbol for possibility, possibility that a movement representing "the people" could do so and enact change on behalf of consensus. There was much doubt about the potential for such a large number of citizens to physically gather in recognition of a cause because the movement began online and persisted through social media. Gitlin states that the notoriety the demonstration in the park eventually gained enabled the movement's slogan "We are the 99%" to become a household phrase. Membership originated from various other organizations such as NYABC, Bloombergville, and the protester group that originated out of support for the hacker group Anonymous. Some impediments, however, stemmed from the movement's numbers and diversity in perspectives.³³

Differing perspectives on the government practices to blame and an absence of clarity regarding a solution to the perceived corruption caused the movement's oft cited lack of purpose. Although protesters clearly articulated that they were representing "the 99%," when government officials and journalists attempted to ask what the organization wanted, no singular answer was given. New York Mayor Bloomberg sent a representative in an attempt to meet with a leader to discuss such questions, but because the movement claimed to be leaderless and without demands, they refused to send anyone to negotiate. Along with this unclear path for resolution, movement participants faced additional challenges from police, arrests, and possible eviction from the park. By the second month, camps emerged all around the globe. Yet, the original camp had already received several warnings of eviction from the sanitation department. They planned to vacate for a

cleaning, but return once it was completed. During the eviction process on November 15th, over 200 participants were arrested. Following their removal from the park, protesters attempted to shut down the New York Stock Exchange, but failed.³⁴

Once the protesters were removed from the park, lawyers for the city and the park's owners met to establish a plan that would keep protesters from returning. The activists obtained a temporary restraining order that barred the city from evicting them and began making plans to re-create their campsite. However, after a Supreme Court hearing, the organization was denied re-entry if in possession of any camping equipment. This dispersal marked the beginning of several other restrictions made against campers throughout the nation.³⁵ Despite their defeat, Gitlin notes the resonance of their message of income inequality and unemployment among citizens and politicians that persisted. One New York Senator claimed that these issues would become a focal point in 2012 political debates.³⁶

Responding to Injustice

Closely reading the rhetoric of OWS lends to an understanding of how, despite a lack of clarity, demands, or purpose, the protesters encompassed the potential to influence public opinion and dictate the subject of political debates. Although the protesters themselves did not give explicit insight to their direction, Micah White's call to action, the manifesto created by the General Assembly, and the popular slogans that originated at Zucotti Park offer more clarity regarding the movement's grievances and purpose. Thus, a close examination of these documents follows and the most salient characteristics of the discourse are discerned in order to provide an understanding of the problems the movement aimed to resolve as well as their method of achieving such a

task. Rather than dividing this portion of the chapter by form of discourse, this analysis focuses on recurring themes. The most prominent themes that emerge from OWS discourse are first, rhetors' attempt to describe the problem the organization aims to address which is identified as a corrupt and immoral government, and second, the need for solidarity and progress to rectify wrongs committed. Thus, the analysis that follows begins with rhetors' effort to define the problem that became the movement's purpose.

Corruption and Immorality in Government

Theorists in a range of fields attempt to define and explain the concept of collective action. Because of this large body of work, providing a definition is warranted. Leland Griffin, one of the earliest Communication Studies scholars to theorize about social movements, describes the term in regards to three necessary variables. The first is people's dissatisfaction with "some aspect of their environment," the second is the desire to create a change within the environment, and finally, the efforts for this change must experience an outcome of either success or failure.³⁷ In order to explore OWS's efforts to define their movement, actors' articulation of the first two variables is examined. This specifically includes analyzing rhetors' attempt to communicate the dissatisfaction they experience with their environment and their explanation of the plan they will engage in as a collective to address this issue and enact change. First, the problem they identify is examined.

As the narrative of OWS explains, Lasn and White decided to publish a call to action in the *Adbusters* magazine to bring citizens together to protest a single demand. That demand had not yet been established and the founders' dissatisfaction with the current economic and political systems in place, as well as the leadership of those

systems became focal points of this document. The intent for occupying public space is first identified as the rectification of a wrong potentially harmful to all Americans—corruption in government. Insinuating that a lack in democracy already exists, the author of this call to action asserts that employees of Wall Street are to blame when he claims “the greatest corrupter of our democracy [is] Wall Street, the financial Gomorrah of America.”³⁸ An analogy between Wall Street practices and the fictional city Gomorrah assigns a deeper meaning to the description of Wall Street as the corrupter of democracy. The story of Gomorrah is told in various religious traditions including Christianity, Judaism, and Islam. Among the variations of the story, the city of Gomorrah is considered synonymous with sin and is eventually consumed by fire due to the ultimate judgment of God. This story has been used as a metaphor to imply moral iniquity. The term “Gomorrah” has been adopted as a by-word for immoral actions and the most shameful vices of a culture.³⁹ Based on this analogy, advocates relate the vices committed in the city of Gomorrah to the practices of Wall Street executives. Thus, the same judgment of the city made by God is made by White and directed toward these executives.

Because this story is common to a range of religions, there is the potential for identification among a diverse audience. Rather than focusing on a story relevant to a particular faith, the analogy aims to portray Wall Street employees as immoral, unethical and ultimately, committers of sin using a common story among even a diverse audience. The use of this particular story also emphasizes how the rhetor’s connection between Wall Street and the lack of democracy within government defines immoral and impious actions as the problem they, as a movement, aim to address. Instead of identifying a

specific action committed by financial executives or government officials, the author illuminates the moral deficiencies of these employees.

Morality and ethical standards are often interpreted differently and defined within a broad spectrum. To best understand the use of these terms, one must discover the cultural norms of the context in which they are used. Rhetorical critic Henry E. McGuckin, in his examination of former President Richard Nixon's famous Checkers Speech, explains that speakers often develop concepts such as good will, moral character and good sense, characteristics Aristotle originally argued constituted ethos, based on cultural values. The author analyzes Nixon's speech as the former President attempted to enhance his ethos following a scandal regarding use of campaign funds for personal expenses. The author argues that Nixon enhanced his character among Americans by aligning himself with the American value system. This system, as identified by Edward D. Steele and Charles Redding, compile the most salient values possessed by U.S. citizens and include characteristics such as individuality, Puritan and pioneer morality, efficiency and practicality, and achievement and success among others. Thus, McGuckin recognized characteristics of Nixon's speech that enhanced his goodwill as they aligned with the cultural values upheld by the audience.⁴⁰

Utilizing the same method of interpretation, White's characterization of Wall Street executives and politicians as unethical and immoral is understood based on the American value system described by Steele and Redding. The relevant values provided by the Communication Studies authors assert that Americans associate morality with honesty, cooperation, personal responsibility, orderliness, and humility. Specifically, they argue that "Pursuit of power, prestige, and economic success for its own sake has been

considered immoral.” In order to uphold a moral purpose, an individual or group’s gains must be acquired for the betterment of the group and through cooperation.⁴¹ The ideal American, in this sense, would not lie or cheat during this process. Regarding ethical standards, Americans often associate ethics with equality and opportunity, freedom, and inherent rights. Upholding equal rights is the core of the justice system and thus when rights such as voting, free education, and government representation are limited or sanctioned, the condition is considered unethical.⁴² OWS rhetors implicitly and explicitly associate a lack of ethical standard and morality to the ills the movement aims to rectify. Therefore, when these terms are used to characterize financial executives and politicians, it can be assumed that rhetors imply that these figures pursue economic gain for its own sake rather than as means to better society, acquire gains dishonestly, and restrict citizens of their rights as citizens.

White uses descriptors other than his reference to the city of Gomorrah throughout the movement’s call to action that portray both Wall Street employees and politicians as unethical. A distinctly immoral relationship between the two is underscored when the OWS co-founder states that one main issue the movement aims to address is “the influence money has over our representatives in Washington.”⁴³ This influence, White assures, led to democracy’s absence in the U.S. Due to such unethical behaviors, the public must act in order to regain their power as citizens. White warns that it is “time for democracy not corporatocracy, we’re doomed without it.”⁴⁴ This excerpt reinforces the idea that selfishness among leaders threatens the integrity of their government. As this document lays out the corrupt actions of leaders the public must trust, it also portrays this corruption as a threat, specifically a threat to a democratic government. This absence in

democracy alludes to a weakened sense of power among citizens and the limitation of inherent freedoms.

Again, money is indicated as the contributing factor to the corruption that violated citizens' trust in their government. "The lucre of the corporations" is suggested to be an impediment to a citizen-run government and because of such impure and selfish action, citizens are "caught helpless by the current power structure."⁴⁵ White's language throughout the initial document represents a criticism of government actions and illustrates the bedrock idea OWS relies upon. The call to action ultimately contends that actions committed by political leaders violated ideological and cultural expectations that citizens of a democracy carry. In doing so, the system that governs both politicians and corporations urges protest. Without articulating a specific demand, citizens understand that current political practices do not align with acceptable notions of government. Thus, without their action, such practices will only persist and continue to erode the system that once decreed their power as citizens of a democracy.

This idea endured beyond the initial call to action and was reinforced by the slogan "the government did this" that was posted on a banner at the New York campsite. This slogan acted as a reminder to all protesters and citizens that their financial struggles were the direct result of the actions committed by politicians. It also aided in maintaining one of the movement's original purposes—to emphasize the government's role in the financial crisis of 2008 as well as the economic struggle of citizens that resulted in the aftermath. The government's responsibility for citizens' plight was not merely their actions leading up to the crash, but their inability to mend the issue with a plan to relinquish debt. This slogan, then, not only underscores the role politicians played prior to

and during the country's financial dilemma, but their ineptitude to aid citizens during a time of record high unemployment, skyrocketing debt, and the housing market crash.⁴⁶ Highlighting these dimensions of the government's fault reiterates the need for change not only regarding leaders, but the system in which they operate as well.

In addition to providing the audience with a purpose for protest, this call to action and the communication that followed focused on characterizing the movement itself and the actions to be made in order to regain a morally and efficiently functioning government. Moral, as defined earlier, refers to honest work, cooperation, and orderliness. This definition closely aligns with understandings of efficiency and progress. When describing OWS's solution to current problematic conditions as efficient, the same value system is used. Steele and Redding hold that Americans view efficiency as "solving problems as they arise, getting things done," and often relate the concept to practicality, competence and experience. In addition to identifying OWS's goal as actualizing a more efficient political system, it is argued that rhetors rationalize their plan of action by depicting it as progressive. When using this referent of progressivism, Steele and Redding explain that change and progress are understood by Americans as the improvement of human nature and the move toward a better form of life. They argue that Americans often try to live the future and value efforts aimed at developing advancements. Change is not only necessary, but beneficial.⁴⁷ Thus, when it is identified that OWS rhetoric emphasizes progression and efficiency in government and society as a whole, these terms are understood using the value system outlined by Steele and Redding.

Articulating Progress and Solidarity

The *Adbusters* article began by emphasizing the unique qualities of the proposed movement. Such extraordinary protest efforts, White explains, were conceived of by combining tactics used by protesters in Tahrir Square advocating an Egyptian revolution in 2011 and the protest campers in Spain working towards a more democratic state. In Egypt, more than a million actors occupied Tahrir Square, a public town square, and demanded that their President, Hosni Mubarak, step down from office. Protesters remained in the square for nearly two months and repeated their demand until Mubarak resigned as President.⁴⁸ Responding to the record breaking unemployment rates, citizens of Spain organized protest camps throughout main squares across the country. Their mission closely resembled OWS's as they demonstrated against Spain's financial crisis and the politicians and bankers deemed responsible.⁴⁹

White maintains that combining the strategies of occupying public space and continuously chanting a singular demand represents "A worldwide shift in revolutionary tactics."⁵⁰ Other descriptors used to reflect a progressive solution include characterizing their protest methods as an "emerging stratagem," "fresh," "novel," and the creation of a "new formula." White uses these terms to endorse the idea of coming together to camp on Wall Street. He suggests that this "new formula" can enact "a whole new social dynamic."⁵¹ Implicit in this encouragement is the need for thousands of participants. Thus, in addition to the endorsement of this significant societal change is the plea for participation. Using such language to describe the campaign highlights the desire to enact original efforts and implies that White believes accomplishing so will garner changes in government that reflect a more efficient system. In addition to the descriptors provided

above, this is further demonstrated when he claims removing the economic influence of a “corporatocracy” is the key to reinstating a democratic government. This characterizes the movement’s efforts as focused on rectifying the wrongs committed by officials as well as establishing more functional social and economic practices.

White is explicit in his appeal for increased participation, calling for the movement’s need “to see 20,000 people.” With this amount, he claims, “we start setting the agenda for a new America.” The discourse clearly devises a goal, but also draws attention to the movement’s commitment to public interest. Rather than advocating for a particular agenda, the author articulates OWS’s purpose as simply upholding the will of the people. For example, the call to action states that “cleaning up corruption in Washington is something all Americans, right and left, yearn for and can stand behind.” Here, the author attempts to diminish any political biases towards a particular party which reinforces the movement’s commitment to all citizens regardless of political affiliation. In doing so, his appeal for participation represents an open approach and a tactic to reach a greater range of potential participants. Although Gitlin and some media characterize the movement as leftist advocates,⁵² the call to action reflects an attempt to attract individuals regardless of their political affiliation. Additionally, he urges the audience to create a demand they wish to achieve. While promoting “one simple demand” that embodies “pragmatic simplicity,” White projects an encouraging message to remain united despite a diversity in perspectives. He asks that the audience “help each other zero in on what our one demand will be.”⁵³

Using language that emphasizes the number of advocates needed and their potential to enact a more efficient citizen-centered government articulates the possibility

for progress through solidarity. Making statements that motivate individuals to help each other and “stay strong” despite their differences forms a theme that the movement values unity. Stressing the need to unify on the basis of achieving government and social change despite one’s political beliefs adds to the movement’s commitment to implement a more democratic government. Supporting these notions of consensus and harmony is the promise that it will improve larger society. Referring to potential dissidents as “redeemers, rebels, and radicals” and consistently expressing the possibility for a more functional and unique political system enables the idea that coming together and embracing individual differences is the formula for this progressive system. Thus, the language patterns indicate that coming together is the necessary means for the intended outcome which White articulates is a government focused solely on “the will of people.”⁵⁴

The term radical is also polysemous, but in this text can be understood as related to progress. Similar to the way Steele and Redding associate progress with improvement and advancement, Michael Kaplan explains that, when referring to a political system, ‘radical’ concerns the possibility of social transformation and modification. Without the possibility of change, the process would not be political at all. This change, he contends, relies upon rhetoric as a discursive model of politics.⁵⁵ Therefore, within the social movement context, White’s use of the term to refer broadly to a new form of government reflects the need for change and identifies with those that also perceive problems within government and seek social and political change.

As a further means to motivate participants and maintain the theme of democratic ideas, White promises a positive outlook for the future if cooperation is gained. Precisely,

he assures that their efforts will propel the country “toward the radical democracy of the future.” Again, as further assurance, he insists “If we hang in there, 20,000 strong, week after week against every police and National Guard effort to expel us from Wall Street, it would be impossible for Obama to ignore us.”⁵⁶ The positively oriented messages provide readers with a vote of confidence for acting alongside the OWS collective. In addition, this description reinforces earlier premises that their goal, as a movement, is to construct a new and more contemporary form of government. Emphasizing that cooperation from several thousand individuals is necessary provides potential participants with a sense of community and cohesiveness because enacting a solution requires their unity. The use of the term radical is present once again and is employed as a means to justify the movement’s actions. When utilized while attempting to motivate potential adherents, the term is inclusive, but again, to those who perceive the need for change. Because White identified problems plaguing politicians in general, not solely those affiliated with a particular party, his plea does not reflect an effort to exclude citizens from certain political parties either. Rather, the goal to achieve a more radical future again implies the need for participation among citizens seeking change.

As many slogans emerged during protests in Zucotti Park, a variety aligned with the movement’s devotion to unity. Demonstrators posted the slogans “we the people” and “we are the 99%” on banners at the campsite. Coupled with a banner reading “this is what democracy looks like,” OWS rhetors project a sign of solidarity and efficiency. The first slogan reflects the movement’s identification with the Constitution and the ideals that the document represents. Taking the exact language from the Preamble aligns the movement’s principles with those of the Constitution. Because the Constitution was

written as a means of ensuring citizens maintained their inherent rights as Americans, the slogan works to assign the same notion to the movement. More specifically, by alluding to the Constitution, the slogan reinforces the notions dispelled in the call to action that characterize the movement's goal as reconstructing a democratic government. Again, reinforcing the idea that the changes the organization aims to uphold do not favor either political party or any specific class, race, or gender, and instead attend to the need for progress and representation in government by those the movement deems moral and ethical.

Further strengthening this claim of equality, is the second slogan implying that those participating in the protests represent the portion of the population who have not benefitted from the economic system. Referring to a statistic released in 2010 that described wealth distribution in the country and showed that the richest 1% control and possess the majority of the country's wealth,⁵⁷ demonstrators state that they are acting on behalf of those suffering from the economic inequality. This particular slogan works in conjunction with the former by underscoring those whom the movement aims to represent. Rather than attending to the needs of a particular class, the movement more openly aims to serve all of those unaccounted for or misrepresented during and following the financial crisis.

Regarding the last slogan "this is what democracy looks like," campers articulate their alignment with democratic ideals and their interpretation of democracy. Assigning their actions the classification of democracy lends to an understanding of their efforts. Although not entirely definite, this characterization alludes to protesters' interpretation of democracy as a form of government that values citizens above all other interests. As the

call to action asserts, political officials faulted by allowing corporations and economic gain to influence their decisions in government. Thus, using such slogan throughout the campsite serves to express the organization's desire to reincorporate public interest as the driving factor in political decision making. Together, these three slogans exemplify the collective's most crucial commitments—to respond to the needs of all citizens and achieve a political system that values such needs.

Slogans became an important rhetorical strategy for expressing grievances and the movement's purpose, but the organization's manifesto also served as an important rhetorical tactic. The General Assembly created this declaration collectively, intending to encapsulate OWS's purpose. Despite White's efforts to publish a more detailed list of demands, the assembly decided against such a document and instead developed this much more concise declaration. The entire four line mantra reads "Exercise your right to peaceably assemble; occupy public space; create a process to address the problems we face; and generate solutions accessible to everyone."⁵⁸

Parallel to the collective's slogans, this discourse takes language from the nation's Constitution and embraces an ambiguous message to epitomize their objective as a movement. Using such language shapes the organization's goal to maintain citizen rights and act within the confines of the law by referring to a past document that also affirmed these goals. More specifically, these lines come from Article I of the Constitution which affirms the right to freedom of expression and religion. Emphasizing this particular right upholds the democratic ideals expressed by the movement and rearticulates their goal to represent the many and diverse voices of the people without favoring one group over another. Furthermore, communicating the desire to act peaceably and solely occupy space

reflects their desire to remain nonviolent. This component of the manifesto enhances the movement's moral and principled purpose. Juxtaposed to the corrupt actions trusted officials committed, the integrity of the movement is further underscored.

Focusing the second half of the manifesto on OWS's purpose constructs a proactive plan that tends to all citizens. Stating their efforts to address public problems exemplifies the movement's objective to become a pragmatic organization that attempts to resolve any issue plaguing citizens. In addition to addressing such problems, they devote their actions to the creation of solutions accessible to all. Given the result of the economic crisis, it is evident the manifesto is referring to the government aid provided to large banks and corporations and the lack of attention paid to citizens' debt. Here, the movement's aim is described similarly to the explanation provided in the call to action. Along with the goal of rectifying the wrongs committed by government officials, OWS intends to create a system that more adequately manages the needs of the public regardless of class standing or income level.

In combination, OWS discourse exemplified a movement with the intent to generate a new and more efficient political system that might allow citizens to regain their power to govern. Rhetors articulated unification and solidarity as their method of achieving such a system. Democracy, emphasized as one of their chief goals, was also described as the desired system demonstrators aimed to recover and perfect. Highlighting the need for those of all class standings to participate ultimately illuminated the organization's commitment to construct a government that upholds moral and ethical principles. Principles such as those described by Steele and Redding that refer to a system, in this case political, bound by honesty, cooperation, and advocate equal rights

for citizens. Along with their efforts to define the problems the movement focused on addressing, OWS rhetoric both provided their audience with a purpose worthy of protest and the solutions to resolve current political problems.

Conclusion

Financial greed has a long history in the U.S. and the implications of such vice came to fruition in 2008 when many of the most influential and powerful banks and investment firms came “within a whisker” of bankruptcy.⁵⁹ Their inability to account accurately for gains and losses coupled with the housing market crash that soon followed left many citizens scarred by debt and unable to recover quickly. The government took from the Federal Reserve in order to replenish the debt large banks experienced but failed to implement a plan that could adequately aid citizens during their economic trials.⁶⁰ As one might anticipate, this left many individuals feeling helpless and unaccounted for, including Micah White and Kalle Lasn. White’s and Lasn’s feelings, however, merely added fuel to the fire that burned in desperation to dismantle capitalism and eradicate the economic system in place. Thus, OWS founders were born and what became a global movement⁶¹ began with a call to action authored by White.

This document set out to scorn both government officials and Wall Street executives for their unethical follies. Emphasizing their mistakes and the path these ills created for corrupt practices in Washington highlighted the need for action. This need stemmed from politicians’ failure to consider public interests, and was presented as a threat to citizens’ power. This placement of blame was sustained by displaying the slogan “the government did this” throughout the Zucotti Park campsite.

In addition to constructing a rationale for collective action, OWS rhetors described the movement's objective as geared toward replacing current political and economic practices with a more efficient and ethical system. Specifically, he referred to this system as a "whole new social dynamic" in which citizens would "start setting the agenda." White's call to action indicates a pursuit to establish a movement that addressed the needs of all citizens. In doing so, the movement could replicate a system they aimed to enact within government. The organization's manifesto mirrored this sentiment. Articulating the goal to generate solutions accessible to all not only defined their purpose as a collective, but also highlighted the government's inefficiencies. Thus, the document served a dual purpose by amplifying the problems necessitating protest and explicating the social movement's objective.

Additional slogans that appeared displayed at Zucotti Park paralleled the objective portrayed in the manifesto. "We the people," rearticulated the movement's goal to serve all citizens, not a particular class, gender or race. The slogan "we are the 99%" demonstrated the same non-discriminatory idea as well as the desire to resolve the economic disparity among the elite and the rest of the economic strata. Finally, the slogan "this is what democracy looks like" represented demonstrators' understanding of the democratic ideals they worked to promote. As a reference to the public demonstration at the park, the slogan emphasizes politicians misunderstanding of democratic practices and protesters' ability to come together and embody the political system they wish to actualize.

OWS discourse indirectly responded to the economic crisis that climaxed in 2008. Conversely, their rhetoric directly articulated their perception of Wall Street executives'

and politicians' role in the catastrophe. This ultimately became the guiding purpose that ignited collective action. OWS rhetors also explained that their efforts as a movement were designed to address the needs of the public and influence the establishment of a new democratic system that was created by the people, for the people. The themes illuminated throughout these efforts are rhetorically examined in the following chapter as they are identified as methods of framing the movement. The language within these themes are further unpacked to discover how defining OWS contributes to their collective identity.

Endnotes

¹ Todd Gitlin, *Occupy Nation: The Roots, the Spirit, and the Promise of Occupy Wall Street* (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 2012), 15-16.

² This particular choice in organization is modeled after Mathew Glass's book, *Citizens Against the MX: Public Languages in the Nuclear Age*, (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1993), in which he divides the book into two broad sections. Chapters 1-3 describe the narrative of the campaign's emergence and the debates that followed. The next 3 chapters focus on his interpretation and analysis of citizens' discourse that led to the termination of the MX deployment.

³ Wayne Brockriede, "Rhetorical Criticism as Argument," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 60, no. 2 (1974): 165.

The term "rhetorical experience" is borrowed from Brockriede to describe the object of criticism as it denotes more than discourse, but encompasses a range of phenomena including "instances when people and/or ideas relate together in a concrete context."

⁴ Tim Worstall, "Ben Bernanke: The 2008 Financial Crisis Was Worse Than The Great Depression," *Forbes* Aug. 7, 2014. <http://www.forbes.com/sites/timworstall/2014/08/27/ben-bernanke-the-2008-financial-crisis-was-worse-than-the-great-depression/>

⁵ Nick Mathiason, "Three Weeks that Changed the World," *The Guardian* Dec. 27, 2008. <http://www.theguardian.com/business/2008/dec/28/markets-credit-crunch-banking-2008>, para 2.

⁶ David Hatherly and Gavin Kretschmar, "Capital and Income Financialization: Accounting for the 2008 Financial Crisis," *Elsevier* 35 (2011): 210.

⁷ Hatherly and Kretschmar, "Capital and Income Financialization," 210.

⁸ Shann Turnbull, "Could the 2008 US Financial Crisis Have Been Avoided with Network Governance?," *International Journal of Disclosure and Governance* 9, no. 3 (2012): 238-39.

⁹ Mathiason, "Three Weeks that Changed the World," para 13.

¹⁰ Mathiason, "Three Weeks that Changed the World," para 31.

-
- ¹¹ Alexandra Twin, “Stocks Crushed: Approximately \$1.2 Trillion in Market Value is Gone After the House Rejects the \$700 Billion Bank Bailout Plan,” *CNN Money* Sept. 29, 2008 http://money.cnn.com/2008/09/29/markets/markets_newyork/
- ¹² Manav Tanneeru, “How a ‘Perfect Storm’ Led to the Economic Crisis,” *CNN* Jan 29, 2009. <http://www.cnn.com/2009/US/01/29/economic.crisis.explainer/index.html?iref=newssearch>, para 31.
- ¹³ “The Effect of the Economic Crisis on Americans,” *The National Bureau of Economic Research*, last updated Aug. 2014, <http://www.nber.org/bah/2010no3/w16407.html>.
- ¹⁴ Steve Denning, “Lest We Forget: Why We Had a Financial Crisis,” *Forbes* (Nov. 22, 2011) <http://www.forbes.com/sites/stevedenning/2011/11/22/5086/>, para 1.
- ¹⁵ Denning, “Lest We Forget,” para 4.
- ¹⁶ Derek Thompson, “Employment Down, Profits Up: The Aftermath of the Financial Crisis in 1 Graph,” *The Atlantic* Sept. 13, 2013 <http://www.theatlantic.com/business/archive/2013/09/employment-down-profits-up-the-aftermath-of-the-financial-crisis-in-1-graph/279671/>,” para 5.
- ¹⁷ Thompson, “Employment Down, Profits Up,” para 8.
- ¹⁸ Thompson, “Employment Down, Profits Up,” para 9.
- ¹⁹ “Occupy Wall Street,” *Occupywallst.org*, last modified August 22, 2014.
- ²⁰ Mattathias Schwartz, “Pre-Occupied: The Origins and Future of Occupy Wall Street,” *The New Yorker* Nov. 28, 2011. <http://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2011/11/28/pre-occupied?currentPage=all>, para 1.
- ²¹ These advertisements can be seen here: <https://www.adbusters.org/campaigns/occupywallstreet>.
- ²² Patrick Kingsley, “Kalle Lasn: The Man Who Inspired the Occupy Movement,” *The Guardian* Nov. 5, 2012. <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2012/nov/05/kalle-lasn-man-inspired-occupy>.
- ²³ Micah White, “Clicktivism is Ruining Leftist Activism,” *The Guardian* Aug. 12, 2010 <http://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2010/aug/12/clicktivism-ruining-leftist-activism>.
- ²⁴ Schwartz, “Pre-Occupied,” para 16.
- ²⁵ Gitlin, *Occupy Nation*, 17.
- ²⁶ Gitlin, *Occupy Nation*, xiii-xiv.
- ²⁷ Gitlin, *Occupy Nation*, 18-19.
- ²⁸ Schwartz, “Pre-Occupied,” para 33.
- ²⁹ Craig Calhoun, “Occupy Wall Street in Perspective,” *The British Journal of Sociology* 64, no. 1 (2013): 32.
- ³⁰ Kaibin Xu, “Framing Occupy Wall Street: A Content Analysis of *The New York Times* and *USA Today*,” *The International Journal of Communication* 7 (2013): 2418-2421.
- ³¹ Schwartz, “Pre-Occupied,” para 35-36.

-
- ³² Susan Kang, "Demands Belong to the 99%? The Conflict over Demands, Issues, and Goal in OWS," in *Occupying Political Science* eds. Emily Welty, Matthew Bolton, Meghana Nayak, and Christopher Malone (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2013), 78-79.
- ³³ Gitlin, *Occupy Nation*, 4 & 13.
- ³⁴ Schwartz, "Pre-Occupied," para 65-66.
- ³⁵ Chad Bray, Jessica Firger, Andrew Grossman, and Pervaiz Shallwani, "Judge Rules Against 'Occupy' Protesters," *The Wall Street Journal* Nov. 16, 2011
<http://www.wsj.com/articles/SB10001424052970204190504577039253668863814>.
- ³⁶ Gitlin, *Occupy Nation*, 27.
- ³⁷ Leland Griffin, "The Rhetoric of Historical Movements," *The Quarterly Journal of Speech* 38, no. 2 (1952): 184.
- ³⁸ Micah White, "#OccupyWallStreet: A Shift in Revolutionary Tactics," *Adbusters* July 17, 2011.
<https://www.adbusters.org/blogs/adbusters-blog/occupywallstreet.html>. para 4.
- ³⁹ Conrad Leyser, "Cities of the Plain: The Rhetoric of Sodomy in Peter Damian's 'Book of Gomorrah,'" *Romanic Review* 86, no. 2 (1995): 192-193.
- ⁴⁰ Henry E. McGuckin, "A Value Analysis of Richard Nixon's 1952 Campaign-Fund Speech," *The Southern Speech Journal* 33, no. 4 (1968): 260-261.
- ⁴¹ Edward D. Steele and W. Charles Redding, "The American Value System: Premises for Persuasion," *Western Speech* 26, no. 2 (1962): 85.
- ⁴² Steele and Redding, "The American Value System," 87.
- ⁴³ White, "#OccupyWallStreet," para 8.
- ⁴⁴ White, "#OccupyWallStreet," para 7.
- ⁴⁵ White, "#OccupyWallStreet," para 8.
- ⁴⁶ Carmen M. Reinhart and Kenneth S. Rogoff, "The Aftermath of Financial Crises," *The National Bureau of Economic Research* Jan 2009 <http://www.nber.org/papers/w14656>.
- ⁴⁷ Steele and Redding, "The American Value System," 86-87.
- ⁴⁸ Ahdaf Soueif, "Tahrir Square Protests: 'For Everyone Here, There's No Turning Back,'" *The Guardian* Feb. 1, 2011. <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2011/feb/01/ahdaf-soueif-egypt-protests>.
- ⁴⁹ Alan Taylor, "A Defiant 'Spanish Revolution,'" *The Atlantic* May 20, 2011
<http://www.theatlantic.com/photo/2011/05/a-defiant-spanish-revolution/100070/>.
- ⁵⁰ White, "#OccupyWallStreet," para 1.
- ⁵¹ White, "#OccupyWallStreet," para 1, 3, & 9.
- ⁵² Gitlin, *Occupy Nation*, xiii & 23.
- ⁵³ White, "#OccupyWallStreet," para 8 & 10.

⁵⁴ White, “#OccupyWallStreet,” para 1 & 8.

⁵⁵ Michael Kaplan, “The Rhetoric of Hegemony: Laclau, Radical Democracy, and the Rule of Tropes,” *Philosophy and Rhetoric* 43, no. 3 (2010): 256-257.

⁵⁶ White, “#OccupyWallStreet,” para 8 & 3.

⁵⁷ G. William Domhoff, “Wealth, Income, and Power,” *Who Rules America?* Updated February 2013. <http://www2.ucsc.edu/whorulesamerica/power/wealth.html>.

⁵⁸ Schwartz, “Pre-Occupied,” para 33.

⁵⁹ Mathiason, “Three Weeks that Changed the World,” para 1.

⁶⁰ Mathiason, “Three Weeks that Changed the World,” para 13.

⁶¹ Erika Biddle, “Re-Animating Joseph Beuys’ ‘Social Sculpture’: Artistic Interventions and the Occupy Movement,” *Communication and Critical/Cultural Studies* 11, no. 1 (2014): 26.

Chapter Three: A Rhetorical Critique of Social Movement Framing

The term “occupy,” once solely a verb, is now a commonly known noun used to reference social movements all around the globe fighting for equality, democracy, and power—among others. The ideas and sentiment that flourished in a park in downtown Manhattan became a purpose to which citizens devoted a part of their life. Those characterized as Occupy Wall Street (OWS) protestors engaged in revolutionary tactics to bring to light public issues that had begun to deteriorate the democracy Americans value so greatly. This grand effort, like many collective efforts, required substantial work.

Chapter two provided the narrative of OWS. This included the events that catalyzed protest, the eminent actors involved, and the efforts participants engaged in to make their cause known. The discourse disseminated by movement rhetors was described as a means to discover the most prominent rhetorical strategies actors in engaged in. Examination illuminated two salient themes categorized as the articulation of a problematic condition worthy of protest and the explication of the movement’s intended solution. The ills OWS aimed to rectify were characterized as the moral and ethical deficiencies of government officials and Wall Street executives, which contributed to the 2008 financial crisis. Rhetors’ depictions of OWS protests as a progressive solution to the identified societal ills constituted the second theme. These themes not only illustrate the movement’s purpose and plan of action, but also exemplify what theorists refer to as framing.

Framing is often defined as the process of constructing reality. The way in which reality is constructed influences how the audience understands a situation, or, more specifically, an issue. The language employed in this process, Edward Schiappa argues,

shapes the public's conception of acting or responding to said issues. The following chapter closely assesses the framing methods OWS actors engaged in throughout their publicly disseminated messages. The method of analysis combines Schiappa's understanding of defining a situation with Communication Studies scholar Robert Entman's framing paradigm. Entman adds to the concept of framing by explaining how the process communicates to promote a problem, causal interpretation, moral evaluation, and/or treatment recommendation. Sociologists Robert Benford and David Snow also theorize about framing and do so specifically within the context of social movements. Thus, their conception of framing is utilized to demonstrate how collective actors engage in these strategies given the adversity and obstacles inherent to advocating social change.

This close reading reveals the strategies movement actors employed to frame OWS. Doing so led to the discovery of the relationship between framing processes and identity construction. Rhetors' capacity to delineate a problem and solution simultaneously defined those the movement represented, those they opposed, and their purpose as an organization. These efforts embody the rhetoric of identification and the rhetoric of polarization, two strategies integral to the process of constructing a collective identity. Using Kenneth Burke's theory of identification as a lens to discover OWS's capacity to identify with potential participants, it is evident that actors attempt to articulate a common ground with the audience and to become consubstantial with publics. Burke contends that consubstantiality is an essential first step toward persuasion. This is the act of articulating differences in a way that allows individuals to maintain their unique identity while discovering commonalities with the rhetor.¹

Richard Lanigan asserts that within the context of social movements, constructing polarization is needed to unite the collective. Thus, actors must not only diminish the differences between participants, but also provide a dichotomy between actors and their opposition to promote further solidarity. According to Susan Kang, during demonstrations at Zucotti Park actors' conception of those who constituted the opposition changed on a daily basis between and among institutions, politicians, corporations, banks, and ideologies. This inconsistency exemplifies rhetors' inability to construct a clear polarization. In turn, this lack of succinct distinction prevented actors from uniting against a common enemy and establishing a specific plan of action. Therefore, it is argued that although OWS's framing methods allowed for identification with a larger audience, the lack in clarity regarding the opposition prevented the movement's capacity to unite in pursuit of a specific course of action.

OWS is a popularly studied phenomenon. Last year, the academic journal *Communication and Critical/ Cultural Studies* devoted an entire issue to examining OWS's impact on U.S. culture in order to add to social movement theory. Additionally, books such as *Occupying Political Science* compile articles examining critical functions of the movement and its emergence. Scholars who added to this growing body of research originate from disciplines such as Sociology, Communication Studies, and Political Science. Their ethnographic work regards aspects of the movement as witnessed in Zucotti Park such as the People's Mic, nonviolent strategies employed, the concept of occupying public space, the influence of mainstream and social media on the New York demonstrations, and the art practices actors used to communicate with the public. Based on such work, theorists leave very few stones unturned. Yet, the research gathered most

prominently focuses on the strategies OWS protesters utilized on a micro-level. In contrast, this examination analyzes rhetorical tactics on a macro-level by closely reading publicly circulated texts. Doing so works to begin bridging previous research that employs ethnographic methods, interviews, and micro-level discourse with public advocacy. This not only aids in understanding each level of strategic work, but also gives insight into the relationship between publicly disseminated rhetoric and the day-to-day interactions and tactics engaged in on the ground.

This rhetorical examination explores multiple processes involved in OWS's communication and in doing so illuminates the interplay between framing and collective identity. To understand this relationship, however, each concept must first be explained independently. To begin, the two themes identified in chapter two and described previously are utilized here as they signify rhetors' strategies to frame the movement. The discourse is then examined to discover how these methods enabled the collective to construct an identity. Finally, the identity articulated by actors is evaluated based on their efforts to identify with prospective movement sympathizers while also establishing polarization between OWS and the opposition.

Defining the Political Situation

OWS's rhetoric defined a political problem that demanded protest and provided potential participants with a course of action to mend perceived ills. Disseminating this discourse aided social actors in describing their purpose as a movement and the means of acting as a collective. These efforts ultimately framed the movement. Communication scholar Edward Schiappa describes the power and utility of framing a situation. The language used to frame an event or situation within the public sphere may eventuate in

social influence. Framing terms, he asserts, are used to make sense of whole situations and in turn to construct an understanding of reality. Such definitions or frames evoke particular attitudes and beliefs among the audience. Thus, rhetors' language use can influence a response from an audience that serves certain interests or purposes.²

Framing, for Schiappa, is a common practice used to characterize issues as either personal, political, or technical. The use of particular adjectives to categorize an issue is integral to determining whom the issue concerns. A choice in adjective is closely related to the attitude exhibited in the message as well as the response expected by the audience. For example, a description incorporating jargon and devoid of emotional language may project an "objective" tone and portray an issue as one to be evaluated by someone within a technical or specialized field, not the general public. Conversely, using value-laden language that represents approval or disapproval of an action may elicit a response that one must act and has the ability to do so. Using terms common to the general public and describing a situation or issue as one that affects the public can persuade an audience that it is their duty to act or respond. Regardless of the framing terms used, descriptions are always partial and their usefulness can only be judged based on the needs and interests they aim to serve.³

Theorists Robert Benford and David Snow provide an overview of nearly twenty years of framing theory and offer an exhaustive explanation of the process, various types, and the relationships that occur between these constructions. According to the authors, social movement actors engage in "the production and maintenance of meaning for constituents, antagonists, and bystanders or observers."⁴ Like Schiappa, Benford and Snow contend that framing is a process of constructing reality. This process includes

three core tasks: diagnostic, prognostic, and motivational framing. They distinctly refer to the outcome of these signifying actions as collective action frames. Although this theory originated by expanding Erving Goffman's explanation of schematas of interpretation, examining these conceptions aids in understanding the unique features of social movements and their ability to legitimate the actions of the organization.⁵ The defining processes discovered throughout OWS discourse are understood using Schiappa's description of the persuasive aspects of language and Benford and Snow's theory of collective action frames.

Communication Studies scholar Robert M. Entman created a paradigm in order to bridge the aspects of the framing process identified across disciplines which aids in understanding how theories from Schiappa and Benford and Snow can be utilized in tandem. For example, he states that this process involves "selecting some aspects of a perceived reality and make them more salient in a communicating text, in such a way as to promote a particular problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation, and/or treatment recommendation for the item described."⁶ The ways in which these frames are established rely upon, as Schiappa also contends, the language utilized by the communicator. Thus, the collective action frames identified previously stem from the use of "certain key words, stock phrases, stereotyped images, sources of information, and sentences that provide thematically reinforcing clusters of facts or judgments."⁷ These strategies guide the audience's or receiver's thinking. The author suggests that this particular form of constructing reality occurs in four locations within the communication process, the communicator, the text, the audience, and the culture. The culture in which these schemas develop influence the type of frames invoked and the way they are

interpreted. Communication, however, ultimately guides the process through strategic selection, emphasis, and the use of the emphasized elements to construct arguments regarding problems and their causes, judgment, and resolutions.⁸ Therefore, Entman's paradigm aids in understanding how language influences the process of constructing frames.

Occupy Wall Street's initial call to action and slogans depict government officials and finance executives as the perpetrators of the economic crisis, the unequal distribution of wealth, and an overall lack of democracy. Micah White, author of the call to action and OWS co-founder, makes this assertion explicit when he states, "The time has come to deploy this emerging stratagem against the greatest corruptor of our democracy: Wall Street, the Financial Gomorrah of America."⁹ Here, financial executives are assigned blame. Comparing these executives to a biblical story constructs a value-laden description and plainly discredits their actions as immoral. As Schiappa claims, using such framing terms focuses attention on certain aspects of a situation while drawing attention away from other aspects. Thus, this description provides the audience with a negative understanding of Wall Street employees and creates a sense of potential gain by reprimanding these individuals. Additionally, in stating that such executives are responsible for a social issue like dismantling democracy, the situation becomes a public matter. Describing the issue as a public matter, Schiappa contends, defines the situation as one that requires a public response.¹⁰ Therefore, framing Wall Street executives as those responsible for an insufficient governmental system portrays the problem as one the audience should act to resolve.

Further examples are provided in the call to action, which supports this description. In addition to the responsibility financial executives bore, politicians are also depicted as at fault. “Corruption in Washington” and the “influence money has over our representatives,” White argues, are the main contributors to the American political system being “unworthy of being called a democracy.”¹¹ Together, Wall Street employees and untrustworthy politicians turned a democracy into what the author refers to as a “corporatocracy.” Not only have their actions led to such a political outcome, but citizens are now “caught helpless by the current power structure.” Therefore, their mission, or simple demand, is to “separate money from politics.”¹² These excerpts exemplify Schiappa’s description of defining a situation as a public problem. Identifying a problem with the use of language common to the general public, he contends, defines an issue as a public matter. Rather than explaining the fraudulent actions committed by these figures in economic terms or with the use of financial jargon, the matter becomes a problem for citizens to resolve.¹³

Focusing on an issue regarding democracy furthers this notion. Because a democratic system is governed by leaders elected to represent the people, a problem identified as a failing democracy portrays a threat to one’s political power. This is emphasized when White claims that individuals must come together to reinstate democracy because they are “doomed without it.”¹⁴ Schiappa notes that dramatizing an issue and declaring what is at stake pushes an issue to the forefront of the audience’s mind. This further depicts the situation as one that requires immediate action.¹⁵ Entman expands on the notion of dramatizing when he asserts that frames make issues more salient. The language applied in these descriptions not only creates a more dramatic

understanding of the problems identified in the call to action, but allow the audience to perceive the issue as more noticeable and meaningful. Using terms such as “doom,” “helpless” and “corruption,” increases the salience of the message and highlights particular features of the matter they are addressing. This in turn strengthens the probability that the audience will interpret the issue as significant.¹⁶

Although OWS’s description of the problem the movement aims to address is vague, the audience is encouraged to identify a condition commanding action. Benford and Snow refer to this process as diagnostic framing. Because directed action requires the recognition of a problem, diagnostic framing obligates social movement actors to identify the source of causality and/ or the culpable agents, as well. This is similar to Entman’s claim that frames work to promote a problem and provide a causal interpretation. Thus, in the case of OWS, the call to action directly classifies a lack of democracy and corruption in government as the problem and Wall Street executives and politicians as those to blame and uses particular terms, as previously identified, to strengthen further the importance of that issue. In addition, the slogan, “the government did this,” promotes the assignment of blame on politicians. Displayed at the Zucotti Park campsite, “the government did this” functions as an attributional component of diagnostic framing. Working similarly to a reminder, this slogan reinforces the placement of blame on government officials and their role in the current economic struggles experienced by citizens. In conjunction with this slogan, the popular “We are the 99%” mantra depicts, by contrast, the elite and wealthy as the opposition. The public discourse offered by OWS actors established a diagnostic frame that depicts corruption in government and an absent democracy as the problematic condition necessitating protest. As well, greedy politicians

and immoral Wall Street employees constituting the 1% are appointed as those responsible for such a dilemma.

The assignment of blame provides the audience with the causal interpretation of the problem by emphasizing the government's role in the previously asserted problem. This exemplifies Entman's claim that including certain characteristics and excluding others enforces a particular characterization of a person or event. Because framing involves the selection of certain aspects to construct a narrative, naturally other aspects are left out. Similar to Schiappa's explanation that defining a situation inherently leaves out some information while emphasizing other aspects, Entman argues that the information excluded is as important to the resulting frame as that which is included.¹⁷ Solely referring to the government as the perpetrator and excluding referents to specific actors or leaders, this slogan highlights how the system in its entirety is culpable. Thus, not only are actors engaging in framing the issue at hand, but their language directs the audience to the cause of the problem.

Benford and Snow refer to the second "core framing task" involved in constructing a collective action view as prognostic. Prognostic framing "involves the articulation of a proposed solution to the problem, or at least plan of attack, and the strategies for carrying out the plan."¹⁸ Amidst forming a particular understanding of the current political system that is ill equipped to serve public interests, collective actors must explain what is to be done as a means to motivate mobilization. As mentioned, defining a situation as a crisis or with dramatic framing terms stimulates the idea that the public must act. Providing detail as to how the audience should act includes demonstrating the efficacy of the plan and establishing a rationale.¹⁹ OWS rhetors do so, first, by

articulating their course of action as camping out in a public space and promoting a singular demand. The call to action begins by urging: “On Sept 17, flood into lower Manhattan, set up tents, kitchens, peaceful barricades and occupy Wall Street.” Once a campsite is organized, participants are “incessantly [to] repeat one simple demand in a plurality of voices.” Although the author claims that the request should be devised through consensus, White provides one ultimatum that is a current top contender. This plan would require President Obama to “ordain a Presidential Commission tasked with ending the influence money has over our representatives in Washington.”²⁰ Camping in a public space is thus seen as the strategy for enacting a single demand devised by the actors and ultimately their prognosis for the identified problem.

In conjunction with the call to action, the organization’s manifesto states the movement’s plan and course of action. The short declaration, written to explicate OWS’s purpose, reads “Exercise your right to peaceably assemble; occupy public space; create a process to address the problems we face; and generate solutions accessible to everyone.”²¹ This discourse also aids in the movement’s prognostic framing phase by providing the audience with OWS’s intended goals and strategies. This condensed manifesto frames the collective’s solution for the problematic political system as acting nonviolently to solve public issues in a manner that satisfies all citizens.

Along with providing this plan for action, rhetors legitimize their means of enacting a solution. The call to action holds that coming together to camp and chant one single demand is a “revolutionary tactic” that infuses protest efforts from Tahrir Square in Egypt to Spain. Because both protests were successful in their respective situations, White claims that by using their techniques, OWS will also elicit successful results. He

explains “Tahrir square succeeded in large part because the people of Egypt made a straightforward ultimatum... [and repeated it] over and over again until they won.” Regarding the tactic to camp in a public urban setting, the co-founder states that by remaining strong and with the solidarity of a large demonstration, “it would be impossible for Obama to ignore us.” Combining these efforts allows OWS actors both to create a spectacle and to propose an uncomplicated demand. Further explaining the underlying logic of this strategy, White argues that the “beauty of this new formula, and what makes this novel tactic exciting, is its pragmatic simplicity... [which] if achieved, would propel us toward the radical democracy of the future.”²² The reasoning behind this method is attributed to the success it yielded in other similar protest situations. For Egyptians it contributed to forcing former President Hosni Mubarak to step down,²³ and for protesters in Spain success lay in motivating participants nationwide to join their movement.²⁴ White expresses that this combination of tactics has the potential to bring strength to citizens by shifting the political power from corrupt individuals and back to the public. Thus, OWS engages in the component of prognostic framing that justifies their strategies when their actions are deemed pragmatic, based on the history of their tactics and the potential future they can induce.

The final framing task, according to Benford and Snow, is motivational in nature. Similar to expounding a rationale for a particular course of action, motivational framing provides a rationale for actors’ involvement in the movement. Essentially, this task works to ignite agency among individuals.²⁵ The OWS call to action articulates a sense of urgency when identifying a lack of democracy and implies that the current political system has relinquished citizens’ power to govern. Asserting that U.S. democracy has

been overtaken by economic interests and fraudulent practices depicts a government no longer governing for the people and by the people—something deemed a core American value. In the American value system described in chapter two, Edward D. Steele and Charles Redding identify the concept of freedom as a highly regarded characteristic in the U.S. The authors refer to this as the rejection of authority and a preference for individualism. Generally speaking there is a deep aversion to accepting restraint or coercion established by an organization or authoritative figure. One's freedom to make decisions, such as an "occupation, marriage partner, political party, place of residence, among many other things" is the very essence of individualism. The importance placed on rights creates an almost natural resistance to authoritarian relationships between citizens and governmental agencies. Thus, there is a strong underlying mentality that the government should not interfere with one's inherent rights.²⁶ Based on this information, posing current societal issues as a threat to the democratic system that protects citizens' rights works to justify a plea for advocating change and action. Working in tandem with this rationale is Micah White's prediction of the potential future collective action could incur.

White promises that OWS demonstrations could result in "the beginning of a whole new social dynamic" and allow citizens to "start getting what we want." Emphasizing the efficacy of protesting and coming together to occupy Wall Street was an integral component of the movement's strategy to mobilize. By arguing that their presence on Wall Street would force Obama to "choose publicly between the will of the people and the lucre of corporations," White provided the audience with a no-fail mentality. OWS's motivational framing came in the form of identifying a threat to

something highly valued by citizens of a democracy and explaining the potential gain from their efforts.

OWS engaged in the three core framing tasks throughout their discourse. But as Schiappa explains, the way in which a method of framing can be judged must be based on the needs and interests such a frame serves. One necessary function of framing within the social movement context is to construct a meaning of reality that can “mobilize potential adherents and constituents.”²⁷ In order to do so, frames must be articulated in a manner that allows individuals to identify with the beliefs, values and ideas held by the movement. Kenneth Burke’s seminal work on identification demonstrates the necessity to engage in communication in order to find commonalities despite the ever salient differences among individuals. Articulating divisions and emphasizing similarities allows individuals to become consubstantial with one another, an idea described in more detail in the following section, and increases the potential for social order. Specifically regarding collective action, Robert Futrell and Pete Simi state that finding a “shared sense of ‘we’” is the basis for a movement’s solidarity, commonality and actors’ mobilization.²⁸ Therefore, if a collective action frame allows for this perception of unity and commonality among actors and potential participants, the movement’s framing processes are better equipped to serve the needs of mobilization. For this reason, framing processes are linked to collective identity construction and maintenance. David Snow and Doug McAdam argue that identity construction ultimately relies upon framing. “Framing processes that occur within the context of social movements,” they suggest, “constitute perhaps the most important mechanism facilitating identity construction processes.”²⁹ In the following discussion, Snow and McAdam’s understanding of framing as it influences

identity is first expounded. Then, OWS's framing discourse is analyzed to discover rhetors' ability to establish and maintain a collective identity.

Framing Collective Identity

Francesca Polletta and James M. Jasper's review of research on the theory of collective identity is instructive. Due to the prominence of identity within social movements, scholars assess its role in nearly all movements. This led to the application of collective identity theory to too many dynamics and has been used both too broadly and too narrowly. Because of this overextension, Polletta and Jasper sought to define the concept more concisely. Collective identity, they write, is defined as "an individual's cognitive, moral, and emotional connection with a broader community, category, practice, or institution."³⁰

Alberto Melucci's explanation of collective identity provides a deeper understanding of the processes that Polletta and Jasper explain are involved in the construction and maintenance of a movement's identity. He refers to this process as an action system. This is due to the need for "an interactive and shared definition produced by a number of individuals concerning the *orientations* of their action and the *field* of opportunities and constraints in which such actions take place." Thus the process involves "cognitive definitions concerning the ends, means, and fields of action." It requires a network of relationships between actors who consistently interact, negotiate, and communicate with each other. Finally, an emotional investment must be present among constituents so as to make them feel as though they are part of a common unity. Collective identity, according to Melucci, is communicatively constructed and thus constantly in flux. It is important to note that such identity cannot be understood as a

singular product. Because social movements continuously grow and change, change in their identity must follow and possess the capability to withstand duration.³¹

Snow and McAdam claim that the process of constructing an identity occurs mainly through framing discourse because it requires advocates to define the organization's actions and means of acting. This form of discourse, the scholars hold, occurs when "giving formal testimony at movement functions, when explaining the movement to others in the course of recruitment and proselytizing activities, when preparing press releases and making public announcements, when crafting reports and columns for newspapers, and when adherents are engaged in frame disputes or debates."³² There is a broad range in possible discourse that plays a role in developing an organization's identity, yet examining OWS's most salient public communication can aid in discovering the movement's attempts to frame the organization and generate a succinct collective identity.

As Melucci contends, defining a movement's ends and means of action in a way that "enables individuals to feel themselves part of a common unity" directly relates to actors' capacity to construct an identity.³³ In maintaining the focus of this analysis on language, two chief concepts are utilized as guides to understand how unity is expressed and sustained. These two concepts are identification, as defined by Burke, and polarization as explained by Richard L. Langian. In *A Rhetoric of Motives*, Burke explains that individuals inherently possess unique traits that contribute to their individuality. Hence, humans collectively have fewer traits in common and more that differentiate us. Thus, in order to identify with another despite these differences, a common ground or joining of interests must be discovered and communicated. The

process of articulating similarities does not contribute to two individuals becoming identical with another; instead, it enables the possibility to become joined without denying each's differences. It is through finding common interests and acting together that citizens come to gain "common sensations, concepts, images, ideas, [and] attitudes that make them consubstantial."³⁴ Thus, communication makes identification possible. It is only when one speaks the language of the other that persuasion can take place. Also, identification can be an end in itself when one solely desires to bridge division with some group or other. Burke points out that identification is not always consciously attempted. In cases when identification is the end goal, it is most likely that the process occurs without conscious intent.³⁵ Burke's conception of identification illuminates how OWS actors aspire to identify with citizens in an attempt to unite and mobilize.

Although identification aims to emphasize commonalities over differences, Richard L. Lanigan contends that collective actors assume an additional and complicated task to unite movement participants while also creating a division with their said enemy. When attempting to establish a sense of "we" among the collective, actors must also create a "we-they" dichotomy between adherents and the opposition. This process is referred to as polarization. Thus, a rhetoric of polarization refers to the communication strategies employed as a means to substantiate such division. These strategies attempt to establish value differences through the characterization of one group as "good, right, lawful, rational and the like" and the other as "evil, wrong, unlawful, irrational and so on."³⁶ Andrew A. King and Floyd Douglas Anderson hold that polarization exhibits two dimensions, affirmation and subversion. Affirmation is most concerned with the use of symbols that promote a strong sense of group identity. Conversely, subversion is

concerned with strategies that work to undermine the ethos of opposing groups, ideologies, or institutions. Both strategies can be present when explicitly stated through language. Together, these rhetorical tactics support feelings of solidarity while also presupposing “the existence of a perceived ‘common foe’ which the group must oppose if it is to preserve the fabric of beliefs out of which the persuader has woven its identity.”³⁷ The strategies of identification and polarization are utilized and applied to OWS discourse to identify the tactics rhetors engaged in when framing their identity.

When OWS’s call to action states that one of the movement’s chief goals is to begin a whole new social dynamic in which “we the people start getting what we want,” an emphasis is placed on serving the public interest. Additionally, when this document states that their demonstration is designed to force the President to choose publicly between “the will of the people and the lucre of the corporations,” the ends of the movement are identified as reducing economic influence on political decisions and returning governing power to citizens. An apparent sense of “we” is expressed and a sense of solidarity is portrayed when the purpose of the movement is argued to be “something all Americans, right and left, yearn for.”³⁸ This language demonstrates the rhetor’s effort to invite potential participants by communicating that the movement aims to represent citizens regardless of political affiliation. Rather than attempting to disregard differences, White articulates the clear division in his audience regarding their political beliefs, but aims to highlight the need to unite despite such variations. This epitomizes Burke’s claim that identification is the process of illustrating commonalities in a way that allows individuals to overcome their inherent differences. Here, White addresses the need

to create a new social institution that better serves the needs of citizens in general, not just those identifying as conservative, liberal, or somewhere in between.

Additionally, the manifesto authored and disseminated by OWS while occupying Zucotti Park asserts that their sole purpose is the “generation of solutions accessible to everyone.”³⁹ Here, the lines between class, race, and gender distinctions are blurred and the interests of all citizens are emphasized in OWS’s goals as an organization. This illustrates the effort to unify citizens despite varied interests, skills and demographics. Political Scientists Matthew Bolton, Emily Welty, Meghana Nayak, and Christopher Malone, in the introduction to their book *Occupying Political Science*, describe how the ability of movement actors to influence a broad range of participants added to their interest in studying the movement. All having personally experienced the demonstration in Manhattan, they explain that protesters successfully made room for “a wide range of people” to contribute to the movement. Having witnessed the diversity among protesters, the authors agree that OWS constructed a movement that allowed for individuals, regardless of degree in skills, education, or income, to converge in the service of social justice.⁴⁰ This makes clear the purpose of creating a manifesto that more broadly defines OWS’s goal.

Communication Studies scholar Wendy Atkins-Sayre addresses the articulation of identity in the same context, attempting to merge individual identities to form a singular, unified movement. By examining the discourse from the organization People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA) she discovered the collective’s efforts to weaken the divide between animals and humans. In order to increase individuals’ care for animals, PETA used images and language to invite viewers to see similarities, visually

experience their world, and visually deconstruct the differences between animals and humans. Emphasizing shared qualities aided in shifting identities and removing the hierarchy that places humans above animals. Allowing the audience to identify with animals and feel consubstantial with them allowed for the breakdown in perceived differences.⁴¹

OWS discourse exemplifies a breakdown in differences as they described the movement's goals as the achievement of strengthening the people's political voice, regardless of political affiliation or socio-economic status. Doing so allows a broader range of citizens to identify with OWS's purpose. The movement's slogan "we are the 99%" reinforces this idea. As Todd Gitlin reveals in his book *Occupy Nation*, this slogan became a household phrase shortly after the campsite in Zucotti Park emerged. Being a part of the 99% was something Americans could characterize themselves as and commit to supporting.⁴² This included all economic classes below the nation's highest earners. Thus, this was not merely a distinction between the wealthy and poor. Statistics that surfaced prior to protests in 2010 contended that the population's top earning citizens controlled nearly half the country's wealth. Those included in this top tier were citizens earning an average of \$516,633 a year. In New York City specifically, the top one percent earned an average of \$3.7 million. This was the largest income gap since 1928.⁴³ The 99% thus consisted of all citizens outside of this elite level of wealth. The slogan then attempts to close the gap between class and income levels among this broad category of citizens advocating their unity as a collective. "We are the 99%" does not state these differences but rather emphasizes the need to become one due to their common ambition

to achieve economic equality. In disregarding their differences, they can identify with one another based on this shared condition.

The slogan “we the people” functioned similarly. Utilizing three words tied to the country’s founding document highlights another shared characteristic, the rights of citizenship. Through communication OWS rhetors attempt to define themselves as “the people” of the constitution, not an organization based solely on a particular class, race, or other social sub-group. This strategy diminishes a variety of distinctions between or among Americans and maintains the focus on shared substances. Again, this works to invite a range of participants, as Bolton, Welty, Nayak, and Malone report that they witnessed in the park. Both slogans embody Burke’s concept of consubstantiality in which “two persons may be identified in terms of some principle they share in common, an ‘identification’ that does not deny their distinctions.”⁴⁴ The commonalities depicted in these slogans include the financial burden that resulted from the unequal distribution of wealth and their freedoms as U.S. citizens. These shared characteristics are also highly important to Americans and it is argued that utilizing these factors increases the likelihood of identification. As Steele and Redding argue, freedom is highly valued by citizens who also value material comfort. Material comfort, the authors explain, often equates with happiness. Americans tend to possess an unlimited desire for an improved standard of living. Thus, highlighting the current inequalities regarding wealth has the potential to invite participation among a broad audience.

Along with articulating similarities, OWS discourse encapsulates polarization by underscoring the differences between movement actors and the opposition. Naturally, by describing protesters as the 99%, they are creating a distinction between dissidents and

the elite 1%. This enables individuals both to identify with others as part of the 99% and to differentiate themselves from the wealthy class. Therefore, the slogan “we are the 99%” expresses a distinction between the majority of Americans and the top earners. This embodies King and Anderson’s claim that both affirmation and subversion can be present. In this case, while attempting to unite an audience based on their position as those lacking a majority of the nation’s wealth, they are juxtaposed with those who possess that wealth. This aids in constructing a we-they dichotomy defined earlier. A clear division is made which invites the audience to coalesce in opposition to those essentially perpetuating this inequality.

The slogan “the government did this” also divides protesters and politicians. When engaging in diagnostic framing and attributing blame, this language benefits the development of OWS’s identity. By placing blame on government officials, actors highlight the division between protesters and the individuals responsible for committing unjust actions in government. This also assigns a negative value orientation to “the government” which Lanigan contends is a common strategy of polarization. He explains that assigning negative characteristics to an opposing group or individual enables organizations to emerge as a vanguard for their protection from this enemy. This indication of division is additionally apparent when White describes the mission of the movement as working against Wall Street, whom they claim to be “the greatest corruptor of our democracy.” Using the term “our” to describe democracy further contrasts citizens with financial executives. In blaming these figures for the destruction of their political system, actors can recognize these individuals as the opposition. Thus, the diagnostic

framing rhetors employed assisted the construction of the movement's identity by working to create an understanding of those constituting the opposition.

Through their framing efforts, OWS rhetors created a collective action frame for the movement. Each framing task—diagnostic, prognostic and motivational—was completed as a means to define the organization's purpose, describe a plan for action, and provide a rationale for their efforts. It is not enough, however, to engage solely in these efforts. Social actors use framing as a tool to gain support, mobilize adherents, demobilize antagonists and construct an understanding of reality that legitimates the movement's actions. Part of the capacity to achieve an outcome as such is, first, to develop a collective identity that encompasses a definition of the organization's ends, means and field of action; then to organize a network of individuals that communicate, negotiate and influence one another; and finally to enable actors to feel unified with one another.⁴⁵ Thus, the framing techniques utilized in OWS's call to action, manifesto and slogans are evaluated based on their ability to construct and maintain a collective identity.

Identifying With a Diverse Audience

Melucci clearly defined the three necessary components of a collective identity—cognitive definitions, active relationships, and emotional investment—which theory is used to understand what constitutes a movement's identity. He then provides three features necessary to a collective identity. In order to ensure the permanence of this unity there must be “continuity of a subject over and beyond variations in time and its adaptations to the environment; the delimitation of this subject with respect to others; the ability to recognize and to be recognized.”⁴⁶ Although continuity seems paradoxical to the concept of identity as a process, this notion refers to actors' continuous efforts to

organize the collective's conception of self. This may come in the form of a system of rules, leadership relationships, or organizational forms. Essentially, this requires somewhat of a structure as a means to stabilize one's identity. Continuity also refers to an organization's ability to overcome moments of challenge or conflict. Then, delimiting and stabilizing this sense of self requires a clear understanding of those who are a part of the group and those outside of it. Finally, the ability to recognize and be recognized relies upon the movement's characterization of the group and of the opposition.

Communicative strategies for maintaining clear distinctions between those in the movement and those outside of the group reflect Burke's concept of consubstantiality and Langian's explanation of polarization. Consubstantiality aids individuals in transcending their differences and identifying based on shared characteristics. Understanding how OWS actors attempt to promote consubstantiality aids in discovering their strategies for constructing a stable identity. Additionally, the ability to recognize those within the group and those outside of the group reflects the need to engage in polarization as a means to establish a we-they dichotomy. Thus, an evaluation of OWS's framing language as it assists in the construction and maintenance of the movement's identity follows, using rhetorical theorists' conceptions of identification and polarization within the context of collective action.

As demonstrated, OWS rhetors framed the movement by diagnosing a problem, assigning blame, developing a plan of action, and motivating citizens to participate in the movement. By establishing a problem, OWS discourse constructed a common ground with which the audience could identify. Methods of creating a common ground include connecting the audience through gender, race, or sexual orientation. This tactic, for

example, was employed by women throughout third wave feminist movements. Valerie R. Renegar and Stacey K. Sowards argue that first and second wave feminist movements failed to represent adequately women of all races and classes, but third wave feminists, due to new vocabularies and developing new ways of thinking, bridged individual differences. Rather than focusing on issues of race or class, they emphasized autonomy and established a common ground between women of differing demographics. This common ground was constructed by framing the feminist movement as a human-centered cause that, instead of highlighting essentialist traits of individuals, aimed to embrace and understand differences. These tactics, the authors assert, became a rhetorical philosophy in which advocates' vocabulary was transformed in a way that united protesters across their differences.⁴⁷ Similar to this approach, OWS drew attention to a problem to which most Americans could relate, and used that as a common ground for identification. Because nearly 40% of citizens reported enduring financial distress following the aftermath of the economic crisis,⁴⁸ there is an increased likelihood that they could identify with a feeling of insecurity in their government. Thus, OWS rhetors worked to unite their audience through strategies of identifying with their expectations of democracy and by posing corruption in government as a threat to their power as citizens.

Another method for constructing a common ground came from the slogans used by movement actors. "We are the 99%" embodied a strategy to unite individuals based on their position in society, but more importantly represented those who were negatively affected by unequal distribution of wealth in the U.S. In addition to underscoring a problem Americans faced, using this slogan to characterize the audience as the victims of that problem further reinforced the common ground relating to individuals. An additional

slogan that worked in a similar fashion was the mantra “we the people.” Referring to an audience of individuals as “the people” not only relates them to the Constitution that unites Americans, as noted previously, but allows for individuals with varying distinctions to identify with one another. John W. Bowers, Donovan J. Ochs, Richard Jensen, and David P. Schulz contend that slogans enhance the possibility for solidification because they suggest action, loyalty, or identify the causes for protest.⁴⁹ Together, “we are the 99%” and “we the people” highlight the problems associated with protest and those the movement aims to represent which influences participation based on a commonly shared experience. Thus, the OWS slogans simultaneously frame the problematic condition the movement aims to address and create a common ground to unite the audience.

OWS slogans also strengthened notions of a common ground between and among potential adherents. Burke explains that the use of pronouns such as “we” and “they” that group individuals together help to invite participation. For example, attaching an action to the use of the term “we” draws the audience in and enables them to find themselves participating in the act regardless of the subject matter. This is the case due to the universal appeal of such terms and the formal patterns of language that “awaken an attitude of collaborative expectancy in us.”⁵⁰ This tactic was utilized throughout all forms of OWS discourse. Examples originating in the call to action include references to “our democracy,” “our demand,” “we the people start getting what we want,” and “we start setting the agenda for a new America.”⁵¹ These plural pronouns suggest an already bonded group and imply that an identification with a common purpose is already present. This presents a tone of solidarity and enforces a sense of involvement among actors.

Burke holds that even though such language unites individuals regardless of the matter being addressed, when an audience does not possess an original resistance to the subject “the attitude of assent may then be transferred to the matter which happens to be associated with the form.”⁵²

Based on notions of expressing identity, OWS engaged in the necessary requirements in tandem with framing the movement. In describing the economic crisis as a problem requiring protest, leaders created a common ground and invited a diverse audience to identify with the movement. Additionally, assigning blame to Wall Street executives and government officials for this issue identified an enemy and allowed rhetors to engage in polarization. Finally, providing a solution to said problems and offering a purpose for such strategies with the use of terms like “we” and “our” implied a pre-existing unity which aided in solidarity. Despite the use of these rhetorical strategies, ethnographic accounts of the movement in Zucotti Park depict a movement lacking cohesion and stability in terms of who the movement represented, whom they opposed, and the specific problems to address which complicated demonstrators’ ability to enact a plan of action.

Limits of OWS’s Rhetoric

In his exploration of the People’s Mic constructed by OWS actors in Zucotti Park, Marco Deseriis discovered a lack of alignment in protesters’ opinions regarding the problems identified by the movement. When it came to articulating their grievances as a group, various expressions lacked consensus. The People’s Mic is a collective amplification of individual voices employed as a method of shouting demands despite the ordinance banning bullhorns. The action—to be successful—required all demonstrators

to repeat every word being said even when they did not agree with the content of the message. Deseriis highlights the mixed feelings that arose once participants began shouting their beliefs on public issues. Actors faced the issue of amplifying sentiments they did not agree with in order to uphold their principle of endorsing free speech, allowing all voices to be heard, and completely representing the 99%. In order to sustain their broad identity, participants had to be willing to disseminate opinions contrary to their own. According to Deseriis's interviews, some participants engaged to maintain the consensus ideology and "we" promoted by the movement. Others, however, engaged in the People's Mic only when they agreed with the sentiment being shouted.⁵³ Thus, although the movement articulated unity among "the people," not all demonstrators were willing to uphold the principle.

Todd Gitlin also refers to the lack of consensus experienced while employing the People's Mic and explains how these discrepancies in opinion created a structural problem for the General Assembly. The human microphone, he argues, was a method used to amplify their message to identify the movement. Unfortunately, meetings regarding which grievances to express and amplify often ended in chaos and the General Assembly eventually began promoting a system of "modified consensus" that allowed powerful individuals to override actors' sentiment concerning OWS's grievances, demands, and goals.⁵⁴ Therefore, although the wide net cast as their identity enabled identification from a diverse audience, that diversity created a clash in perspective beyond operating the People's Mic.

Susan Kang expands on the consequences of this clash as it related to the development of a plan of action. She identifies the problems that occurred within the

General Assembly and between the Assembly and other actors, as Gitlin alludes to, but she expands on how this related to the development of demands. As noted earlier, the call to action urged participants to establish one demand that will unite a movement in addressing the issue of political corruption. Uniting to fight this issue became the common ground used by OWS rhetors to motivate identification with the movement. Once demonstrators gathered in Zucotti Park, however, the plan of action changed and OWS became a movement with no demands. Thus, as the field of action shifted from demanding a change in government to demanding nothing, not all actors continued to identify with OWS.⁵⁵

Kang explains that, while still in the park, a group who referred to themselves as the Demands Working Group (WG) emerged and devoted their efforts to articulating grievances and developing possible demands despite the General Assembly's decision to make OWS a demand-less movement. Once the WG settled on urging for jobs for Americans, members of the General Assembly made sure to announce publicly that any expressions made by this group were not representative of OWS. Advocates even used the People's Mic to convey this sentiment, which created a divide among OWS actors and between protesters and the organizations that sympathized with the movement. Groups such as New Yorkers Against Budget Cuts, Bloombergville, and People's Organization for Progress retracted their support and splinter groups within the movement emerged to fulfill their purpose for joining. Groups like the WG, Visions and Goals, Occupy Homes, Antidemands, Occupy Jobs, Direct Action, Occupy the SEC, and the very similar Demands Process Working Group surfaced. Some of these new groups remained in the campsite, while others felt well placed elsewhere. Ultimately, Kang

contends, the attempt to shift to a “nondemands identity hurt the movement’s effectiveness.”⁵⁶

Relying on methods of articulating a collective identity, OWS rhetors related to individuals through establishing a common ground and expressing similarities. Advocating for the health of “our democracy,” adopting a plan of action that enabled citizens to “start setting the agenda,” and communicating a goal to “generate solutions accessible to everyone” granted the movement an ability to attract a diverse audience. Framing the movement as one encompassing a broad identity was a significant tactic to initiate participation. Yet, upon the organization’s convergence at Zucotti Park, an inability to come together completely and to fuel the movement with consensus surfaced. Thus, an identity was constructed, but maintaining such identity became problematic for the demonstrators. “The 99% identity,” Kang asserts, “obscures the reality of exclusivity based on a vision of a particular set of politics and certain processes.”⁵⁷ Therefore, a stronger articulation of distinguishing OWS from others was needed in order to uphold the component of identity that involves a cognitive definition of means and ends shared by participants.

OWS rhetors engaged in these efforts throughout their discourse by describing the enemy as Wall Street executives and corrupt politicians who favor economic gain over public interest. Their language in reinforcing this distinction included the slogans, “we the people,” “we are the 99%,” and “the government did this.” Those constituting the 1%, however, changed for some during the campout and the sentiment regarding their adversaries was not upheld. Political Scientist Emily Welty suggests that “For OWS, the opponent is not always coherent or consistent and depending on the person or the day, the

opponent may be individuals, corporations, institutions, or ideas.”⁵⁸ An absence of consistency concerning the opposition hindered OWS’s capacity to maintain a definite sense of self with which all participants identified.

This incoherence was evident during the enactment of the People’s Mic when participants disagreed on the opinions being amplified, and during rallies and marches. Welty notes that when New York City Police officers were present at the campsite, some actors shouted in support of the police because they technically constituted a portion of the 99% while others shouted to degrade police officers for their allegiance to government officials. She holds that articulating their opponents as an entire political system at times became problematic when attempting to understand the field of action to be occupied.⁵⁹

Kang expands on this notion of actors’ inability to define and engage in a plan of action due to inconsistently defining those within the collective and their antagonists. At some points, she observed, protesters at the park named the opposition as bankers and politicians, and in other moments they blamed the entire system in which these figures operated. This discrepancy contributed to unrest when attempting to decide on movement goals. Some actors felt that making demands reflected an acknowledgment of the faulty political system and a willingness to operate within it which ultimately worked against efforts to defeat it. This group of advocates, she argues, “saw OWS’s identity as inclusive and nonideological, and thus unable to make definitive central demands.” The actors, comprised of the splinter groups that formed in disagreement, felt that making demands was the only way to implement significant change through protest and to address the overwhelming need for jobs among Americans.⁶⁰

Based on Gitlin's, Kang's, and Welty's personal accounts of the OWS movement that took place in Zucotti Park it is evident that discrepancies regarding a plan of action proved problematic. These disagreements led to a lack of consensus when making decisions during General Assembly meetings, a loss in support from movement sympathizers, and the emergence of splinter groups advocating for various demands and grievances using the OWS name. Melucci maintains that "cognitive definitions concerning the ends, means, and the field of action" are imperative when developing a collective identity. Upholding these definitions is also necessary when faced with conflict or adjustments. OWS's issue in fulfilling this component stemmed from their inability to articulate clearly the movement's opponents. Despite their expression of a common ground to unite adherents and potential participants, OWS discourse needed to enact a division between those the collective included and those they opposed. Thus, their failure to establish this necessary division led to an incoherent plan of action which proved unable to unite actors.

Conclusion

Theories of collective identity create a composite for understanding the phenomenon and the processes involved in expressing this sense of self. Research by Melucci and by Polletta and Jasper helps to define the concept as one's cognitive and emotional connection to a larger community or institution comprised of a network of active relationships. Melucci adds to this understanding by assigning three features necessary for the persistence of an identity. A collective sense of self must possess the ability to continue over time despite adversity or adaptations, this subject must be distinguishable from others, and finally, individuals within the organization must have

the ability to recognize others in the group and be recognized themselves. In turn, Communication scholars such as Burke, Atkins-Sayre, Lanigan, and King and Anderson underscore methods for articulating an identity. This involves establishing common ground that enables consubstantiality with one another, breaking down differences, and emphasizing the distinctions between those in the group and those of the opposition.

Snow and McAdam assert that framing processes constitute identity work and through framing, a shared self can be constructed. Thus, an examination of OWS's framing language permits a deeper understanding of their efforts to create and maintain a collective sense of self. Analyzing the diagnostic, prognostic, and motivational framing emphasized rhetors' attempts to define the problematic condition the movement aimed to address. Defining this problem as corrupt politicians and immoral Wall Street employees framed the issue as one requiring public action. Dramatizing the societal ills and utilizing framing terms that portray a lack of democracy defined the situation as one that required action. Additionally, describing this deficiency as a public matter enabled individuals to perceive an ability to rectify the issue. Attributing blame to representatives and Wall Street executives adequately identified the source of the problem and allowed the audience to recognize the opposition. Rhetors engaged in prognostic framing by illustrating their course of action as the combination of tactics used in Tahrir Square and Spain. This was illustrated as coming together to camp in Zucotti Park to express a singular demand that ordered the removal of corruption from office and amend the current power structure. Finally, OWS discourse employed motivational framing by communicating a rationale for the movement. Their reasoning included the potential to implement a new social dynamic that upheld public interest rather than economic gain.

Generating solutions for the problems all Americans faced was described as the benefits participants could benefit from if protest action were taken.

Together, these core framing tasks supported the creation of a collective identity. Defining the problem established a common ground to which Americans could relate. This enhanced individuals' ability to identify with the movement and the cause. Using plural pronouns throughout all forms of discourse worked as a reinforcement for this identification. Descriptors such as "our democracy" and "we the people" implied the presence of a connection between and among individuals. The slogan "we are the 99%" worked similarly and enforced notions of consubstantiality. The refrain acknowledged that not all individuals fall within the same demographic, but they still share a relationship due to inequality in the distribution of wealth. This mantra highlighted the division between actors and those the movement opposed. Characterizing the group as the 99% framed the 1% as the opposition. This distinction also assigned blame, and the slogan "the government did this" affirmed the division between those within the movement and those the movement countered.

Polarization, according to King and Anderson, is essential to solidification. Rhetorically creating two mutually exclusive groups allows for the recognition of those who are part of the collective and those outside, which is necessary to maintain a collective identity. Accentuating similarities and differences allows for the delimitation of a subject in respect to others and permits one to recognize those within the group and to be recognized themselves. This aspect, however, was not articulated consistently enough to maintain an identity capable of overcoming adjustments. As the movement supported broad notions of identity, the organization became very diverse. This diversity

resulted in a clash of perspectives regarding the problems the movement articulated and the means of address. From the publication of the call to action, the problem to be engaged was defined as corruption and the influence of money over government. Once the manifesto was written, however, OWS claimed to “address the problems we face” which left the movement’s purpose much more open to interpretation. Then, as goals and ideas were adjusted from being a consensus driven demand to OWS becoming a demand-less movement, a lack of identification was prominent within the campsite. The opposition, understood as the 1%, expressed in the slogan “we are the 99%,” often shifted between institutions, corporations, politicians, executives, and ideas. Thus, because adjustments caused the opposition to vary, a clear expression of division was needed in order to sustain a collective identity.

OWS discourse framed the movement engaging in all three necessary framing tasks. This process allowed for the construction of a collective identity that upheld the definitions provided by Melucci and by Polletta and Jasper. Finally, OWS rhetoric utilized language that supported identification. The obstacle the movement faced was the ability to sustain an identity that represented a broad and diverse audience of actors. This diversity led to varying goals and ideas regarding action and generated the need for modification. Without articulating division during moments of adjustment, the originally constructed identity could not be upheld. This examination underscores the utility of language. Adopting particular strategies has the potential to frame a public matter in a way that influences citizens to act. Additionally, language can unite a group of individuals in pursuit of a common goal and mobilize those individuals to act

collectively. Because of this potential power, it is important to understand how to use language strategically and to serve more fully particular needs and interests.

This analysis attempts to understand how the movement's public discourse related to the inner-workings of the Zucotti Park demonstration. Although protesters' rhetorical strategies reflect the necessary components of framing the movement and identifying with participants and potential adherents, the diversity OWS strove for proved problematic when attempting to maintain the broadly articulated identity. This suggests that although identifying with a large base of individuals may increase the potential for participation, sustaining such a wide network of actors may increase the difficulty of advocating specific social change and operating democratically.

As Gitlin and other theorists exploring the inner-workings of OWS note, the movement achieved a number of goals and surpassed skeptics' expectations. In a digital world, it is increasingly difficult to motivate actors to come together in a physical space. Yet, OWS rhetors organized and rallied adherents in over 1,500 cities globally. Despite an absence of clarity and the challenges actors faced, OWS demonstrators became pioneers and showed the public that citizens still possess the power to change the world. "They were," Gitlin notes, "rebooting history."⁶¹

Endnotes

¹ Kenneth Burke, *A Rhetoric of Motives* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1969), 20.

² Edward Schiappa, *Defining Reality: Definitions and the Politics of Meaning*, (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 2003), 151-52.

³ Schiappa, *Defining Reality*, 153-56.

⁴ Robert Benford and David Snow, "Framing Processes and Social Movements: An Overview and Assessment," *Annual Review of Sociology* 26 (2000): 613.

⁵ Benford and Snow, "Framing Processes and Social Movements," 614.

-
- ⁶ Robert Entman, "Framing: Toward Clarification of a Fractured Paradigm," *Journal of Communication* 43, no. 4 (1993): 52.
- ⁷ Entman, "Framing," 52.
- ⁸ Entman, "Framing," 53.
- ⁹ Micah White, "#OccupyWallStreet: A Shift in Revolutionary Tactics," *Adbusters* July 17, 2011. <https://www.adbusters.org/blogs/adbusters-blog/occupywallstreet.html>. para 4.
- ¹⁰ Schiappa, *Defining Reality*, 156.
- ¹¹ White, "#OccupyWallStreet," para 7-8.
- ¹² White, "#OccupyWallStreet," para 7 & 9.
- ¹³ Schiappa, *Defining Reality*, 154.
- ¹⁴ White, "#OccupyWallStreet," para 7.
- ¹⁵ Schiappa, *Defining Reality*, 156.
- ¹⁶ Entman, "Framing," 53.
- ¹⁷ Entman, "Framing," 54.
- ¹⁸ Benford and Snow, "Framing Processes and Social Movements," 616.
- ¹⁹ Benford and Snow, "Framing Processes and Social Movements," 617.
- ²⁰ White, "#OccupyWallStreet," para 5 & 7.
- ²¹ Mattathias Schwartz, "Pre-Occupied: The Origins and Future of Occupy Wall Street," *The New Yorker* Nov. 28, 2011. <http://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2011/11/28/pre-occupied?currentPage=all>, para 33.
- ²² White, "#OccupyWallStreet," para 6, 8 & 3.
- ²³ CNN Wire Staff "18 Days of Protest Culminate in Mubarak's Ouster," *CNN* Feb. 11, 2011 <http://www.cnn.com/2011/WORLD/africa/02/11/egypt.protests/>.
- ²⁴ Alan Taylor, "A Defiant 'Spanish Revolution,'" *The Atlantic* May 20, 2011 <http://www.theatlantic.com/photo/2011/05/a-defiant-spanish-revolution/100070/>.
- ²⁵ Benford and Snow, "Framing Processes and Social Movements," 617.
- ²⁶ Edward D. Steele and W. Charles Redding, "The American Value System: Premises for Persuasion," *Western Speech* 26, no. 2 (1962): 88.
- ²⁷ Benford and Snow, "Framing Processes and Social Movements," 614.
- ²⁸ Robert Futrell and Pete Simi, "Free Spaces, Collective Identity, and the Persistence of U.S. White Power Activism," *Social Problems* 51, no. 1 (2004): 16.

-
- ²⁹ David A. Snow and Doug McAdam, "Identity Work Processes in the Context of Social Movements: Clarifying the Identity/ Movement Nexus," in *Self, Identity, and Social Movements* eds. Sheldon Stryker, Timothy J. Owens, and Robert W. White (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2000), 53.
- ³⁰ Francesca Polletta and James M. Jasper, "Collective Identity and Social Movements," *Annual Review of Sociology* 27 (2001): 285.
- ³¹ Alberto Melucci, "The Process of Collective Identity," in *Challenging Codes: Collective Action in the Information Age* (Cambridge University Press, 1996), 70-71.
- ³² Snow and McAdam, "Identity Work Processes in the Context of Social Movements," 54.
- ³³ Melucci, "The Process of Collective Identity," 71.
- ³⁴ Burke, *A Rhetoric of Motives*, 21.
- ³⁵ Mary Hochmuth, "Kenneth Burke and the 'New Rhetoric,'" *The Quarterly Journal of Speech* 38, no. 2 (1952): 136.
- ³⁶ Richard L. Lanigan, "Urban Crisis: Polarization and Communication," *Central States Speech Journal* 21, no. 2 (1970): 108.
- ³⁷ Andrew A. King and Floyd Douglas Anderson, "Nixon, Agnew, and the 'Silent Majority': A Case Study in the Rhetoric of Polarization," *Western Speech* 35, no. 4 (1971): 244.
- ³⁸ White, "#OccupyWallStreet," para 7-9.
- ³⁹ Schwartz, "Pre-Occupied," para 33.
- ⁴⁰ Emily Welty, Matthew Bolton, Meghana Nayak, and Christopher Malone, "We Had a Front Row Seat to Downtown Revolution," in *Occupying Political Science* eds. Emily Welty, Matthew Bolton, Meghana Nayak, and Christopher Malone, (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2013), 16.
- ⁴¹ Wendy Atkins-Sayre, "Articulating Identity: People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals and the Animal/Human Divide," *Western Journal of Communication* 74, no 3 (2010): 314.
- ⁴² Todd Gitlin, *Occupy Nation: The Roots, The Spirit, and The Promise of Occupy Wall Street*, (New York City: HarperCollins Publishers, 2012), 12-13.
- ⁴³ Suzy Khimm, "Who Are the 1 Percent?" *The Washington Post* Oct. 6, 2011
http://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/wonkblog/post/who-are-the-1-percenters/2011/10/06/gIQAn4JDQL_blog.html.
I chose to use statistics from 2010 because they highlight the economic status contemporary to OWS protest in New York City.
- ⁴⁴ Burke, *A Rhetoric of Motives*, 21.
- ⁴⁵ Melucci, "The Process of Collective Identity," 70-71.
- ⁴⁶ Melucci, "The Process of Collective Identity," 71.
- ⁴⁷ Valerie R. Renegar and Stacey K. Sowards, "Liberal Irony, Rhetoric, and Feminist Thought: A Unifying Third Ave Feminist Theory," *Philosophy & Rhetoric* 36, no. 4 (2003): 348.
- ⁴⁸ "The Effect of the Economic Crisis on American Households," *The National Bureau of Economic Research*, Sept. 2010, <http://www.nber.org/papers/w16407>.

⁴⁹ John W. Bowers, Donovan J. Ochs, Richard J. Jensen, and David P. Schulz, *The Rhetoric of Agitation and Control* (Long Grove: Waveland Press, Inc., 2010): 33.

⁵⁰ Burke, *A Rhetoric of Motives*, 58-59.

⁵¹ White, “#OccupyWallStreet,” para 7, 2 & 9.

⁵² Burke, *A Rhetoric of Motives*, 58.

⁵³ Marco Deseriis, “The People’s Mic as a Medium in Its Own Right: A Pharmacological Reading,” *Communication and Critical/Cultural Studies* 11, no. 1 (2014): 44-46.

⁵⁴ Gitlin, *Occupy Nation*, 69 & 77.

⁵⁵ Susan Kang, “Demands Belong to the 99%? The Conflict over Demands, Issues, and Goals in OWS,” in *Occupy Political Science* eds. Emily Welty, Matthew Bolton, Meghana Nayak, and Christopher Malone, (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2013), 67-69.

⁵⁶ Kang, “Demands Belong to the 99%?,” 76-77 & 69.

⁵⁷ Kang, “Demands Belong to the 99%?,” 82-83.

⁵⁸ Emily Welty, “The Art of Nonviolence: The Adaptions and Improvisations of Occupy Wall Street,” in *Occupy Political Science* eds. Emily Welty, Matthew Bolton, Meghana Nayak, and Christopher Malone, (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2013), 92.

⁵⁹ Welty, “The Art of Nonviolence,” 93-94.

⁶⁰ Kang, “Demands Belong to the 99%?,” 69-70.

⁶¹ Gitlin, *Occupy Nation*, 13.

Chapter Four: Conclusion

Social movements aim to disrupt some form of what is considered the status quo. In doing so, practices can be reevaluated, terms can be redefined, and individuals' and leaders' roles can be reformed. Regardless of the outcome, challenging the status quo requires inquiry and commitment to a purpose. Active citizens devote a portion of their life to alter social and political reality. As David Zarefsky notes, the health of the public sphere relies on deliberation among informed citizens. Thus, the public debate such coalitions invite is an important aspect of the health of the public sphere.¹ Due to this catalytic role, it is important to investigate how collective action potentially opens the door to a form of communication aimed at altering social practices. Edward Schiappa, Robert Entman, and Robert Benford and David Snow all argue that the discourses disseminated by social movements become vessels for the constructions of reality. Therefore, it is also important to explore attempts made at creating reality, and the context that results.

Occupy Wall Street (OWS) is a unique exemplar for examining social movement rhetoric as the collective in its entirety represented many plights fought by Americans and other individuals throughout the world. The name "Occupy" resonated in over 1,500 cities as actors gathered globally to protest their own grievances with economic and political controversy.² Additionally, Todd Gitlin asserts that the slogan "We are the 99%" became a household phrase.³ It is evident that OWS maintained an identity to which many, despite their challenge or location, could relate. The questions remaining, however, regard the process of establishing such identity and the consequences of these actions. To follow these lines of inquiry, this thesis examined OWS's publicly

disseminated discourse. Because of the breadth of actors that embraced the name “Occupy,” analysis focused solely on the demonstration that took place in Zucotti Park in New York City and the texts written before and during actors’ occupation of the park. This collection of discourse included the movement’s call to action, manifesto, and four prominent slogans. The reason for this choice lies in the fact that demonstrations in New York City constituted OWS’s emergence. The two months dissidents spent in the park represent the first step in what became a global movement.

The best way to begin such exploration requires a complete narrative of the movement’s own beginning. Thus, chapter two provided readers with an orientation to the surrounding context related to the movement’s creation. This consisted of a description of the 2008 economic crisis and the ways in which the handling of the market crash by government and finance experts left many citizens dissatisfied. Also included was a short biographical sketch of OWS’s founders. Finally, a close reading of the texts to be examined in chapter three followed. Consequently, the third chapter explored the discourse as a means to discover rhetors’ methods of framing the movement. This exploration illuminated methods of identification present throughout actors’ framing. Ultimately, examining OWS’s rhetoric resulted in the conclusion that dissidents framed the movement in a way that established a common ground and enabled a diverse group of followers to identify with the collective. Simultaneously, though, that rhetoric constructed an identity too broad to allow for a singular plan of action. In this conclusion, each chapter is reviewed and summarized in order to demonstrate how the project contributes to rhetorical studies. In addition, the project’s limitations, as well as recommendations for future research, are offered.

OWS's Road to Framing Identity

The narrative of OWS is not unlike many other social movement stories. A catastrophic event affected a great portion of the population and left Americans reliant upon their government for aid. This event was the unfortunate economic crisis of 2008 that was the inevitable result of large banks spending irresponsibly, distributing loans to less than reliable individuals, and inefficiently tending to their books.⁴ While the U.S. Federal Reserve spent hundreds of billions to save the American banking system,⁵ citizens were left with an inadequate stimulus plan.⁶ The discrepancies that arose when media, politicians, and economic experts attempted to assign blame for the market crash only further confused the potential for a clear solution.⁷ *Adbusters* founder Kalle Lasn and his senior editor social activist Micah White collaborated to initiate a movement that aided citizens in their fight against what they termed a corrupt government. What began as a call to action published in *Adbusters* became a two month occupation of Manhattan's Zucotti Park. Once actors established their campsite in the park, they constructed the movement's declaration. Also in the park, the popular slogan "We are the 99%" emerged along with three other prominent mantras, "This is what democracy looks like," "The government did this," and "We the people."

In chapter two, a close reading of these texts resulted in the discovery of two salient themes, actors attempted to define a problem and offer a solution to said issue. As mentioned previously, the discourse identified a corrupt government as an issue because such malpractice, according to actors, led to an absent democracy. Micah White, sole author of the initial call to action, explained that politicians' and Wall Street employees' preoccupation with economic gain supported a "corporotocracy" rather than a

democracy. Thus, in identifying a fraudulent government as the problem, White also blamed financial experts and dishonest politicians in the call to action. The slogan “the government did this,” blatantly assigned politicians culpability for such lack in democracy. Suggesting citizens were “caught helpless by the current power structure”⁸ further reinforced the idea that the actions committed by leadership, both financial and governmental, directly influenced a weakened relationship between citizens and their representatives. Along with providing citizens a purpose for protest, a second major theme witnessed throughout the movement’s discourse was rhetors’ description of OWS’s intended solution.

Protest constituted one strategy for solving these fraudulent acts illustrated in these texts. The call to action outlined the benefits of occupying public space and collectively devising a singular demand to resolve citizens’ ills. White suggested that combining these tactics would be “revolutionary” and that coming together to present President Obama with an ultimatum would elicit results favorable to citizens. Terms he used to describe this “new formula” of tactics included “fresh” and “novel,” and the formula itself was categorized as an “emerging stratagem.” Along with a description of this plan was the plea for participation. White articulated the desire for at least 20,000 protesters to unite in solidarity for a more citizen-focused government. He stressed the need to construct collectively a singular demand that represented the needs of the public. Doing so, White claimed, would force the government to focus more on “the will of the people” and less on the “lucre of corporations.”⁹ White’s definition of “the will of the people” remains ambiguous, but he also stated that OWS should support a spectrum of

political affiliations rather than attending to those of the left or those leaning toward the right. Other forms of discourse supported this notion.

The slogans “We are the 99%” and “We the people,” aided the attempt to serve a broader citizenry. These slogans reflect the movement’s effort to unify, reach a larger audience, and represent a more diverse group of individuals. Further upholding the concept of unity and consensus is the slogan “this is what democracy looks like.” This is an explicit commitment to reinforcing not only more democratic practices in government, but a commitment to practicing such ideals within the collective, as well. The organization’s manifesto, which reads “Exercise your right to peaceably assemble; occupy public space; create a process to address the problems we face; and generate solutions accessible to everyone,”¹⁰ also embodies this commitment. Here, OWS displayed their purpose and solution to immoral actions in government as one that aspired to reflect broader public interest rather than the interests of a particular party, class, or demographic. Both the slogans and this declaration utilized language taken from the U.S. Constitution, language that supported OWS’s intention to represent citizens in general.

Chapter two explained the ways rhetors embraced and employed language that emphasized traditional stories such as the tale of Sodom and Gomorrah, and infused language from America’s founding documents, such as the opening statement of the Constitution’s preamble. Applying Constitutional language throughout their own discourse demonstrates the movement’s attempts to engage democratic practices. In addition, utilizing the story common to many religions enabled actors to portray financial executives and government officials as immoral and unethical, in ways that even a diverse audience could apprehend. The findings from chapter two, discovering the

prominent themes in OWS's texts and illuminating language patterns, transitioned into the rhetorical examination in chapter three that yielded an analysis of framing efforts and identification strategies. The two themes related very closely to Robert Entman's definition of framing. He explains that the process includes promoting a problem, interpreting a cause, morally evaluating the issue, and/or recommending a solution.¹¹ This definition also aligns with Robert Benford and David Snow's description of framing tasks which involve diagnosing a problem, providing a prognosis for said problem, and motivating individuals to participate in enacting the solution.¹² Thus, employing theories of framing in chapter three allowed for a deeper understanding of the themes presented earlier.

Analysis entailed as well that application of Edward Schiappa's theory of rhetorical definition. Schiappa holds that the way in which orators describe a problem influences an audience's perception of the issue as well as their role in rectifying such ill.¹³ Incorporating this lens in chapter three resulted in the recognition of not only framing processes, but the communicative means of defining the purpose to an audience of prospective participants. Thus, the result of studying OWS discourse through this lens led to the claim that OWS rhetors, throughout the discourse studied here, engaged in framing by identifying a corrupt government as the problem, characterizing financial executives and government officials as the perpetrators, and introducing protest through the occupation of public space as the intended solution. Additionally, the language patterns throughout indicated that in describing the problem as a threat to citizens' democracy and the solution as a means of reenacting their rights, rhetors' strategically

portrayed the problem and solution in a way that invited citizens' participation. This discovery prompted further analysis of framing as identity work.

Theorists from many disciplines categorize framing as a form of identity work. Specifically, the research of David Snow and Doug McAdam was used to understand this relationship. The authors argue that because many of the negotiations involved in defining a movement's purpose, there is an increased capacity for individuals to connect through these definitions.¹⁴ Collective identity, according to Francesca Polletta and James M. Jasper, involves individuals' connection to a broader community cognitively, morally and emotionally.¹⁵ Additionally, Alberto Melucci includes a component to this definition, a shared understanding concerning the movement's actions. This consists of the ends, means, and fields of action to be engaged in.¹⁶ Taking these descriptions into consideration, chapter three included an analysis of the ways that OWS's framing contributed to the identity constructed. In order to perform such a task critically, Kenneth Burke's theory of identification was applied to the examination. Burke argues that it is possible for individuals to identify with another through communication while maintaining their unique identities. As defined previously, this concept is referred to as consubstantiality. This notion refers generally to establishing commonalities with others that do not deny one's differences. Burke suggests that identification is necessary for persuasion, but can be an end in itself. One salient method of becoming consubstantial with others throughout the OWS movement's rhetoric was articulating a common ground.¹⁷

Chapter three, in more detail, outlined the various moments when Occupy Wall Street emphasized a common ground with the audience. An example entailed the call to

action's claim that the movement aimed to enact a solution in government that "all Americans, right and left, yearn for."¹⁸ Thus, the issue is one that affects all citizens, not one particular political party. Additionally, the slogans "we the people" and "we are the 99%" also represent a large body of individuals. These language strategies blur the lines that divide Americans such as one's political affiliation, class standing, age, or gender. Simultaneously, the call does not ignore that individuals possess these differences; rather, it unifies them based on a greater commonality, their citizenship. More obviously, the manifesto expressed OWS's concern for creating a resolution that responded to the problems all citizens experience. Although this declaration lacks detail in explaining such solution, White, in the call to action, encouraged citizens to come together and generate one demand through consensus. Therefore, while working to identify with a broader audience, OWS's rhetorical strategies also attempted to unite these individuals. The common ground created here centers on a problem that the movement perceives many Americans faced and through this shared experience they can unite to establish a solution. This is a strategy that most plainly motivates solidarity; however, advocates also used the rhetoric of polarization, easily interpreted as the converse of identification, to solidify a group based on a common enemy.

Richard Lanigan, as well as Andrew A. King and Floyd Douglas Anderson, theorize about the rhetorical potential of articulating polarities. Lanigan asserts that within the social movement context, collective actors must unite the organization while also creating a separation from their opposition. Constructing this separation works to solidify the group further by identifying a common enemy which Lanigan refers to as a "we-they" dichotomy. This process consists of characterizing the movement as the

favorable party and the opposition as evil or the guilty party.¹⁹ Rhetoricians King and Douglas explain that language becomes the symbol for affirming a group identity and subverting the ethos, ideologies, or institutions the movement dissents.²⁰ For example, the OWS slogan “we are the 99%” separates actors from the extremely wealthy. Additionally, “this is what democracy looks like” endorses the movement’s actions while implicitly claiming that government leaders have failed to maintain democratic practices thus degrading their competence. These examples, although only representing some of those discovered in the texts, demonstrate actors’ capacity to engage in polarizing discourse. However, chapter three asserts that these efforts were not effective enough to establish a clear foe the movement contested.

Based on the ethnographic findings published by Susan Kang and Emily Welty, protesters had a difficult time maintaining consensus and upholding a horizontal governing structure. This, Kang argues, stems partially from actors’ inability to articulate a singular enemy. Often, the opposition ranged from specific institutions, to particular individuals, to all corporations, and even to capitalistic ideologies.²¹ Chapter three explains how clarity’s absence was possible due to OWS’s attempts through discourse to identify with such a broad audience. As Welty pointed out, although deductively the “1%” was identified as the opposition, defining who the 1% represented was open to interpretation.²² Similarly, in the manifesto, the movement claimed to be addressing “the problems we all face” and “generating solutions accessible to all.” Although this document aided in framing the purpose of the movement by identifying a problem and solution, it is unclear who is included, and not included, in the terms “we” and “all.” There are strengths and weaknesses to communicating in the fashion actors did. Welty

claims that an oft changing opposition helped actors to maintain nonviolent strategies due to a lack of a specific target. Kang, however, argues that without an identifiable enemy, the movement was susceptible to conflict when determining a course of action. This flaw contributed to discrepancies between advocating a specific demand and embodying a demand-less organization.²³ Thus, regarding OWS's identity in terms of Melucci's definition, the movement failed to define explicitly those within the group, those outside the group, and the collective's course of action. Chapter three explains that by identifying with such a broad and diverse audience, OWS needed to communicate an opposition through engaging in polarization more distinctly. Doing so would have aided in sustaining a coherent collective identity.

This project aimed to provide a unique understanding of the OWS movement. As demonstrated here, many theorists from a range of disciplines study the organization, both as it emerged in New York City and as it expanded globally. Thus, this analysis aims to provide nuanced information, not just about the phenomenon itself but about rhetorical theory, as well. Celeste Condit contends, in her book *Decoding Abortion Rhetoric*, that rhetoric possesses a social force.²⁴ In turn, rhetorical critics have the opportunity to discover the functions of such persuasive public discourse. Despite the fact that Condit's research focused on the use of ideographs throughout public rhetoric and the current study focuses more broadly on language strategies, both attempt to discover the persuasive functions of language. Because this rhetorical examination claims that OWS's discourse reflected attempts to frame the movement in a way that resonated with the broader public, it adds to rhetorical theory by analyzing the force such discourse has

on communicating democratically. Next, this concluding chapter demonstrates how this project adds to current theories focused on democratic discursive practices.

Communicating Democratically

Quite often, orators attempting to uphold democratic ideals within a social movement strive to achieve consensus on important matters. Rhetorician Gerard A. Hauser, in the edited collection *Rhetorical Democracy*, refers to democracy as “a rhetorical form of governance in which all citizens are equal, everyone has a say, everyone has a vote, and decisions are based on the most compelling arguments.” He adds a caveat to this definition by including the notion that this form of governance is a utopian ideal because it assumes all citizens are guided by reason and “the better angels of human spirit.” Hauser states that one significant problem with attempting to maintain a modern democracy amidst diverse individuals and perspectives is “the creation of a discursive practice in which citizens may pursue the possibilities of civic engagement.”²⁵ The case of OWS illustrates. Actors attempted to establish those practices and motivate citizens to unite in order to have their voices heard. The collective aspired to attract a diverse audience, with the goal of regaining a more democratic society with a government that upheld the will of the people, not the voices of the elite. In doing so, however, rhetors experienced limitations. A rhetorical examination of these efforts, then, adds to research focused on such practices. Specifically, the analysis adds to such research through understanding how a movement’s identity can be influenced by, and how it in turn influences, the democratic functions of a group.

Language suggesting that a leader or group conducts business democratically and by means that appeal to “the people,” Hauser explains, does not always reflect that such

methods occur. The tack does, however, represent the leader's or group's recognition that their actions necessitate public authorization. He claims, as have rhetoricians in the past, that definitions and understandings of "the people" fluctuate to serve myriad interests. The importance of studying the language used to reflect democratic means, Hauser contends, lies in the fact that problems of representation in the current democracy are heavily influenced by the "realities of communication."²⁶ Essentially, it is not what is said that enables one to enact a system of governance, it is how particular communicative patterns work to encourage civic engagement. Additionally, merely using language that appears democratic, such as the previous example "the people," does not ensure that such governance will follow.

Again, democracy is an idealized system that is problematic in requiring all participants get the same opportunity to engage in the deliberative processes. Studying OWS rhetoric confirmed this limitation when it was recognized that although the movement attempted to represent "the will of the people" or that of "the 99%," maintaining consensus when constructing a clear plan of action failed and splinter groups supporting varied demands and actions emerged. Thus, studying discourse like that of OWS adds to understandings of the reality of such discursive practices. This is not to say that communicating as OWS rhetors did proves fruitless. Instead, it is to suggest, as Hauser does, that merely communicating democratically is not enough. The current project provides insight supporting this notion and helps to further the discovery of processes necessary for reinforcing democratic conventions throughout collective action.

In examining how the Jewish Reform Movement in the U.S. constructed an identity, Shawn Hellman analyzed the ways a movement's discourse shaped a

collectivity. Rhetors relied heavily upon shared values and assumptions in order to speak to Jews' lived experiences and their position as immigrants. Hellman explains that reformers framed the Jewish identity as a religious community comprised of "reasonable, modern, and progressive people," characteristics that reflected progressive values.²⁷ As discovered in this project, finding common ground and emphasizing American values was an integral component throughout OWS's discourse. Progressive values, hard work, and individualism, to name a few, are some the values incorporated throughout.

Hellman claims that participants in the reform movement identified with those who were more traditional as well as those who valued individualism through the emphasis of progressive values in their discourse. Leaders introduced a process that included organizers' consideration for each participant's opinion when describing their hopes for the movement. One leader collected all written proposals and wrote a declaration for the movement with the consideration of those proposals. Participants received the draft and the declaration went through a series of phases until advocates from multiple perspectives collaborated in the writing. Hellman argues that including participants in this process motivated further participation.²⁸ Allowing for feedback and the use of such feedback generated the civic engagement and deliberative process Hauser explains are necessary for enacting a near-democratic governing system. In the case of the Jewish Reform movement, articulating widely accepted values and expressing ideals that many in the Jewish religion could identify with, as well as allowing all members to participate in this process, helped in constructing a stable collective identity that in turn supported the organization's actions. In his conclusion, Hellman notes that the Jewish community shaped the movement's identity and the collaborative process was necessary

for that to occur. Although a few influential leaders and rabbis could have created the movement's declaration on their own and represented Jewish sentiment, this would not have resulted in such a strong identity.²⁹

Communicating democratically, motivating individuals to engage in a deliberative process, and carrying out this process are all important factors in establishing and sustaining a collective identity. Maintaining an identity created in such democratic context is equally necessary in order to uphold those practices. In the case of OWS, and likely in the case of many other movements, executing all of these steps can be trying. Sociologist Kathleen M. Blee recognizes the difficulty of achieving such goals for grassroots activists. She demonstrates, by examining 60 emerging activist groups, how social movements often fail to achieve their goals due to a lack of exercising democratic practices. Her book *Democracy in the Making*, like this project, focuses on the early stages of cultural activism and the obstacles these groups go through while attempting to enact social change. Contemporary collectives face external hurdles such as social media, news media, and entrenched structures of power, but also fall victim to internal problems such as the tendency to become oligarchies, recruiting only like-minded individuals, and interacting only in ways they are accustomed. These internal issues stunt imagination and reinforce homogenization which becomes troubling when a movement's grievances with the current power structure often relate to democracy's absence. They also become problematic by hindering an organization's ability to grow, to become influential in their communities, and ultimately, to support actions that reflect a broad and diverse public.³⁰

Blee explains that activists engage in theorizing about the world around them and the intellectual work of activism consists of "interpreting the world, developing a shared

ideology, and shaping frames that will translate the particular problems of an aggrieved group into universal conditions appealing to a broader public.” This form of theorizing, she argues, does not always last long enough. Over time, concepts, definitions, and guiding principles of the movement are often left to the leaders to construct. Blee’s research aimed primarily at studying grassroots activists to discover how these actions occur during meetings, gatherings, protests, and other like events.³¹ Thus, she examines more of the interpersonal interactions among activists. The current project, through the focus on rhetoric, aims to add to this conversation but with a concentration on macro-level practices. Doing so is an attempt to bridge the two levels to understand such relationships further. For example, studying OWS’s discourse alone yielded an understanding of the ways participants worked to frame the movement and identify with citizens. Yet, by including a discussion of OWS’s identity at the micro-level, more insightful findings regarding the movement’s discourse and how it functions was possible. Therefore, although actors communicated democratically and openly by incorporating language that established a common ground with a broad range of potential participants, such language alone was not enough to maintain the collective’s identity.

Self-definition, Blee holds, is fundamental to becoming an activist group. Defining who the group is establishes a platform for producing a singular and unified voice, for generating rules and guidelines, and for strategizing. As she highlights, many groups accomplish this task in a variety of ways. Regardless of the method, however, self-definition is both accomplished and malleable; even an organization’s provisional self can influence actions and interpretations of the group. In attempting to discover how activist groups achieve this goal, she explores three dimensions: belonging, membership,

and recruitment.³² Through examining OWS's early communication, such as the call to action, and discourse disseminated while occupying Zucotti Park, the current project adds to research directed at exploring actions that influence self-definition and the base constructed for other functions such as strategies, rules and procedures, political agendas, and a movement's unified voice. As Blee explains, there is no universal foundation of knowledge in which movements emerge; rather, activists inspire nuanced ways of thinking that shape shifting interpretations of reality.³³ Thus, continuing research geared toward understanding this constantly evolving process has the potential to strengthen our understanding of rhetoric as a social force.

Limitations and Future Directions

Kenneth Burke creatively stated that "A way of seeing is also a way of not seeing—a focus on object A involves a neglect of object B."³⁴ Although this project provides insight into the ways OWS's discourse framed the movement, identified with a diverse audience, and ultimately influenced the collective's identity, there was much left unstudied and therefore much to be studied in the future. This thesis adds to current research by exploring the ways in which language alters the process of framing and the resulting frames. Additionally, it further illuminates the unique relationship between framing and collective identity. Finally, this project adds to the ongoing conversation regarding the distinct features that comprise OWS. One important component not studied was the influential role that the news media played in framing OWS and the process of establishing a collective identity. As illustrated in chapters one and two, popular media impacted the public's understanding of OWS's makeup and the purpose of the movement. Thus, examining how the media framed the movement as well as the absence

of reporting on the demonstration in its early stages would have added to insight explaining the obstacles OWS dissidents faced when working to define the collective and to establish a course of action.

Framing is an ongoing process that often involves revising and reinterpreting as grievances change, membership shifts, and problems evolve.³⁵ Examining how the media play a role in this process aids in further developing theories that account for this process. Robert Benford and David Snow, in their overview of framing theory, explain that this process of evolving is not always under control of movement leaders and the end result is not always favorable to the organization. What the authors term counterframing is understood as publicly challenging a movement's framing in an effort to "rebut, undermine, or neutralize" a collective's version of reality. Media are often studied as a means of determining the significance of counterframing. Since the 1960s, the authors note, an abundance of scholars have studied the ways media engage in counterframing. This action often leads to frame contests, when actors reframe the movement in response.³⁶ Analyzing the frame contests that emerged between OWS and corporate media offers a potential line of inquiry for future research, particularly given OWS's initial grievances with corporate media. Such research might yield a deeper understanding of the changes demonstrators made when adapting the movement from one with demands to a demand-less group. Also within the subject of frame contests, research concentrated more on the internal contests that occurred could amplify information regarding OWS's identity work.

News media play a distinct role in shaping public opinion, but during the time of OWS's emergence social media also functioned influentially. Kevin DeLuca, Sean

Lawson, and Ye Sun contend that on “old media” such as newspapers and television news programs, OWS had been neglected and later frivolously framed. Yet on social media OWS was debated, discussed, and considered vibrant. The authors additionally assert that outlets such as Twitter, YouTube and Facebook allowed for individual and collective participation in the framing of the movement due to the unique context not offered in old media.³⁷ Discovering how two or more drastically different orientations of the movement erupted may also expand framing scholarship in a productive fashion. Exploring the patterns used either to stunt or to increase interest in OWS might demonstrate the utility of social media within the social movement context. Studying the function of social networking in relation to the movement’s broad identity could lead to deeper insight into the construction of collective identities in the 21st century. Because OWS began during the early stages of expanding technologies, such research could also inform the potential for public discourse to encourage civic engagement. The dynamic between social media and democratic communication throughout collective action is one topic that commends itself.

The final limitation to discuss and offer direction for future research regards the scope of the project. There is much more discourse to be studied that would forward beneficial research of the OWS movement. As noted, this project examined one document authored by one of the movement’s co-founders, a collaboratively written manifesto, and four prominent slogans that materialized during protest. Although these documents yielded insightful findings regarding early attempts at defining the movement, OWS maintained a strong presence even after eviction from Zucotti Park. Examining discourse disseminated by other camps and during later stages of the movement could

provide a broader understanding of the framing processes that established OWS's national and even global identities. As previous studies of OWS highlight, research performed in a particular location or during a certain time period of the movement's existence results in unique findings that do not represent the entire movement or all of their strengths and weaknesses. Thus, the findings described in this project do not constitute a comprehensive study of the whole OWS organization. Future research might benefit from examining other publicly disseminated communication authored by OWS activists to study as its own entity or even as an act of comparing findings.

Conclusion

The current project, then, addresses the tip of the OWS iceberg. The movement became close to massive and for this reason it motivated much research. However, studying the movement's discursive methods of defining the political situation and their place in that reality improves knowledge concerning rhetorical theory. While changing the status quo may seem like a collective's sole concern, terms, ideas, and practices are defined and redefined as a result. As Michael C. McGee contends, a social movement should not be characterized as a phenomenon; instead, it is a movement insofar as the meanings of terms and concepts change and adapt, thus, moving.³⁸ Although the language analyzed here only signifies the use of terms at one particular moment in time, a continuation of similar studies captures such motion. The use of language to represent American values, to reflect Constitutional rights and to define problems worth uniting to resolve reveal rhetoric's centrality in the process.

Framing, as explained previously, garnered and continues to garner substantial research across multiple disciplines. Examining OWS actors' efforts to define the

movement led to a deeper understanding of the process that relates to the construction of a collective identity. Thus, studying this process illuminated the unique interplay between framing and identification. Although David Snow and Doug McAdam explore the defining actions that constitute identity work, this project discovered the role language patterns play in such actions. As Edward Schiappa argues, the terms employed throughout defining a situation influence the resulting response. Engaging in linguistic strategies that portray a situation or problem as one necessitating citizens' action became an integral position in the frames developed. Similarly, Robert Entman explains that terms throughout allow certain frames to become more salient than others and to resonate strongly with certain individuals. Therefore, by studying OWS rhetoric through a framing lens and with a concentration on language, investigating the movement's ability to identify with citizens followed logically.

In turn, this analysis illustrated how particular discursive practices function to identify with social actors and potential participants. Framing the movement as one that protected citizens' Constitutional rights and was born to reinforce democratic practices in government worked to establish a common ground that could unite citizens. This method of identification, though, proved quite broad. Constructing a broad identity is strategic when attempting to reach a large and diverse audience and when motivating participation. However, theorists such as Richard Langian as well as Andrew A. King and Floyd Douglas Anderson recommend creating a we-they dichotomy to increase solidarity within the group. Doing so also allows individuals to distinguish clearly between those within the group and those outside, a component Alberto Melucci holds is necessary to maintain a collective identity. Ultimately, OWS rhetors adequately identified with a diversified

audience, and throughout their demonstrations in Zucotti Park they attracted a large amount of protesters. Framing the movement as one that upheld principles many resonated with benefited OWS, yet defining the opposition with an absence of detail hindered their ability to create a clear enemy. Thus, in result, strategizing a clear plan of action became difficult and problematic once actors gathered to demonstrate. Although a clear causal relationship cannot be identified in this study, Melucci notes that one aspect of maintaining a collective identity is developing a shared understanding of the group's ends, means, and field of action. Ultimately, OWS actors adequately engaged in framing by defining a problem, creating a solution and motivating participation. The language utilized in this process also allowed for a diverse group of citizens to identify with OWS. The movement's limitation, however, was the inability to establish plainly an opposition which hindered their capacity to maintain a collective identity and support a succinct course of action.

OWS experienced many obstacles, both internal and external, but their power to persevere was present as their visibility and appeal increased. Maintaining a presence is not the only important aspect of social activism, but such a capacity is vital to the health of the public sphere. Returning to John Dewey's notion of inquiry, questioning the status quo invites civic engagement fundamental to public deliberation. Thus, researching communication that functions in this way encourages critical thinking and ultimately improves the potential for these discursive practices to make rhetorical democracies more real than ideal.

End Notes

¹ David Zarefsky, "The Decline of Public Debate," *USA Today* (March 1998): 57.

-
- ² “Occupy Wall Street,” *Occupywallst.org*, last modified August 22, 2014.
- ³ Todd Gitlin, “Occupy’s Predicament: The Moment and the Prospects for the Movement,” *The British Journal of Sociology* 64, no. 1 (2013): 13.
- ⁴ Shann Turnbull, “Could the 2008 US Financial Crisis Have Been Avoided with Network Governance?,” *International Journal of Disclosure and Governance* 9, no. 3 (2012): 238-39.
- ⁵ Nick Mathiason, “Three Weeks that Changed the World,” *The Guardian* Dec. 27, 2008.
<http://www.theguardian.com/business/2008/dec/28/markets-credit-crunch-banking-2008>.
- ⁶ Alexandra Twin, “Stocks Crushed: Approximately \$1.2 Trillion in Market Value is Gone After the House Rejects the \$700 Billion Bank Bailout Plan,” *CNN Money* Sept. 29, 2008
http://money.cnn.com/2008/09/29/markets/markets_newyork/.
- ⁷ Steve Denning, “Lest We Forget: Why We Had a Financial Crisis,” *Forbes* (Nov. 22, 2011)
<http://www.forbes.com/sites/stevedenning/2011/11/22/5086/>.
- ⁸ Micah White, “#OccupyWallStreet: A Shift in Revolutionary Tactics,” *Adbusters* July 17, 2011.
<https://www.adbusters.org/blogs/adbusters-blog/occupywallstreet.html>, para 8.
- ⁹ White, “#OccupyWallStreet,” para 1, 3, & 9.
- ¹⁰ Mattathias Schwartz, “Pre-Occupied: The Origins and Future of Occupy Wall Street,” *The New Yorker* Nov. 28, 2011. <http://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2011/11/28/pre-occupied?currentPage=all>, para 33.
- ¹¹ Robert Entman, “Framing: Toward Clarification of a Fractured Paradigm,” *Journal of Communication* 43, no. 4 (1993): 52.
- ¹² Robert Benford and David Snow, “Framing Processes and Social Movements: An Overview and Assessment,” *Annual Review of Sociology* 26 (2000): 613.
- ¹³ Edward Schiappa, *Defining Reality: Definitions and the Politics of Meaning*, (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 2003), 151-152.
- ¹⁴ David A. Snow and Doug McAdam, “Identity Work Processes in the Context of Social Movements: Clarifying the Identity/ Movement Nexus,” in *Self, Identity, and Social Movements* eds. Sheldon Stryker, Timothy J. Owens, and Robert W. White (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2000), 53.
- ¹⁵ Francesca Polletta and James M. Jasper, “Collective Identity and Social Movements,” *Annual Review of Sociology* 27 (2001): 285.
- ¹⁶ Alberto Melucci, “The Process of Collective Identity,” in *Challenging Codes: Collective Action in the Information Age* (Cambridge University Press, 1996), 70-71.
- ¹⁷ Kenneth Burke, *A Rhetoric of Motives* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1969), 20-22.
- ¹⁸ White, “#OccupyWallStreet,” para 7-9.
- ¹⁹ Richard L. Lanigan, “Urban Crisis: Polarization and Communication,” *Central States Speech Journal* 21, no. 2 (1970): 108.
- ²⁰ Andrew A. King and Floyd Douglas Anderson, “Nixon, Agnew, and the ‘Silent Majority’: A Case Study in the Rhetoric of Polarization,” *Western Speech* 35, no. 4 (1971): 244.

-
- ²¹ Susan Kang, "Demands Belong to the 99%? The Conflict over Demands, Issues, and Goals in OWS," in *Occupy Political Science* eds. Emily Welty, Matthew Bolton, Meghana Nayak, and Christopher Malone, (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2013), 67-69.
- ²² Emily Welty, "The Art of Nonviolence: The Adaptions and Improvisations of Occupy Wall Street," in *Occupy Political Science* eds. Emily Welty, Matthew Bolton, Meghana Nayak, and Christopher Malone, (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2013), 92.
- ²³ Kang, "Demands Belong to the 99%?," 68.
- ²⁴ Celeste Condit, *Decoding Abortion Rhetoric* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1990),
- ²⁵ Gerard A. Hauser, "Rhetorical Democracy and Civic Engagement," in *Rhetorical Democracy: Discursive Practices of Civic Engagement* eds. Gerard A. Hauser and Amy Grim, (Mahwah: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Publishers, 2004), 1-2.
- ²⁶ Hauser, "Rhetorical Democracy," 2-3.
- ²⁷ Shawn Hellman, "Rhetoric of Globalization: A Social Movement Defines Its Collective Identity in America," in *Rhetorical Democracy: Discursive Practices of Civic Engagement* eds. Gerard A. Hauser and Amy Grim, (Mahwah: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Publishers, 2004), 175.
- ²⁸ Hellman, "Rhetoric of Globalization," 176.
- ²⁹ Hellman, "Rhetoric of Globalization," 177.
- ³⁰ Kathleen M. Blee, *Democracy in the Making: How Activist Groups Form* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 139.
- ³¹ Blee, *Democracy in the Making*, 139.
- ³² Blee, *Democracy in the Making*, 53-56.
- ³³ Blee, *Democracy in the Making*, 53.
- ³⁴ Kenneth Burke, *Permanence and Change: An Anatomy of Purpose* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984), 49.
- ³⁵ Blee, *Democracy in the Making*, 82.
- ³⁶ Benford and Snow, "Framing Processes and Social Movements," 625-626.
- ³⁷ Kevin DeLuca, Sean Lawson and Ye Sun, "Occupy Wall Street on the Public Screens of Social Media: The Many Framings of the Birth of a Protest Movement," *Communication, Culture & Critique* 5 (2012): 483-485.
- ³⁸ Michael Calvin McGee, "'Social Movement: Phenomenon or Meaning?," *Central States Speech Journal* 31, no. 4 (1980): 236.

Bibliography

- Atkins-Sayre, Wendy. "Articulating Identity: People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals and the Animal/Human Divide." *Western Journal of Communication* 74, no. 3 (2010): 309-328.
- Benford, Robert and David Snow. "Framing Processes and Social Movements: An Overview and Assessment." *Annual Review of Sociology* 26 (2000): 611-639.
- Biddle, Erika. "Re-Animating Joseph Beuys' 'Social Sculpture': Artistic Interventions and the Occupy Movement." *Communication and Critical/Cultural Studies* 11, no. 1 (2014): 25-33.
- Blee, Kathleen M. *Democracy in the Making: How Activist Groups Form*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012.
- Bowers, John, Donovan Ochs, Richard Jensen, and David Schulz. *The Rhetoric of Agitation and Control*. Third Edition Long Grove: Waveland Press, 2010.
- Brady, Miranda and Derek Antoine. "Decolonize Wall Street! Situating Indigenous Critiques of the Occupy Wall Street Movement." *American Communication Journal* 15, no. 1 (2013): 1-10.
- Bratich, Jack. "Guest Editor's Introduction." *Communication and Critical/ Cultural Studies* 11, no. 1 (2014): 1-4.
- Bray, Chad, Jessica Firger, Andrew Grossman, and Pervaiz Shallwani. "Judge Rules Against 'Occupy' Protesters." *The Wall Street Journal*, November 16, 2011 <http://www.wsj.com/articles/SB10001424052970204190504577039253668863814>.
- Brockriede, Wayne. "Rhetorical Criticism as Argument." *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 60, no. 2 (1974): 165-174.
- Burke, Kenneth. *A Rhetoric of Motives*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1969.
- Burke, Kenneth. *Permanence and Change: An Anatomy of Purpose*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984.
- Calhoun, Craig. "Occupy Wall Street in Perspective." *The British Journal of Sociology* 64, no. 1 (2013): 26-38.
- CNN Wire Staff. "18 Days of Protest Culminate in Mubarak's Ouster." *CNN* Feb. 11, 2011 <http://www.cnn.com/2011/WORLD/africa/02/11/egypt.protests/>.
- Condit, Celeste. *Decoding Abortion Rhetoric*. Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1990.

- Condit Railsback, Celeste. "The Contemporary American Abortion Controversy: Stages in the Argument." *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 70 (1984): 410-424.
- Coy, Patrick, Lynne Woehrle, and Gregory Mane. "Discursive Legacies: The U.S. Peace Movement and 'Support the Troops.'" *Social Problems* 55, no. 2 (2008): 161-189.
- DeLuca, Kevin, Sean Lawson, and Ye Sun. "Occupy Wall Street on the Public Screens of Social Media: The Many Framings of the Birth of a Protest Movement." *Communication, Culture & Critique* 5 (2012): 483-509.
- Denning, Steve. "Lest We Forget: Why We Had a Financial Crisis." *Forbes*, November 22, 2011 <http://www.forbes.com/sites/stevedenning/2011/11/22/5086/>.
- Denton, Robert. "The Rhetorical Functions of Slogans: Classifications and Characteristics." *Communication Quarterly* 28, no. 2 (1980): 10-18.
- Dewey, John. "Search for the Great Community." In *The Public and its Problems 1954*, 143-184. Athens: Ohio University Press, 1954.
- Deseriis, Marco. "The People's Mic as a Medium in Its Own Right: A Pharmacological Reading." *Communication and Critical/ Cultural Studies* 11, no. 1 (2014): 42-51.
- Domhoff, G. William. "Wealth, Income, and Power." *Who Rules America?*, February 2013. <http://www2.ucsc.edu/whorulesamerica/power/wealth.html>.
- Entman, Robert M. "Framing: Toward Clarification of a Fractured Paradigm." *Journal of Communication* 43, no. 4 (1993): 51-58.
- Edsall, Thomas. "Conservatives Seek to Shift Blame for Crisis onto Minority Housing Law." *Huffington Post*, May 25, 2011. http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2008/10/01/conservatives-seek-to-shi_n_131020.html.
- "The Effect of the Economic Crisis on Americans." *The National Bureau of Economic Research*, August 2014. <http://www.nber.org/bah/2010no3/w16407.html>.
- Feigenbaum, Anna. "Resistant Matters: Tents, Tear Gas and the 'Other Media' of Occupy." *Communication and Critical/ Cultural Studies* 11, no. 1 (2014): 15-24.
- Futrell, Robert and Pete Simi. "Free Spaces, Collective Identity, and the Persistence of U.S. White Power Activism." *Social Problems* 51, no. 1 (2004): 16-42.
- Gitlin, Todd. "Occupy's Predicament: The Moment and the Prospects for the Movement." *The British Journal of Sociology* 64, no. 1 (2013): 3-25.

- Gitlin, Todd. *Occupy Nation: The Roots, the Spirit, and the Promise of Occupy Wall Street*. New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 2012.
- Griffin, Leland. "The Rhetoric of Historical Movements." *The Quarterly Journal of Speech* 38, no. 2 (1952): 184-188.
- Harris, Paul. "Occupy Wall Street: The Protesters Speak." *The Guardian*, September 21, 2011. <http://www.theguardian.com/world/blog/2011/sep/21/occupy-wall-street-protests>.
- Hatherly, David and Gavin Kretschmar. "Capital and Income Financialization: Accounting for the 2008 Financial Crisis." *Elsevier* 35 (2011): 209-216.
- Hauser, Gerard A. "Rhetorical Democracy and Civic Engagement." In *Rhetorical Democracy: Discursive Practices of Civic Engagement* Edited by Gerard A. Hauser and Amy Grim, 1-16. Mahwah: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Publishers, 2004.
- Hellman, Shawn. "Rhetoric of Globalization: A Social Movement Defines Its Collective Identity in America." In *Rhetorical Democracy: Discursive Practices of Civic Engagement* Edited by Gerard A. Hauser and Amy Grim, 173-178. Mahwah: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Publishers, 2004.
- Hochmuth, Mary. "Kenneth Burke and the 'New Rhetoric.'" *The Quarterly Journal of Speech* 38, no. 2 (1952): 133-144.
- Juris, Jeffery S. "Reflections on #Occupy Everywhere: Social Media, Public Space, and Emerging Logics of Aggregation." *American Ethnologist* 39, no. 2 (2012): 259-279.
- Kang, Susan. "Demands Belong to the 99%? The Conflict over Demands, Issues, and Goals in OWS." In *Occupying Political Science*, edited by Emily Welty, Matthew Bolton, Meghana Nayak, and Christopher Malone, 59-88. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013.
- Kaplan, Michael. "The Rhetoric of Hegemony: Laclau, Radical Democracy, and the Rule of Tropes." *Philosophy and Rhetoric* 43, no. 3 (2010): 253-283.
- Khimm, Suzy. "Who Are the 1 Percent?" *The Washington Post*, October 6, 2011 http://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/wonkblog/post/who-are-the-1-percenters/2011/10/06/gIQAn4JDQL_blog.html.
- King, Andrew A. and Floyd Douglas Anderson. "Nixon, Agnew, and the 'Silent Majority': A Case Study in the Rhetoric of Polarization." *Western Speech* 35, no. 4 (1971): 243-255.

- Kingsley, Patrick. "Kalle Lasn: The Man Who Inspired the Occupy Movement." *The Guardian*, November 5, 2012.
<http://www.theguardian.com/world/2012/nov/05/kalle-lasn-man-inspired-occupy>.
- Lanigan, Richard L. "Urban Crisis: Polarization and Communication." *Central States Speech Journal* 21, no. 2 (1970): 108-116.
- Leyser, Conrad. "Cities of the Plain: The Rhetoric of Sodomy in Peter Damian's 'Book of Gomorrah.'" *Romanic Review* 86, no. 2 (1995): 191-112.
- Mathiason, Nick. "Three Weeks that Changed the World." *The Guardian*, December 27, 2008. <http://www.theguardian.com/business/2008/dec/28/markets-credit-crunch-banking-2008>.
- McGee, Michael. "'Social Movement': Phenomenon or Meaning." *Central States Speech Journal* 31, no. 4 (1980): 233-244.
- McGuckin, Henry E. "A Value Analysis of Richard Nixon's 1952 Campaign-Fund Speech." *The Southern Speech Journal* 33, no. 4 (1968): 259-269.
- Melucci, Alberto. "The Process of Collective Identity." In *Challenging Codes: Collective Action in the Information Age*, 68-86. Cambridge University Press, 1996.
- Msnbc.com staff. "80 arrested at 'Occupy Wall Street' Protest." *NBC News*, September 24, 2011. http://www.nbcnews.com/id/44656667/ns/us_news-life/t/arrested-occupy-wall-street-protest/#.U__b9_ldWSo.
- Naureckas, Jim. "They Are the 1 Percent." *Extra!* November 2011. Print.
- "Occupy Wall Street," *Occupywallst.org*, August 22, 2014.
- Polletta, Francesca and James M. Jasper. "Collective Identity and Social Movements." *Annual Review of Sociology* 27 (2001): 283-305.
- Radovac, Lilian. "Mic Check: Occupy Wall Street and the Space of Audition." *Communication and Critical/ Cultural Studies* 11, no. 1 (2014): 34-41.
- Reinhart, Carmen M. and Kenneth S. Rogoff. "The Aftermath of Financial Crises." *The National Bureau of Economic Research*, January 2009
<http://www.nber.org/papers/w14656>.
- Renegar, Valerie R. and Stacey K. Sowards. "Liberal Irony, Rhetoric, and Feminist Thought: A Unifying Third Ave Feminist Theory." *Philosophy & Rhetoric* 36, no. 4 (2003): 330-352.

- Schiappa, Edward. *Defining Reality: Definitions and the Politics of Meaning*. Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 2003.
- Schwartz, Mattathias. "Pre-Occupied: The Origins and Future of Occupy Wall Street." *The New Yorker*, Nov. 28, 2011.
<http://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2011/11/28/pre-occupied?currentPage=all>.
- Sharma, Sarah. "Because the Night Belongs to Lovers: Occupying the Time of Precarity." *Communication and Critical/ Cultural Studies* 11, no. 1 (2014): 5-14.
- Simons, Herbert W. "Requirements, Problems, and Strategies: A Theory of Persuasion for Social Movements." *The Quarterly Journal of Speech* 56, no. 1 (1970): 1-11.
- Snow, David A. and Doug McAdam. "Identity Work Processes in the Context of Social Movements: Clarifying the Identity/ Movement Nexus." In *Self, Identity, and Social Movements*, edited by Sheldon Stryker, Timothy J. Owens, and Robert W. White, 41-67. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2000.
- Soueif, Ahdaf. "Tahrir Square Protests: 'For Everyone Here, There's No Turning Back.'" *The Guardian*, February 1, 2011.
<http://www.theguardian.com/world/2011/feb/01/ahdaf-soueif-egypt-protests>.
- Steele, Edward D. and W. Charles Redding. "The American Value System: Premises for Persuasion." *Western Speech* 26, no. 2 (1962): 83-91.
- Tanneeru, Manav. "How a 'Perfect Storm' Led to the Economic Crisis." *CNN*, January 29, 2009.
<http://www.cnn.com/2009/US/01/29/economic.crisis.explainer/index.html?iref=newssearch>.
- Taylor, Alan. "A Defiant 'Spanish Revolution.'" *The Atlantic*, May 20, 2011
<http://www.theatlantic.com/photo/2011/05/a-defiant-spanish-revolution/100070/>.
- Thompson, Derek. "Employment Down, Profits Up: The Aftermath of the Financial Crisis in 1 Graph." *The Atlantic*, September 13, 2013
<http://www.theatlantic.com/business/archive/2013/09/employment-down-profits-up-the-aftermath-of-the-financial-crisis-in-1-graph/279671/>.
- Turnbull, Shann and Michael Pirson. "Could the 2008 US Financial Crisis Have Been Avoided with Network Governance?" *International Journal of Disclosure and Governance* 9, no. 3 (2012): 238-263.
- Twin, Alexandra. "Stocks Crushed: Approximately \$1.2 Trillion in Market Value is Gone After the House Rejects the \$700 Billion Bank Bailout Plan." *CNN Money*, September 29, 2008
http://money.cnn.com/2008/09/29/markets/markets_newyork.

“United States: Hundreds of Protesters set to ‘Occupy’ Wall Street.” *Asia News Monitor* (Bangkok, Thailand) September 20, 2011.

Welty, Emily. “The Art of Nonviolence: The Adaptions and Improvisations of Occupy Wall Street.” In *Occupying Political Science*, edited by Emily Welty, Matthew Bolton, Meghana Nayak, and Christopher Malone, 89-116. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013.

Welty, Emily, Matthew Bolton, Meghana Nayak, and Christopher Malone. “We Had a Front Row Seat to Downtown Revolution.” In *Occupying Political Science* edited by Emily Welty, Matthew Bolton, Meghana Nayak, and Christopher Malone, 1-24. New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2013.

White, Micah. “Clicktivism is Ruining Leftist Activism.” *The Guardian*, August 12, 2010 <http://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2010/aug/12/clicktivism-ruining-leftist-activism>.

White, Micah. “#OccupyWallStreet: A Shift in Revolutionary Tactics.” *Adbusters* July 17, 2011. <https://www.adbusters.org/blogs/adbusters-blog/occupywallstreet.html>

Worstell, Tim. “Ben Bernanke: The 2008 Financial Crisis Was Worse Than The Great Depression.” *Forbes*, August 7, 2014. <http://www.forbes.com/sites/timworstell/2014/08/27/ben-bernanke-the-2008-financial-crisis-was-worse-than-the-great-depression>.

Xu, Kaibin. “Framing Occupy Wall Street: A Content Analysis of *The New York Times* and *USA Today*.” *The International Journal of Communication* 7 (2013): 2412-2432.

Zarefsky, David. “The Decline of Public Debate.” *USA Today*, March 1998.

Curriculum Vita

Molly B. Forgey

6100 Blowing Bellows Street
Las Vegas, NV 89130
(702)336-9288
mbforgey@gmail.com

Education

- | | |
|--|-----------------------|
| University of Nevada, Las Vegas | Expected: Summer '15 |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Master of Arts in Communication Studies• GPA 3.91 | |
| University of Nevada, Las Vegas | Graduated: Summer '13 |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Bachelor of Arts in Communication Studies• GPA 3.73 | |
| Universidad Nacional de Costa Rica | Summer '13 |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Summer Abroad | |
| College of Southern Nevada | Graduated: Fall '11 |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Associate of Arts in Communication• GPA 3.63 | |

Affiliations

- Student member of Phi Kappa Phi Honor Society
- Student member of the National Communication Association Student Club
- Student member of Sigma Alpha Pi the National Society of Leadership and Success
- Student member of Lambda Pi Eta the Communication Studies Honor Society

Honors

- Outstanding Graduate Teaching Award 2014-15 Academic Year
- Dean's Honor List at UNLV Spring '12, Fall '12, Spring '13
- Dean's List at CSN Fall '10, Spring '11, Fall '11
- Graduated with honors from CSN 2011

Teaching Experience

University of Nevada, Las Vegas

Guest Lecturer

- Famous Speeches, S. VanderHaagen, Spring '15

Instructor of Record

- Communication 101: Introduction to Public Speaking
- Summer '14 (16 students) & '15 (21 students)

Graduate Teaching Assistant

- Communication 101: Introduction to Public Speaking
- Fall '13, Spring '14, Fall '14, Spring '15

Department Experience

UNLV Public Speaking Contest, Invited Judge, Spring '14
UNLV Public Speaking Contest, Invited Judge, Fall '15

Course Work

Thesis—D. Henry
Famous Speeches—S. VanderHaagen
Social Movement Studies—R. Futrell
Social Movement as Rhetorical Form—D. Henry
Public Communication—D. Conley
Empirical Research Methods—T. Emmers-Somer
Rhetorical-Critical Research Methods—S. VanderHaagen
Theories of Communication—D. Conley
Survey of Communication Studies—T. McManus
College Teaching in Communication—W. Belk

Volunteer

Boys and Girls Club
North Vista Hospital

Work Experience

UNLV, Graduate Teaching Assistant: Communication 101
Wyndham Vacation Ownership, Activities Coordinator
Marriott Resort, Lifeguard
Bubbles Swim School, Swim Instructor