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Contemporary Social Movements through Twitter:  
The Cases of Madison, Wisconsin and Occupy Wall Street

By

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ABSTRACT

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This project investigates the Madison, Wisconsin protests in response to

Governor Scott

Walker's Budget Repair Bill, which took most collective bargaining rights away from state workers, and the Occupy Wall Street movement in opposition to corporate influence over the political system in the United States. What common elements do these protests exhibit? How does the Twitter activity reinforce the social movement analysis? In what ways and to what extent is the Occupy Movement inspired by the Madison protests? What about their goals and "repertoire of protest" can be recognized in the tradition of previous social movements, and what instead seems new and thus constitutes a new movement in opposition to capitalism and the United States' corporatocracy?

Twitter was used extensively by the protestors and people talking about the protests. The tweets relating to these protests are analyzed by user and word counts to discover the patterns of participation, the spikes in activity on Twitter, and the important concepts used by tweeters. The protests on the other hand, are analyzed according to Sidney Tarrow's key concepts of social movements such as repertoires of contention, master framing, and cycles of protest. I argue that these two cases of

prolonged protests have developed a new social movement in opposition to the corporate influence in our political system and the inequalities of our economic system.

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## Chapter I

### Introduction

*“I said, you know, this may seem a little melodramatic, but thirty years ago, Ronald Reagan ... had one of the most defining moments of his political career, not just his presidency, when he fired the air traffic controllers ... that was the first crack in the Berlin Wall and the fall of Communism.”*

*– Governor Scott Walker discussing over the phone to a David Koch impersonator about his dinner with cabinet members the night before he announced his Budget Repair Bill.*

In February 2011 the governor of Wisconsin, Scott Walker, proposed a bill that would reduce the collective bargaining rights of most state employees. With the bill, Governor Walker was making budget cuts because he felt as though the public worker unions were costing the state too much money. He wanted to limit what the workers could demand and thus reduce the cost to the state. The bill, designed to attack the state workers unions, was due to be passed on Thursday February 17<sup>th</sup> (MacAskill 2011). Since the bill included spending provisions, the democratic senators fled the state for Illinois. This was an ingenious tactic to dodge the attack on workers because it left the 19 republican senators one short of the quorum required for bills including spending provisions (Wisconsin Union Bill Passes State Assembly 2011). By the next day, thousands of protestors had reached their 4<sup>th</sup> day of protests and many schools had closed down because of teachers’ participation in the protests (MacAskill 2011).

On Wednesday March 9<sup>th</sup>, a spending committee made up of members from the Senate and State Assembly removed the spending measures from the bill so that they could vote on it the following day (Wisconsin Union Bill Passes State Assembly 2011). On Thursday, the Assembly passed the bill 53-42. However, on May 26<sup>th</sup>, Judge Maryann Sumi from the Dane County Circuit Court voided the bill, saying that the committee had violated the open meetings law (Greenhouse 2011). The open meetings law states that there needs be two hours notice before votes. Unfortunately, in June the State Supreme Court overturned Judge Sumi's decision and reinstated the bill (Kilkenny 2011).

The bill was a drastic attack on state unions and organized labor in general. Significant collective bargaining rights of over 300,000 state workers were destroyed (MacAskill 2011). State unions are not permitted to negotiate pensions or health insurance and the workers are forced to pay half their pensions and at least 12.6% of their healthcare. When it comes to raises, workers may only seek wage increases based upon the rate of inflation (Wisconsin Union Bill Passes State Assembly 2011). In addition to the cuts to collective bargaining, the bill regulates union elections and changed the rules on collecting union dues. Cleverly, the police and firefighter unions are excluded from this bill (MacAskill 2011). The police maintain public order and are needed to protect the government officials and the governor did not want the police to turn on him. Firefighters are required for public safety and a strike would potentially be dangerous.

Governor Walker's bill is a direct attack on the state employees and an even greater threat to workers everywhere in the United States. This bill is a travesty to unions because it takes away their bargaining rights. However, there is a silver lining to be seen in this incident: the response of the people of Wisconsin. Their resistance to the governor's bill and their participation in these protests constitute a main subject of this thesis.

Another movement that started in late September 2011 was Occupy Wall Street. The protesters define themselves as being part of the "99 percent" with little wealth and protest the greed of Wall Street. The rulers on Wall Street, the protestors claim, are part of the 1 percent who controls most of the wealth in the country and on a larger scale, in the world. The 99 percent have become frustrated with the capitalist system that has fueled the few who have to gain more, leaving the many who have little in the dust.

Over the past three decades the government has been redistributing wealth to the richest one percent through corporate favoritism (Harcourt 2011). According to the Congressional Budget Office, between 1979 and 2007, the income of the top 1 percent has grown 275 percent while the bottom 20 percent experienced only an 18 percent increase in income (Gelder 2011). The government facilitates this through corporate welfare, tax breaks, and overall favoritism. By championing the free market and deregulation, both political parties disguised the shifting of wealth into the hands of people whom were already wealthy. The protestors are angry at the current political system "for serving the few at the expense of the other 99 percent" (Harcourt 2011).

## **The Issue: Corporations and Government**

Neoliberalism is an economic school of thought developed in the 1970s at the University of Chicago. David Harvey defines Neoliberalism as “a theory of political economic practices that proposes that human well-being can best be advanced by liberating individual entrepreneurial freedoms and skills within an institutional framework characterized by strong private property rights, free markets, and free trade” (Harvey 2007, 2). Under Neoliberal Theory, the State’s role is one of ensuring an institutional framework that allows for the continuation of these practices and must defend them with military, police, and legal structures. The State also has the obligation to create markets in areas that they do not exist. Neoliberal policy suggestions include trade liberalization, privatization of state enterprises, balanced fiscal policy, and economic deregulation.

The United States has followed Neoliberal policies since Ronald Regan was president and has become a capitalist paradise. In a capitalist paradise corporations are “assured full support of the state juridical and martial apparatus to repress those workers who break established rules of the labor-management engagement” (Ness 2011, 302). This type of state supports management in gaining absolute dominance over workers and predatory forms of labor exploitation. In doing so, the state disregards its workers who make up the majority of the population. Through legislation and presidential actions the United States government has shown its true colors, defenders of capital. The government, following Neoliberal Theory, in the best interest of corporations, defends the free market and became a paradise for corporation.

The United States defends capital because of the influence of the economic elites and corporations. Michael Parenti argues that capitalism in America is more than the economic system, it is a *plutocracy* defined as “a social order ruled mostly for and by the rich” (Parenti 2011, 47). In addition to businesses and banks, the cultural institutions, such as media, educational, and hospitals, are controlled by boards of directors who are affluent corporate representatives. This situation is due to Neoliberalism and the free market. Discussing the effects of the free market Parenti states:

*The free market is very good for winners, offering all the rewards that money can buy, but it is exceedingly harsh on millions of others. Contrary to the prevailing social mythology, the U.S. capitalist system squanders our natural resources, exploits and underpays our labor, and creates privation and desperate social needs amidst commodity glut, serving the few at great cost to the many, leaving us with a society that is less democratic and increasingly riven by wealth and want. (Parenti 2011, 46).*

The system of free market capitalism, we are told, breeds democracy and prosperity. However, it only stimulates the profit motive within our society while ignoring the values of justice, health, safety, and the future (Parenti 2011).

### **Corporate Favoritism**

The federal government favors corporations through aiding their pursuit of capital accumulation and supporting them when they fail. Parenti terms the extensive tax breaks, bailouts, subsidies, and grants as *corporate welfare*. Also, the government

leases and sells land and resources to corporations below market value giving them the opportunity for “private gain at public expense” (Parenti 2011, 72). The government gives rights to corporations to use common assets at the expense of the public while pocketing the profits (Gelder 2011). Tax breaks for the wealthy and corporations and government bailouts for banks and corporations increase the concentration of wealth into the hands of the top 1 percent.

Those who control the majority of capital in our society control the ideological development by controlling education, think tanks, and the media; they control jobs and investments and therefore economic policy; and the political process with extensive campaign contributions and lobbying to insure that they or someone loyal to them holds public office (Parenti 2011). Most policymakers have been in the top echelons of corporations, law firms, and sometimes the military and the scientific establishment.

Political and economic elites are connected on a personal level through elite groups such as the Bohemian Club and the Council on Foreign Relations (CFR). Parenti argues that the top politico-economic elites decide what candidates and policies they will support to secure their class interest. For instance, the Bohemian Club of San Francisco meets yearly at a California retreat, inviting United States presidents, top White House officials, and the directors of large corporations and financial institutions. Since the meetings began about a century ago every Republican president and some Democratic presidents have been invited (Parenti 2011).

Another such group of elites is the CFR, a policy advising group. The CFR receives funding from financial institutions, media networks, and corporations. The membership

has included presidents, CIA directors, Federal Reserve officers, and other key political officials. Additionally, about a third of the members are from corporations and banks (Parenti 2011). Through the Bohemian Club, the CFR, and other such groups, business elites and public officials meet and decide in secret, who will hold office and what they will do in that position. With these personal connections and joint decision making, the government must do what is in the best interest of the wealthy and the corporations which they control.

### **Corporatocracy**

Defining the United States as a plutocracy is an accurate interpretation of the current politico-economic system because the wealthy are able to control the government. While Occupy Wall Street does not use the term plutocracy in their critique of the politico-economic system, they use an almost synonymous term, *corporatocracy*. Mooney, Knox, and Schacht define corporatocracy in their book Understanding Social Problems as “A system of government that serves the interests of corporations and that involves ties between government and business” (Mooney, Knox and Schacht 2009).

When talking about Governor Walker’s bill the steward of the AFSCME Local 1871 Brian Standing said, “In the past they've said this is all about jobs, but now we know it's about nothing less than global corporate domination in every aspect of our lives!” (Mills 2011). A Wisconsin dairy farmer, Joel Greeno, friend of John Nichols, saw the protests in Madison as more than a struggle for workers’ rights; it is about the working people having a say in the government. Greeno explains “The big corporations

are organized. They're in this fight with all the money in the world," (Nichols 2012, 48).

Paraphrasing Greeno, Nichols writes that our system is "looking less and less like a democracy and more and more like a corporate kleptocracy" (Nichols 2012, 48).

Kleptocracy means rule by thieves, and in this case, corporate thieves. Clearly, the control of social and political institutions by the affluent business class (in Marxian terms the bourgeoisie) leads to favoritism towards, if not complete control by, corporations within the government.

## **Research Questions**

This Thesis examines the aforementioned Madison protests in response to Governor Scott Walker's budget repair bill, and the Occupy Wall Street movement, with a special interest in these protests' shared critique of capitalism and our political system. What common elements do these protests exhibit? How does the Twitter activity reinforce the social movement analysis? In what ways and to what extent is the Occupy Movement inspired by the Madison protests? What about their goals and "repertoire of protest" can be recognized in the tradition of previous social movements, and what instead seems new and thus constitutes a new movement in opposition to capitalism and the United States' corporatocracy?

To answer these questions I draw on two main sources. First, I analyzed the literature and news articles relating to both protests. Also, I conducted interviews at Occupy Wall Street during December 2011. Second, the data collected through the literature and interviews is complemented by an analysis of Twitter feeds, which will give us access to the opinions of a broader base and the important concepts related to

the protests. The protestors and people who support them have used Twitter extensively. I conducted counts of the users' total tweets and their tweets by date and the most common words used. These counts help answer some key questions that aid in identifying the movements better. I analyzed the #wiunion tweets from February 17<sup>th</sup> through June 30<sup>th</sup>, the #occupywallstreet tweets from July 26<sup>th</sup> until October 25<sup>th</sup>, and the #ows tweets from October 6<sup>th</sup> until October 27<sup>th</sup> to identify main actors, key words, and patterns of use.

I argue that the protests in both Madison and New York City are part of the same new social movement in opposition to our politico-economic system. The protests represent a learning process in how to oppose capital's influence over the government. I further have evidence that the Wisconsin protests developed from the traditional labor movement. However, in contrast to the labor movements of the last century, the participation is widespread and involved people who were not at personal risk from the Governor's bill. Additionally, the analysis of the Twitter data will validate the connection between the two protests.

## **Defining Social Movements**

Since this study is about social movements we must have a clear definition of social movements, their components, and key concepts. I follow Sidney Tarrow on that the basis of all social movements and revolutions is *contentious collective action* (Tarrow 1996). Collective action is common within institutions and is normal in politics. However, collective action becomes contentious when people who do not have access to political institutions support a new or unaccepted claim. They use collective action to

challenge others (Tarrow 1996). When this challenge is sustained and centered around common claims a social movement is formed. Coordinating this collective action requires that actors mount collective challenges, draw on common purposes, build solidarity, and sustain collective action (Tarrow 1996). Therefore, Sidney Tarrow defines social movements as, *“collective challenges by people with common purposes and solidarity in sustained interaction with elites, opponents and authorities”* (Tarrow 1996, 3).

This definition includes four empirical properties of social movements. Social movements must have a collective challenge, a common purpose, solidarity, and be able to sustain collective action (Tarrow 1996).

#### **Four Empirical Properties of Social Movements**

Social movements challenge elites, authorities, other groups, or cultural codes through disruptive direct action. These collective challenges usually interrupt, obstruct, or make uncertain the actions of their opponents (Tarrow 1996). Most actions of social movements are collective challenges which gain the movement attention. Since they are asserting new claims they lack money, organization, and access to the state (Tarrow 1996). Therefore, they must become the focal point for supporters and gain attention from opponents and third parties (Tarrow 1996). Social movements use collective challenge to achieve these goals.

The number of participants in a social movement is the result of those people having a common purpose. People band together because they wish to voice common claims against opponents, authorities, or elites (Tarrow 1996). The people involved in a

particular social movement have overlapping interests and values. They must have a good reason to risk themselves for the sake of a social movement (Tarrow 1996). These common interests, values, and risks allow for solidarity within the group to form.

Solidarity is another component to any social movement. The group forms solidarity when they recognize their common interests, which leads to the potential for collective action (Tarrow 1996). According to Tarrow, leaders can only form a social movement when they appeal to deep-rooted identity or solidarity. As opposed to social class, it is easier to create a movement based on nationalism, ethnicity, or religion (Tarrow 1996).

It is through this common purpose, solidarity, and collective identities that movements can sustain collective action, the defining component of a social movement. By sustaining collective action participants create a social movement out of contentious episodes (Tarrow 1996). The mobilization of people through social networks and around symbols drawn from the culture affects the magnitude and duration of the collective action (Tarrow 1996).

### **Social Movement Dynamics**

Sidney Tarrow draws his concept of repertoires of contentions from Charles Tilly. This is “not only what people *do* when they are engaged in conflict with others; it is what they *know how to do* and what others *expect* them to do” (Tarrow 1996, 31). The repertoires do change but slowly. Tilly explains that participants in social movements experiment with established tactics in order to gain an advantage over their opposition. A movement’s repertoire is the tactics it employs and what the opponents will expect

them to do as well as their means for making a claim. Essentially a movement's repertoire is the trademark tactics of the movement.

A collective action frame is the way in which a social movement constructs meaning of and interprets its environment (Tarrow 1996). Once these frames are constructed and employed they can be used by other movements in their message. Master frames are important because "in a context of general turbulence, permissiveness and social enthusiasm, it is adapted, added to and honed down by the practice of a variety of actors engaged in different struggles against different opponents" (Tarrow 1996, 131). These master frames are generally the basic demand and purpose of the movement itself.

The concept of *Cycles of protest* is one of the most important concepts to this study of the Wisconsin protests and Occupy Wall Street. Tarrow's concept of *cycles of protest* refers to a period of increased conflict and contention within a social system including: "a rapid diffusion of collective action from more mobilized to less mobilized sectors; a quickened pace of innovation in the forms of contention; new or transformed collective action frames; a combination of organized and unorganized participation; and sequences of intensified interaction between challengers and authorities which can end in reform, repression and sometimes revolution" (Tarrow 1996, 153).

The initial demands in a *cycle of protest* perform two tasks important to the movement. First they open up opportunities for other demands to be made by exposing that authorities are vulnerable to such demands. Secondly, the demands are a direct challenge to other contenders because appeasement of their demands would limit the

ability to appease other demands, or the demands are in opposition to an established group (Tarrow 1996).

These cycles help the formation of new movements by inspiring collective action in unrelated groups and antagonists. This process is the way new weapons are formed for social protests. Tarrow says that periods in recent history have had:

*heightened conflict, broad sectoral and geographic diffusion, the expansions of the repertoire of contention, the appearance of new movement organizations and the empowerment of old ones, the creation of new "master frames" linking the actions of disparate groups to one another and intensified interaction between challengers and the state* (Tarrow 1996, 155).

The protests in Wisconsin and later, the Occupy Wall Street movement show that we are experiencing such a period in time.

### **Communicative Capitalism**

Jodi Dean, Professor of Political Science at Hobart and Williams Smith Colleges, in "Democracy and Other Neoliberal Fantasies: Communicative Capitalism and Left Politics" argues that the use of technology for people to voice their opinions has replaced political activism. She warns that when too much energy is invested in discussing then the problem is neglected and allowed to continue festering (Dean 2009). Dean says that when communication is the key category for politics "doing is reduced to talking, to contributing to the media environment, instead of being conceived in terms of, say, occupying military bases [or] taking over the government" (Dean 2009, 32). Just because people are "aware of a problem, have an opinion, and make their opinion

known doesn't mean they have developed the infrastructure necessary to write new legislation, garner support for it, and get it passed, much less carry out a revolution" (Dean 2009, 32).

I find this analysis of social media use to be true in many cases such as debates on blogs. However, the new cases of the Madison protests and the Occupy Movement show something different. These actions started on the social networking site Twitter, arguably a prime battle ground for debates as it is easy to join and one can post about anything for many to see. The discussions raised awareness; people developed their positions and shared them. In the Madison protests they were adamant about preventing and later reversing the bill which attacked the unions. They protested to gain support for their rights.

Specifically speaking of the Occupy Movement, they do not have legislation suggestions because they are resisting the current system and refuse to take part in old ideologies (Harcourt 2011). With their actions and general message, they could be (and hopefully are) sparking a revolution.

It would seem as though the system of communicative capitalism which has the tendency to sap political action out of the people, in this case has failed to do so. Rather, it supported and fostered political action.

## **Chapter Outline**

The first chapter examines what has been written on the Madison protests. More importantly this chapter will show the protest as the beginning of a new social movement. This instance is most representative of the labor movement however; I

argue that the Madison protests developed the *repertoires of contention* and *master collective action frame*, and began the *cycles of protest* of a new social movement.

The next chapter will describe the Occupy Wall Street protests. The description will be based upon some written material and the interviews that I conducted of people participating. The interviews will shed light upon the personal motivations for the protestors. The chapter shows that Occupy Wall Street protests continue the *cycle of protests* initiated by the Madison protests using the *repertoires of contention* and *master collective action frame* developed in Wisconsin.

The following chapter will explain the methods used to analyze the Tweets related to the Madison protests and Occupy Wall Street. I conducted counts of the users and significant words. Also, I analyzed the content 200 Tweets from each protest in terms of who tweeted it and what the purpose of the tweet was. We will see the correlation between events and the Twitter activity as well as the similarity of Twitter usage between the protests.

The conclusion argues that these two groups of protests can be seen as events within the same social movement. The Madison protests initiated the movement and Occupy Wall Street continues it. This new social movement critiques our current politico-economic system and the injustices it causes.

## Chapter II

### Wisconsin Protests

*“To Our Friends in Madison, Wisconsin: I wish you could see firsthand the change we have made here. Justice is beautiful, but justice is never free. The beauty of Tahrir Square you can have everywhere, on any corner, in any city, or in your heart. So hold on tightly and don’t let go. ... Breathe deep Wisconsin, because justice is in the air. And may the spirit of Tahrir Square be in every beating heart in Madison today.”*

*– Letter from Egyptian activist Maor Eletrebi, read by Tom Morello, February 21, 2011*

*(Quoted by Nichols page 1)*

#### **Introduction**

The protests of Madison, Wisconsin from February 12<sup>th</sup> to mid June that were organized in response to Governor Scott Walker’s bill curtailing public sector union rights, have become an important chapter in social justice movements in the United States by initiating a new social movement. John Nichols states that Ed Schultz, host of the Ed Show on MSNBC, held his show in Madison because he recognized that these protests were epic events (Nichols 2012). By transforming old and developing new *repertoires of contention*, developing a new *master collective action frame*, and initiating new *cycles of protests* the Madisonians have sparked a new social movement critiquing the United States’ politico-economic system. One of the new *repertoires of contention*

seen in Madison was the extensive use of Twitter, likely because of its use by the Arab Spring; some protestors said that they were motivated by the Egyptian uprising (Cooper and Seelye 2011). This chapter explores the history of the protests, the arguments about the bill they were protesting, and the vast diversity of those opposed to the bill.

## **The Bill**

When Wisconsin's Governor, Scott Walker, took office on January 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2011 the State's budget had a deficit of 137 million dollars (Davey and Greenhouse 2011). His proposed budget bill introduced on February 11<sup>th</sup>, 2011 included drastic cuts to collective bargaining rights for public-sector unions (Marlowe 2011). Walker believes that public-sector unions cost the state too much and should be limited. Walker's bill only allowed public-sector unions to bargain over basic wages; therefore, the unions were not allowed to bargain for changes in healthcare, work schedules, or vacation time (Lewis 2011). While public employees were already banned from striking, Walker modified this to dismiss any public employees taking part in forms of protest such as sick-outs, sit-downs or slowdowns. In addition, the bill required that state employees contribute more for their pensions and healthcare premiums; pension contributions were raised to 5.8 percent of their pay and contributions to healthcare doubled from 6 percent to about 12.6 percent (Davey and Greenhouse 2011). Another provision of the bill was that the unions must hold annual member votes in order to continue representing them (Greenhouse, A Watershed Moment for Public-Sector Unions 2011a).

To understand the reason for protesting, the reasons (explicit and implicit) why the bill was proposed need to be examined. These motives arose out of the media

coverage on the bill and the protests. It is these ideas in the bill, constricting the public-sector unions in Wisconsin by limiting their collective bargaining rights and reducing the power of the unions, that also threatens workers around the United States. Governor Walker spoke of being concerned about the budget; however, there are other motives at work here that ideologically threaten the rights of workers around the country.

### **Walker's Position**

Governor Walker's understanding of public sector unions created his budget balancing method of eliminating those unions in Wisconsin. Walker was most likely influenced by the argument that public sector unions wield undue influence over the democratic process and procure benefits at the expense of the public (McGinnis and Schanzenbach 2010). It is argued that these unions have distorted the state spending priorities and their elimination is "a way to eliminate inefficient spending and create a polity of low taxes and lean government" (McGinnis and Schanzenbach 2010, 4). States with public workers represented by unions usually have higher levels of debt (Edwards 2011). Public sector unions are seen by some scholars as illegitimate collective bargaining; they claim collective bargaining is not necessary to protect public workers because if their unions were eliminated they would maintain their political rights as citizens.

Governor Walker's statements claim balancing the budget as his primary concern. His proposed cuts to the pensions and health insurance, he argued, would save the state 300 million dollars over the next two years; and yet the budget gap is 3.6 billion dollars for the state (Washington 2011). If this deficit is really what motivated

the Governor, rather than unilaterally limiting workers' rights, it would have been appropriate for him to discuss his worries about the state with the unions as well as with all other main actors in Wisconsin politics (Meyerson 2011). Stating instead "I don't have anything to negotiate" (Meyerson 2011, A19), Walker's unwillingness to negotiate with the unions displays his predisposition to destroying those unions due to the perceptions that the unions are illegitimate. Furthermore, the Governor made it clear that dissention would not be tolerated by threatening to use the National Guard if protestors disrupted state services or walked off the job to join (Meyerson 2011).

Although Walker claimed to be concerned with Wisconsin's budget, he was looking for more than just balancing his budget. Walker wanted to be an example for other state governors to limit their public sector unions. During an interview Walker said "I hope I'm an inspiration just as much to others are an inspiration to me", expressing his hopes of setting an aggressive example for other states to limit their public sector unions (Cooper and Seelye 2011, 1). However, he previously stated that "It's not about the unions ... It's about balancing the budget" (Greenhouse, A Watershed Moment for Public-Sector Unions 2011a, 14). For Walker, these are the same idea, as limiting the public sector unions will help balance the budget. Walker's obvious scapegoating of unions for the state's budget problems leads to the conclusion that there are ulterior motives (mainly the corporate interest to destroy unions, public and private) involved in the limiting of public-sector unions.

The motivations for this bill reach farther than balancing Wisconsin's budget and involve more than the viewpoints of Governor Walker. Under Walker, Wisconsin

became the test-site for Republicans in other states claiming to be balancing their budgets by taking away benefits and union rights (Washington 2011). Harold Meyerson argues that “the real goal of the American right is to reduce public employee unions to the level of private-sector unions, which now represents fewer than 7 percent of American workers” (Meyerson 2011, A19). Since the bill not only forces state workers to pay more for their healthcare and pensions, but also forces an annual vote for the union to continue to represent the workers, it is clearly an easily enforced bureaucratic method intended to lower the membership of the unions, thus decreasing the percentage of unionized workers.

Dennis Van Roekel, president of the National Education Association, argues that the governor is following a right-wing agenda to limit the power of workers. Roekel said, "I absolutely believe that is politically motivated, and they are using this budget crisis to run a very different agenda, and that is to attack worker rights and silence public employees," (Jonsson 2011). The debate around this issue suggests that the cuts to unions could be an attempt to undermine progressive ideals such as workers' rights and unionization, in order to bring about more right-to-work agreements and small government. Union leaders say that restricting unions will give corporate interests more power while injuring the working class (Jonsson 2011).

### **Corporate Interests**

This involvement of corporate interests in politics is representative of a corporatocracy. Returning to Mooney, Knox, and Schacht's definition, a corporatocracy is “A system of government that serves the interests of corporations and that involves

ties between government and business” (Mooney, Knox and Schacht, *Work and Unemployment* 2009). Walker was heavily influenced by corporate interests in his budget cuts to unions. John Nichols states, “Walker’s real goal was always clear” (Nichols 2012, 49). Nichols means that once Scott Walker was elected he was on a mission to restrict the public-sector unions in order to injure unionization overall in alignment with corporate interests.

The Supreme Court’s decision in *Citizens United vs. FEC* allowed billionaires such as Charles and David Koch and corporations to donate unlimited amount of money to the Republican Governors Association which spent 3.4 million dollars to help get Walker elected (Nichols 2012). The support of the most wealthy individuals and corporations put Walker into office. Since the PAC controlled by the Koch brothers donated 43,000 dollars to Walker’s campaign, he owed them a debt as well as other wealthy donors, once he was in office. “In addition to attacking unions [Walker] outlined a plan to reconstruct state government so [that he] could sell off power plants in no-bid deals to firms like Koch Industries, while restructuring state health-insurance programs so that tens of thousands of Wisconsinites would lose an alternative to for-profit coverage” (Nichols 2012, 49).

The protests to Governor Walker’s bill focused on the cutting of union rights; however these cuts support corporate interests. The bill exemplifies the presence of a corporatocracy within our government and the Madison protests worked to fight the interests of capital.

## **History of Protests**

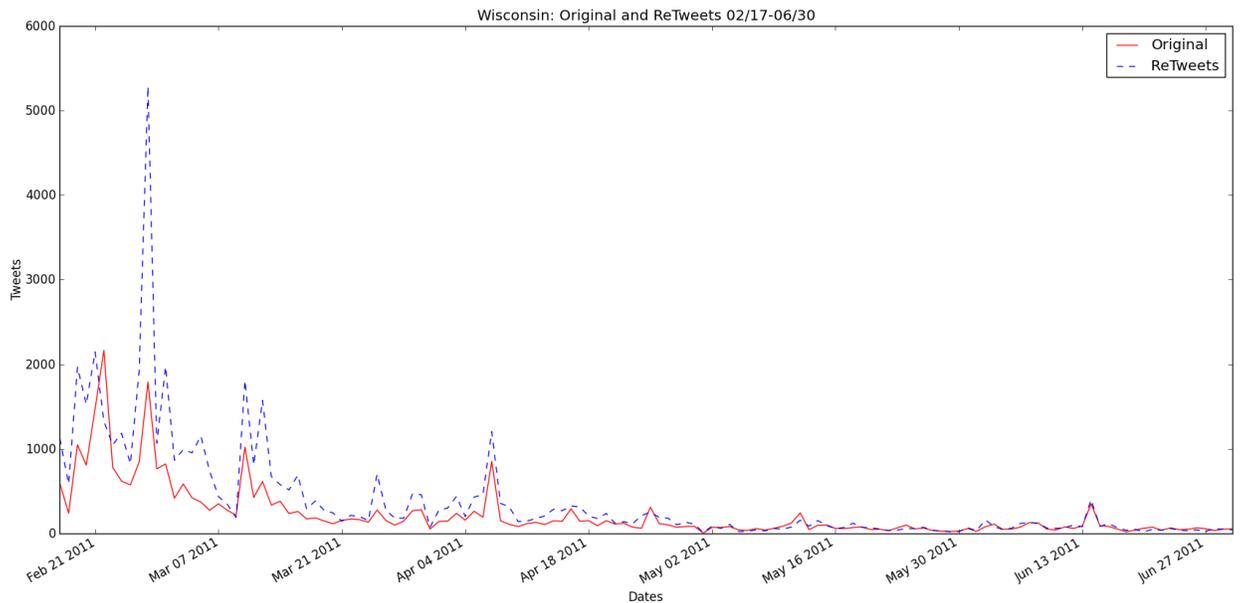
The unions did not wait to respond to the bill, the protests in opposition to Governor Walker's bill commenced on February 12<sup>th</sup>, 2011. Probably against the governor's expectations, protesters gained increasing support from workers and other groups within the community. A *cycle of protests* can be traced, with an escalation in intensity, participation, and visibility of protests. By the time that the protests reached their peak, there would be hundreds of thousands of protestors lending their support for public-sector unions. These protestors were not only state workers with union ties, but included many professions and non-union members as well. As the same type of legislation that Governor Walker proposed spread to other states with Republican Governors, more protests followed. Besides the concrete policies and demands involved, the widespread support protesters found in Wisconsin also speaks of a tradition, as this anti-union legislation does not fit with Wisconsin's history of support for unions.

## **History of Labor in Wisconsin**

The state of Wisconsin has had a long history of supporting labor and its state workers. Wisconsin was the first state to grant its public workers collective bargaining rights; since the 1960's public-sector unions have expanded drastically in size and power (Greenhouse 2011a). The American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees (A.F.S.C.M.E.) was founded in Wisconsin (Cooper and Seelye 2011). In 2010, the state became controlled by republicans, Scott Walker was elected as governor and republicans won both chambers of the state legislature (Guarino 2011). This change to

the right is far from the progressive history where Milwaukee had three socialist mayors in the past 100 years. Previously the leader in trade union rights, Wisconsin is now the battleground for union-busting Republicans (Marlowe 2011). The protests are in response to “a war on workers” that Republican governors are waging (Mtshali 2011).

## The Protests



**Figure 1: Wisconsin Tweets over Time**

The protests began on February 12<sup>th</sup>, the day after Governor Walker’s proposal was made public. Initially only 50 people, members of the Teaching Assistants’ Association at the University of Wisconsin, gathered to voice their opposition to the bill (Nichols 2012). Two days later, the opposition had swelled to 1000 people marching on the capital building. The protestors began their occupation of the State’s Capitol building on the 14<sup>th</sup> (Barbour and Spicuzza 2011). The Madison protestors used the

tactic of occupation immediately. Within a week, the numbers of the resistance had grown to 100,000 (Nichols 2012).

During the first week of protests, workers, reacting to Walker's Bill, gathered outside Governor Walker's home before the police closed the street (Davey and Greenhouse 2011). On Thursday the 17<sup>th</sup> nine out of 25,000 protestors were arrested when they charged into the Wisconsin Capital building while chanting "Freedom, Democracy, Unions!" (Marlowe 2011). Their sit-in disrupted the convening of the 19 Republican senators. By Friday the 18<sup>th</sup> the protests had reached their fourth consecutive day with tens of thousands of demonstrators (Washington 2011). On this day, the Wisconsin Democratic Senators fled the state to deny the Republican Senators the quorum required for passing budget bills. *Figure 1* shows a spike in tweets on the 18<sup>th</sup> likely due to protestors supporting the absence of the senators.

As 14 Democratic senators fled the state, Governor Walker dispatched the state police in an attempt to force the minority leader in the senate so that they could vote on the bill, although he had left with the others (Marlowe 2011). The union leaders and social justice activists joined with the protestors in Wisconsin and Ohio on Tuesday 22<sup>nd</sup> (Jonsson 2011). The pro-labor rock band Street Dogs treated Wisconsin protestors to a concert the night of the 22<sup>nd</sup>.

John Nichols witnessed this pro-labor concert. The Street Dogs consist of Mike McColgan, lead singer of the Dropkick Murphys and Boston firefighter, and Tom Morello, guitarist for Rage Against the Machine (Nichols 2012). One song played at the concert was "Up the Union" a song that condemns "dedication to corporate greed" and

income inequality with lines such as “the pay up top is way too high, while those in the middle barely get by” (Nichols 2012, 9). Nichols observed that, “It did seem as if something was starting again, something as old as the Wobblies and the Flint sit-down strikers of 1937, something as deep and fundamental as the cry of ‘Solidarity forever’” (Nichols 2012, 8-9).

Despite the protestors shouting “Shame!” and booing, the Wisconsin State Assembly passed the so-called budget repair bill on Friday 25<sup>th</sup> (Oppel Jr. 2011). The Republicans called a vote on the bill before most of the Democrats could cast their votes to limit the opposition to and negotiation of the bill (Staff 2011). The rushed vote on the bill showed that the Republicans were not interested in negotiating (Oppel Jr. 2011). Up to February 27<sup>th</sup> protestors had been picketing, marching, chanting, camping outside government buildings, and occupying the state Capitol building (Mtshali 2011). The police disallowed blankets and sleeping bags on the 26<sup>th</sup> and the next day asked the protestors to leave the building (Barbour and Spicuzza 2011). Twitter experienced the largest rise in activity centered on the Wisconsin protests this day, as seen in *figure 1*, likely due to the protestors being evicted from the capital. Also, the day before this the Senate Republicans rushed a vote on the collective bargaining rights section on the bill.

Despite the lack of quorum needed to pass a budget bill, the Senate Republicans voted only on the collective bargaining rights section to pass the anti-union section of the budget repair bill (Quick Facts: WI protests -- a timeline 2011). Even after the collective bargaining rights bill passed in the Assembly on March 10<sup>th</sup> and Governor Walker signed it into law the next day, the protestors were not finished voicing their

opposition (Quick Facts: WI protests -- a timeline 2011). *Figure 1* reveals spikes in Twitter activity on both of these days likely because of the passing and signing of the bill. Two days later, following Governor Walker six hours away from Madison, to Washburn, Wisconsin, a small town of two thousand, where he was attending a fundraising event at a supper club, three thousand protestors gathered outside to let the governor know they had not given up (Nichols 2012).

Later on in May, a Dane County Circuit judge Maryann Sumi, ruled that when passing the collective bargaining rights bill on short notice, the Senate Republicans violated the open meetings law because they did not give a two hour notice to the public and she voided the law (Greenhouse 2011b). The next month, on June 12<sup>th</sup>, the State Supreme Court ordered a reinstatement of the collective bargaining rights bill and thousands protested the bill once again the next day (Kilkenny 2011).

In May Wisconsin protestors founded an encampment outside of the Capital building after they were kicked out of the building in late February. The protestors erected a tent city of about 100 tents on Saturday May 7<sup>th</sup> and dubbed it 'Walkerville', revitalizing the occupation (Terkel 2011). Stephanie Bloomingdale, secretary-treasurer of the Wisconsin American Federation of Labor and Congress of Industrial Organizations (AFL-CIO) noted that "Walkerville is a place for families come together and to stand up for what we believe is right, which is restoring justice, restoring our democracy and working together to achieve a fair economy for all of us" (Terkel 2011). This restoration of the occupation was in response to the Republicans passing a new state budget on June 13<sup>th</sup>. Along with the return of protests, there was a spike in the number of tweets

the next day as seen in *figure 1*. This new budget gave \$2.3 billion in tax breaks to corporations over the next 10 years but cut \$1.6 billion from public schools (Kilkenny 2011). As previously noted, the steward of the AFSCME Local 1871 Brian Standing said, “In the past they've said this is all about jobs, but now we know it's about nothing less than global corporate domination in every aspect of our lives!” (Mills 2011).

The Wisconsin protests took the tactic of occupation from the 20<sup>th</sup> century labor movement. However, they developed it from occupying a factory floor to occupation of the place where their adversaries are. In addition to occupying the Capitol building, later the protestors built a camp outside of the Capitol build thus transforming the repertoire of occupation.

The protest began in support of Workers' Rights but transformed into challenging corporate influence. Through the voices of Standing and Bloomingdale we see the motivation for founding Walkerville was not simply to oppose the collective bargaining rights bill, but also to challenge corporate control over our government and our lives.

## **Outcomes**

The resistance of the people in Wisconsin to Governor Walker's bill uncovered the peoples' will to fight for their rights and against corporate interests, to the extent that corporate interests systematically undermine workers' basic rights and conditions of life. The protests succeeded in raising opposition to Governor Walker's bill (Lewis 2011). Just after the Collective Bargaining Rights Bill was passed, forty-five percent of residents disapprove of Walker's performance as governor. The Wisconsin people

showed Republicans that the attacks on public-sector unions is no longer a “one-sided war”, through their mass protesting and occupation of the Capital building (Lewis 2011, 78). The attacks will not go unanswered and resistance to them, and corporate interests in general, is “possible, worthwhile, and necessary” (Lewis 2011, 78). Due to this success, Nichols argues that labor may revive itself as “a fighting force for economic and social justice” and that they have inspired a movement that will reshape politics (Nichols 2012, 121). Nichols asks:

*At a point when it seemed the long project of corporate empowerment was finally succeeding in creating a "new normal" where the parameters of the American experiment had been narrowed to allow for a range of debate that began on the right and moved toward the abyss, what was it that made a whole state rise up in open revolt against a governor who pushed too far and a lie that says organized labor, social-justice movements, and democracy itself are relics to be tossed aside in a headlong rush to redistribute the wealth of nations upward?*

(Nichols 2012, 12).

## **Participants**

The Wisconsin protests began with teaching assistants having a small gathering and grew to a peak of around 100,000 people of many professions in just a few days. Initially joined by public and private sector union members, over the month after Governor Walker proposed his budget repair bill, the protests had seen people from “every background, every religion, every politics, and every job” join in the capital square in opposition to the attack on worker rights (Nichols 2012, 125). Although not

affected by the legislation, firefighters stood with the other public employees and participated in the protest (Washington 2011). The protests brought together not only the public workers concerned for their livelihood but also students and small business owners chanting the old Industrial Workers of the World adage “An injury to one is an injury to all!” in solidarity (Nichols 2012, 45). Other slogans chanted by protesters included “Tax the Rich!”, “People Power, Not Corporate Power!”, and “This Is What Democracy Looks Like!” (Nichols 2012, 53). Even students from other countries, where they would not be able to protest due to police repression, participated (Weidemann 2012). New York City unions pledged their support for the public workers in Wisconsin, bussing in hundreds of members to join the protests (Mtshali 2011).

Dennis Weidemann’s interviews of participants in the Madison protests reveal the diversity of the protestors involved and their motivations. Farmers came to the support of the protestors in Madison and drove their tractors down the street in what was like a parade (Weidemann 2012). While interviewing Farmer Joe, a man asked him what farming had to do with collective bargaining. Farmer Joe responded by informing the man that eighty percent of raw milk from Wisconsin is sold through co-ops which are a form of collective bargaining to get a fair price from buyers (Weidemann 2012). The farmer also showed the crowd pictures of his family and farm. Weidemann concludes “*This is what they were protesting to protect*” (Weidemann 2012, 14).

Another supporter of the protests was a worker at a French fry factory. Weidemann witness him carrying an NRA sign when the man told him that his factory was not unionized but that unions set the bar for his payment. Another protester was a

soldier in the Vietnam War, who has not felt welcome home since the war ended but seeing the amount of workers standing up for their rights finally made him feel welcome (Weidemann 2012).

Weidemann interviewed another ex-military man from the Navy. Now he works at a software company in Wisconsin after attending the University of Wisconsin under the GI Bill. Although he is not a union member his motivation for joining the protests was his service on a submarine. He said, "On a sub, everybody does their job, or you die. If the pilot drives into a submerged mountain, you die. If the nuclear reactor boys miss something and it goes Chernobyl, you die. If the cooks feed you spoiled food, you die, or get sick enough that you want to die" (Weidemann 2012, 64). He noted that someone speaking at the rally said that people in a community must rely on each other and likened it to living on a sub.

What we see in Wisconsin is a gathering of mass support for the public sector unions from people that would not be affected by the legislation. This support represents the community aiding others in their struggles with no incentive of personal gain.

## **Spread**

Other state governors followed Walker's example and proposed their own legislation to balance their state budgets by destroying the collective bargaining rights of state unions. However, the protests spread as well. Similar protests than those held in Madison would take place in Indiana and Ohio (Mtshali 2011). President of the American Federation of State, county and Municipal Employees, Gerald W. McEntee

said that “workers’ rights – including the fundamental right to organize and bargain for better pay, benefits and working conditions – are under attack in states from Maine to Ohio, from Wisconsin to Florida” (Cooper and Seelye 2011). McEntee was fearful that if Walker and the Republicans succeeded in Wisconsin that Republicans would be “emboldened to attack workers’ rights in every state” (Cooper and Seelye 2011). William B. Gould IV, professor of labor law at Stanford University, predicted that the fight would spread to more states with Republican governors as they tried to blame budget deficits on public employee unions (Davey and Greenhouse 2011).

Governor Walker’s bill inspired the newly elected governor of Ohio, John Kasich, to attempt to limit collective bargaining rights for unions. Governor Kasich hoped to ban collective bargaining for public sector unions on health benefits (Cooper and Seelye 2011). However, around February 19<sup>th</sup> the protests spread to Ohio as union activists protested in Columbus (Jonsson 2011). According to Joe Rugola, executive director of the Ohio Association of Public School Employees and an international vice president of A.F.S.C.M.E., 4000 protestors, inspired by the protests in Wisconsin, converged upon the Columbus Statehouse to resist Governor John Kasich’s efforts to take away collective bargaining rights from unions as Walker did (Cooper and Seelye 2011).

### **Social Movement Concepts**

The protests in Madison, Wisconsin represent a revival of the labor movement. They fit into Sidney Tarrow’s definition of a social movement as *“people with common purposes and solidarity in sustained interaction with elites, opponents and authorities”*



the tweets. These words were used to either direct peoples' actions, or by the protestors and others to declare their support for the protests.

The people in Wisconsin constructed a *master collective action frame* in their protest. While drawing upon the frame of workers' rights, they shaped it into a frame of opposition to corporate influence in the United States' political system. Their reason for protesting was defending workers' rights and opposing the corporate interests that Walker was pushing forward. This master frame was later picked up by the Occupy Wall Street movement.

## **Conclusion**

The Protests in Wisconsin, while representing a revival of the labor movement, were the beginning of a new social movement critiquing the politico-economic system in the United States. The protests borrowed some of its *repertoire of contention* and *master collective action frame*, from the labor movement. However, it developed these to where it stands out as something different from the labor movement.

From the labor movement the tactic of occupation Madison protestors developed into occupying the seat of their employers and founding a camp instead of their place of work. The use of Twitter was an important contribution to the repertoire of contention for this new social movement. The protestors used Twitter to organize and convey important concepts to the public by extensively using the words solidarity, capitol, stand, fight, and unions. The use of social media has become an important part of the repertoire of this new social movement.

The events in Wisconsin began a *new cycle of protests*. The protests quickly swelled from fifty to one-hundred thousand participants within a week. People became involved that are usually not mobilized such as farmers. The protestors used occupation other than on the factory floor and showed that this could be used against any opponent with a main location. Also, the tactic of occupation took on a new aspect of camping where the movement is trying to affect change. Wisconsin was the beginning of a learning process of opposing capital's influence over the political system. The master frame of workers' rights was transformed to an opposition of corporate interests as seen with the revival of protests in June. Groups such as unions were joined by individuals who agreed with their cause. The protest empowered unions and inspired Occupy Wall Street.

## Chapter III

# Occupy Wall Street

*“In the absence of justice, what is sovereignty but organized robbery?” – Saint Augustine*

*“Why does the caged bird sing? Because he still knows how to fly.” – One of the 99%*

### Introduction

To begin classifying a social movement, it is appropriate to start with what the people in the movement think about it. Through the voices of its member, documents and tweets, this chapter will review what the Occupy Wall Street movement says about itself and its history. By picking up *repertoires of contention*, such as using Twitter for organization and discussion, and a *master collective action frame* from the Madison, Wisconsin protests, Occupy Wall Street has continued the *cycle of protests* initiated by protesters in Wisconsin.

The over arching theme of the movement is a critique of our political system in which public officials are influenced, if not controlled, by the nation’s wealthiest economic elites and corporations. Also, our economic system perpetuates inequality and injustice. The occupiers are calling for social justice and a political system which is not controlled by money through campaign donations to the public official who are meant to regulate corporations (Declaration of the Occupation of New York City 2011).

The New York City General Assembly is the organization composed of groups supporting and organizing the Occupy Wall Street movement. Their “Declaration of the Occupation of New York City” includes the movement’s main grievances against corporations and their influence over the political system in the United States, the grievances against corporations are:

- *They have taken our houses through an illegal foreclosure process, despite not having the original mortgage.*
- *They have taken bailouts from taxpayers with impunity, and continue to give Executives exorbitant bonuses.*
- *They have perpetuated inequality and discrimination in the workplace based on age, the color of one’s skin, sex, gender identity and sexual orientation.*
- *They have poisoned the food supply through negligence, and undermined the farming system through monopolization.*
- *They have profited off of the torture, confinement, and cruel treatment of countless animals, and actively hide these practices.*
- *They have continuously sought to strip employees of the right to negotiate for better pay and safer working conditions.*
- *They have held students hostage with tens of thousands of dollars of debt on education, which is itself a human right.*
- *They have consistently outsourced labor and used that outsourcing as leverage to cut workers’ healthcare and pay.*
- *They have influenced the courts to achieve the same rights as people, with none of the culpability or responsibility.*
- *They have spent millions of dollars on legal teams that look for ways to get them out of contracts in regards to health insurance.*
- *They have sold our privacy as a commodity.*
- *They have used the military and police force to prevent freedom of the press.*
- *They have deliberately declined to recall faulty products endangering lives in pursuit of profit.*
- *They determine economic policy, despite the catastrophic failures their policies have produced and continue to produce.*
- *They have donated large sums of money to politicians, who are responsible for regulating them.*
- *They continue to block alternate forms of energy to keep us dependent on oil.*
- *They continue to block generic forms of medicine that could save people’s lives or provide relief in order to protect investments that have already turned a substantial profit.*

- *They have purposely covered up oil spills, accidents, faulty bookkeeping, and inactive ingredients in pursuit of profit.*
  - *They purposefully keep people misinformed and fearful through their control of the media.*
  - *They have accepted private contracts to murder prisoners even when presented with serious doubts about their guilt.*
  - *They have perpetuated colonialism at home and abroad.*
  - *They have participated in the torture and murder of innocent civilians overseas.*
  - *They continue to create weapons of mass destruction in order to receive government contracts.*
- (Declaration of the Occupation of New York City 2011).

The Occupy Wall Street movement has many gripes with the current political and economic systems. “[Occupy Wall Street] is fighting back against the corrosive power of major banks and multinational corporations over the democratic process, and the role of Wall Street in creating an economic collapse that has caused the greatest recession in generations” (About 2011). The movement is fighting against those that write the rules of our unjust global economy, the bourgeoisie who control the political actors, the richest 1% of people.

In the initial call to action from *Adbusters*, a Canadian magazine, they gave the movement a purpose and a method. The method is simple, maintain a straightforward, persistent demand; inspired by the Tahrir uprising in Egypt that was persistent about their demand “that Mubarak must go” (Adbusters 2011). Their one demand was for President Barack Obama to create a presidential commission that would stop money from influencing our lawmakers in Washington. The end goal of this demand: to end “corporatocracy” and establish democracy (Adbusters 2011). The beginning of might include dismantling half of the 1,000 American military bases around the world, reenactment of the Glass-Steagall Act, or “a three strikes and you’re out law for corporate criminals” (Adbusters 2011). While this demand seemed to have been missed

by media coverage and did not come up in the interviews that I conducted, the goal of the movement remains “**DEMOCRACY NOT CORPORATOCRACY**” (Adbusters 2011).

Going back to Mooney, Knox and Schacht’s definition of a corporatocracy as “A system of government that serves the interests of corporations and that involves ties between government and business” (Mooney, Knox and Schacht, *Work and Unemployment* 2009), this is the type of system that Occupy Wall Street wants to remove in the United States and the occupiers believe it is necessary to do so in order for social justice to reign.

When I visited Zuccotti Park I received a printout titled Why Occupy Wall Street? as shown in *figure 1*. This displays many of the outcomes from having a corporatocracy in power. Facts about lowest employment rate since the Great Depression and the drop in minimum wage since 1990 while over the same time period the CEO pay has increased by 300%. Also related is that the wealthiest 5% hold 70% of the wealth in the nation, which makes income inequality worse than in India, Iran, and China. These outcomes, they observe, evidence the presence of a corporatocracy. As in the view of the occupiers in the U.S. we no longer have a democracy, but a corporatocracy, they are motivated to change the system for the sake of social justice.

# Why Occupy Wall Street?

*Because...*

*the* **EMPLOYMENT RATE** is the lowest it has been since the **GREAT DEPRESSION\*** While **CORPORATE PROFITS** just hit yet another **ALL TIME HIGH.**

*\*(except for a spike in the 1980s)*

**TAXES ON THE RICH ARE THE LOWEST THEY HAVE EVER BEEN.**

**INCOME DISPARITY** in the US is **WORSE** than in **INDIA, IRAN** and **CHINA** and our degree of economic inequality is similar some of *the poorest countries in the western hemisphere.*

*while the* **MINIMUM WAGE HAS DROPPED, CEO PAY** has **INCREASED 300%** *since 1990.*

*Average hourly earnings* **HAVE NOT INCREASED** for over **50** years, while CEOs today make over **350** times that of the average worker. *Up from 50x more in the 60's, 70's and 80's.*

*the wealthiest* **5%** **IN THIS COUNTRY HOLD 70%** *of the* **NATION'S WEALTH**

## **SOCIAL MOBILITY**

*has hit the lowest point in our history:*

**14 MILLION AMERICANS CANNOT FIND A JOB OF ANY KIND.**

**THE RICHEST 1% OF AMERICANS OWN & CONTROL MORE THAN THE REST OF US COMBINED!**

**COME JOIN THE REST OF THE 99%, AS WE TAKE BACK OUR DEMOCRACY!**

*Put your skills to work.*

**In this movement, we can all be leaders when we work in solidarity.**

**Find your way, be tenacious, generous, patient, and strong!**

*For information about any Working Group meetings or events, check out:*

**NYCGA.NET/EVENTS**

*Read more: stats from Business Insider online "Here's What Wall Street Protesters Are So Angry About" by Henry Blodget, October 11, 2011*

<http://www.businessinsider.com/what-wall-street-protesters-are-so-angry-about-2011-10?op=1#ixzz1apIMI9z3>

Figure 1: Why Occupy Wall Street? Because ...

## **Organization**

The occupation has been organized as a “people’s assembly”. This is a method of making decisions by debating over proposals based upon non-binding collective consensus (About 2011). Participation is entirely voluntary. If one disagrees with a decision reached by consensus, then one does not have to carry it out, which makes it non-binding (Carolina 2011). Proposals are debated in two rounds, in which there are three speakers for and three against. If they are not agreed upon immediately, proposals are sent back to the proposer to be reworked.

The Occupy Wall Street movement incorporates groups supporting those directly participating in Occupy Wall Street. Direct participants in the occupation may or may not be members of these groups. This collection of groups is called the New York City General Assembly (Groups 2011). There are 109 groups in total under the New York City General Assembly. One of them, the Housing group, was formed after the unexpected eviction on November 15<sup>th</sup> of the occupiers from Zuccotti Park. The Housing group helps occupiers find temporary and long-term shelter so that they can continue with the mission of the movement (Groups 2011). Another group, the People’s Kitchen, prepares food that has been donated for the occupiers. This helps them stay in Zuccotti Park throughout the day as well as giving the out of town occupiers something to sustain them (Groups 2011).

Groups provide more than basic survival services. Tech Ops is the group responsible for creating and maintaining the New York City General Assembly website “[www.nycga.net](http://www.nycga.net)” and aids Occupy Wall Street with online communication (Groups

2011). The Legal group helps occupiers with legal issues and the police. Their goal is to keep the occupiers out of jail and to support those who are arrested and help them understand the legal process (Groups 2011).

Still there are other groups that reach out to organizations and the public to gather support for the movement. The Labor Outreach Committee is composed of people in 30 different trade unions who motivate labor unions to support the movement (Groups 2011). The PR group (Public Relations) is the movement's arm that deals with the outside media and sets up interviews (Groups 2011). The movement is well organized with a large support network, which has aided the movement to continue with strength and not disperse. With this support network the movement can succeed in a sustained occupation and promotion of its claims.

## History of the Movement

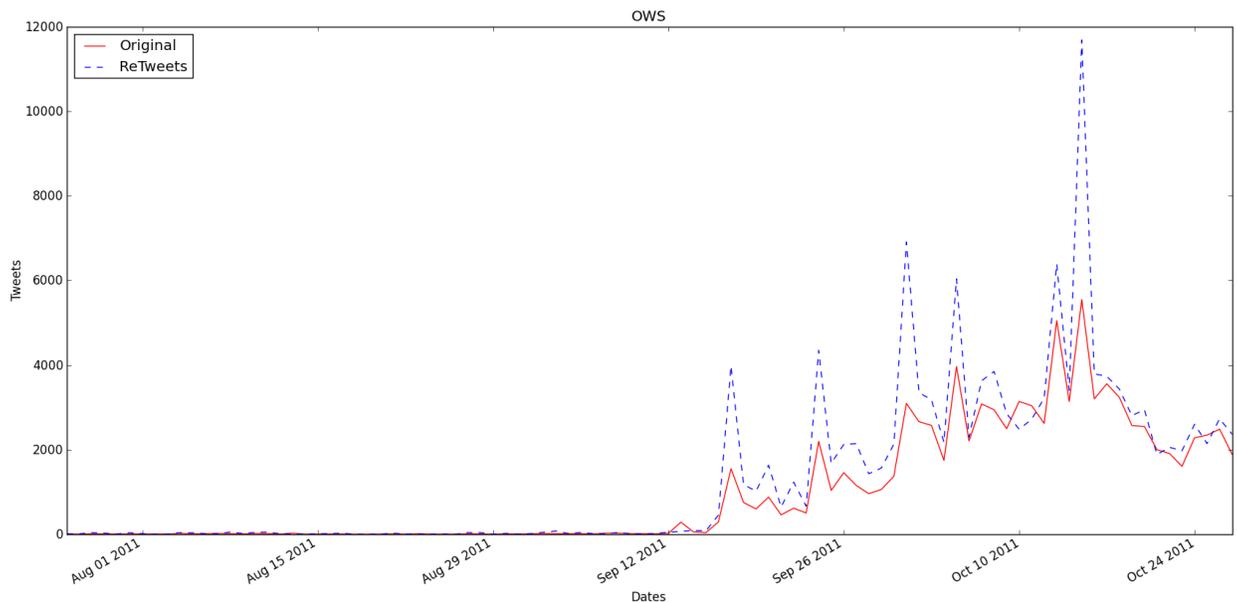


Figure 2: Occupy Wall Street Tweets over Time

The occupation of Wall Street began on September 17<sup>th</sup> 2011, following a call to action in July and an initial online organization in June. The movement has endured, at the time of this writing, over 175 days of occupation in New York City and many other city occupations have sprung up. On June 9<sup>th</sup>, *Adbusters*, a Canadian non-profit group opposed to consumerism, registered the OccupyWallStreet.org domain name (Occupy Wall Street: A Protest Timeline 2011). By July 13<sup>th</sup>, *Adbusters* called for 20,000 people to occupy Wall Street with tents and kitchens on September 17<sup>th</sup> to demand “**DEMOCRACY NOT CORPORATOCRACY**” (Adbusters 2011). That day, about 1,000 settled in Zuccotti Park two blocks north of Wall Street (Occupy Wall Street: A Protest Timeline 2011). The amount of tweets about Occupy Wall Street spiked to over 5000 that first day of protests implying that the protestors used Twitter to organize participants.

The police started to act against the peaceful protestors as soon as the occupation began. On September 20<sup>th</sup> the police cited an 1845 arcane law that does not allow people gathering to be wearing a mask unless it is for a masquerade party or another form of entertainment. 80 people were arrested on the 24<sup>th</sup> for a permit-less march in uptown Manhattan (Occupy Wall Street: A Protest Timeline 2011). A video surfaced on the 26<sup>th</sup> that shows police officers pepper spraying occupiers after trapping them under nets (White 2011). On October 1<sup>st</sup>, 700 protestors were arrested while trying to march across the Brooklyn Bridge, after being first allowed to enter the road level, the police began trapping the protestors and preceding to arrests them. In response, the amount of tweets soared that day as seen in *figure 2*. The tweets may have been used both organizationally to draw protestors to the march, and conceptually

by condemning the police actions. The police, it seemed clear to protesters, had chosen their side in this movement; that is the side of the corporatocracy.

### **Cleaning Day**

After about a month of the occupation, Brookfield Properties, the company who owns Zuccotti Park, determined that the park needed to be cleaned, which involved removing the occupiers' tents. On October 13<sup>th</sup>, the company announced that it would start cleaning the park the next day at seven in the morning and that the occupiers would have to leave the park for four hours; however they could not set up their tents and continue to sleep in the park when they returned (Occupy Wall Street: A Protest Timeline 2011). *Figure 2* shows an extreme spike in the tweets on October 14<sup>th</sup>. The most prominent rise in tweets is due to the announcement of Brookfield Properties that threatened the existence of Occupy Wall Street. These tweets likely were both reactions to the announcement and instructions for more people to join the occupiers at the park to prevent the cleaning.

Angered by this order from Brookfield Properties, the occupiers held their ground in a standoff with the authorities and the company decided to postpone the cleaning (White 2011). Of course only until they could have surefire support from the police department in evicting the occupiers. Brookfield Properties knew that they need support from the police department to forcefully evict the occupiers. Therefore, they waited until mid November for the police to plan the eviction.

## **Spreading**

Despite police repression in New York City, the occupy movement started spreading to other cities. On the same day that people were arrested for marching without a permit, protests in Chicago started that were influenced by Occupy Wall Street (Occupy Wall Street: A Protest Timeline 2011). Within a couple of days, Occupy rallies spring up in Boston and San Francisco (White 2011). By October 3<sup>rd</sup> the movement had spread to Washington, D.C., Los Angeles, Boston, Memphis, Minneapolis, St. Louis, Hawaii, and Portland Maine (Occupy Wall Street: A Protest Timeline 2011). Three days after the movement had an explosion of protests around the country, it continued by spreading further to Houston, Austin, and Tampa (Occupy Wall Street: A Protest Timeline 2011).

## **Occupy Oakland**

The events of Occupy Oakland continued the *cycle of protests* of Occupy Wall Street in New York City and the attitude of the police toward protesters in Oakland epitomizes the police's treatment of the Occupy Movement. Moreover, police repression in Oakland exemplifies how state violence can escalate in defense of the interests of the corporatocracy that the occupiers seek to defeat. Just fifteen days after its beginning, Occupy Oakland erupted in violence when police fired tear gas canisters, rubber bullets, and flash-bang grenades to oust the occupiers from the Frank H. Ogawa Plaza near City Hall which they had been using as their camp (White 2011) (Gabbat 2011). The police critically injured an Iraq war veteran when a tear gas canister hit him in the head, showing the disregard the police have for protesters' safety (White 2011).

In protest to the arrests of 85 people and to reclaim the Plaza 1,000 people marched to the plaza and were again fired upon by police with tear gas (Gabbatt 2011) (Occupy Wall Street: A Protest Timeline 2011).

The fight continued in Oakland as the occupiers maintained unwavering resolve. As on November 2<sup>nd</sup> the occupiers ceased all commerce in Oakland's ports, a prominent shipping hub for the United States (White 2011), the police attacked the Ogawa Plaza again with tear gas claiming that they had been the targets of thrown rocks, explosives, bottles, and flaming objects (Romney 2011). On the 15<sup>th</sup> the Oakland police arrested 20 people while clearing out the plaza again (Occupy Wall Street: A Protest Timeline 2011). Still, something much worse for the Occupy Movement occurred on November 15<sup>th</sup>.

### **Police Raid and Eviction**

On November 15<sup>th</sup>, in New York, a police raid displayed the city police department's brutality and disregard for peoples' personal belongings. As noted before, Brookfield had postponed the clean-up of Zuccotti Park. What became clear in November was that the postponement was part of a strategy to have the police invade the park and oust the occupiers. As it was known later, the police had secretly planned the operation and trained its force for about two weeks prior to the raid (Baker and Goldstein 2011). Disorder training, a counterterrorism tactic that moves large numbers of police officers in a short period of time (Baker and Goldstein 2011), had been key in preparing those in charge of the eviction of the park. Officers who were in the last hours of their shift were told to report to lower Manhattan with their "hats and bats" or helmets and batons (Kemp, Parascandola and Corky 2011). With "military precision"

the police descended upon the Zuccotti camp during the overnight hours, when the park would be at its emptiest, and destroyed the encampment causing a day of confrontations with the occupiers (Foley 2011).

## **Arrival**

The police, my interviewees recalled, showed up at one o'clock in the morning, without warning, and told the occupiers that they had fifteen minutes to pack everything up (Foley 2011). Armored in riot gear, claiming that all property had to be removed immediately because the situation was a health hazard, the police rushed in and flipped over the tents to oust anyone hiding underneath. They threatened to arrest anyone who did not leave (Kemp, Parascandola and Corky 2011). Due to health and safety issues, the police announced that the occupiers could return, however, without sleeping bags or tents (Pavia 2011). The Police Commissioner Raymond Kelly and the Police Chief Joseph Esposito were present when the police arrived in their Emergency Service Unit trucks with bright lights that illuminated the park (Kemp, Parascandola and Corky 2011).

Not surprisingly, many could not pack up all of their things. After the time limit, the police started piling everything up and shoveled it into a dump truck. Many things including tents, laptops, and electronic equipment were destroyed in the process. Also, according to one occupier who was there since September 28<sup>th</sup>, the police killed two six week old puppies.

While this was occurring, people were rounded up and dragged to be detained. One of my interviewees was detained under scaffolding across the street for hours

during the raid. Some of the occupiers refused to leave. Some tied themselves together with a rope, some locked arms; and two even chained themselves to trees (Baker and Goldstein 2011). Across the street from a building called "One Liberty Plaza," the police bashed their knuckles and forced them to the ground to pull them out (Kemp, Parascandola and Corky 2011).

Since the police were clever in dealing with the press to avoid public visibility and oversight of this event, they forced reporters to leave by three in the morning before any arrests were made, everything that happened afterwards can be reconstructed only through witnesses (Kemp, Parascandola and Corky 2011). The police department spokesman Paul J. Browne claimed that this was done for their safety (Baker and Goldstein 2011). Though, if there was real danger should not the reporters be there to document the happenings?

### **In the Morning**

By eight that morning, almost 200 people had been arrested due to alleged confrontations between police and occupiers. Later in the morning, with an order from Judge Lucy Billings prohibiting the eviction, the occupiers attempted to return to the park, only to meet refusal by the riot police (Pavia 2011). Refused reentry into the park, many of the occupiers proceeded to make camp about ten minutes north. Over 100 police officers arrived to arrest them (Foley 2011). Later that night, Supreme Court Justice Michael Stallman upheld the eviction of the occupiers because they are not entitled to camp out in a park indefinitely under their constitutional rights.

## **Outcome**

"Zuccotti Park had become the epicentre of a movement protesting against corporate greed and economic inequality" (Foley 2011, 20). Unfortunately for the Occupy Wall Street movement, since November 15<sup>th</sup> its birthplace has been cleared of the occupy camp. The people in New York City cannot fully "occupy" Wall Street because they must return daily and leave by night time. This has broken the ranks of Occupy Wall Street and some occupiers have returned home with no place to stay in New York City. Between Saturday December 10, and Monday December 12, 2011, less than a month after the eviction, when I visited the park to conduct interviews few occupiers were left. There were only a handful of occupiers on Saturday and close to 35 on Monday. Despite police repression and lower numbers, the movement itself and its message continue even if on a smaller scale.

## **Occupy Wall Street Interviews**

Asked about their personal motivations for taking to action and how they saw the movement, most of my interviewees agreed that they were motivated by the severe income inequality and the injustice of our economic system. Some mentioned the vast poverty in the United States, some difficulties in obtaining justice from employers. Interviewed participants described the movement as a form of opposing these inequalities, and one defined it as a "movement of awakening". One positive outcome of this movement, they explained, is opening peoples' eyes to the injustices of our

political and economic systems. They expressed hope that people will see how they are being mistreated and that the system must be changed to remedy this problem.

Asked about his motivations for participating in Occupy Wall Street one interviewee, a gentleman of European origin said that he had been protesting injustice since he was six years old; he decided to join the movement after being turned away by the courts when demanding an ex-employer for his unpaid wages. In his eyes, the movement is in opposition to the injustice that companies exact upon their workers and the general public. This is why he decided to spend his time in the park with the other occupiers to demonstrate that this should not continue.

Another interviewee, a former member of the US military who witnessed the police raids on November 15<sup>th</sup>, explained his decision to join the movement after being unfairly discharged from the military. During his years in the military, he said he did not pay any attention to what was happening in the United States. Looking back to those years, he now thinks he was a “tool.” People, he explained, become “tools” when, not realizing what is happening to them (mistreatment and injustice), they are mistreated but rather than objecting to it, they ask for more poor treatment. In his view, he “woke up” when he read David Icke. Known as a conspiracy theorist, David Icke’s overarching message is that the world is being controlled by a small global elite. These ideas are what can motivate people to join Occupy Wall Street as it did for this occupier. It opened his eyes to ways in which the elites (those with vast amounts of wealth) control our government.

Another interviewee, not from New York City, expressed his motivation for participating in the movement as arising out of witnessing “all the poverty.” While there is devastating poverty in other parts of the world, there is a growing income gap in the United States. Although he did not cite any specific instances of poverty, one can see all the home foreclosures and vast unemployment as signs of poverty in the United States. He said, “The world is in a shitty place. Never have we seen such a mass accumulation [of wealth].” This mass accumulation alongside growing poverty is entirely unfair. While the “haves” get more and the “have-nots” get less. This fact motivated him to act against this situation and continuing and to support the Occupy movement which is calling for a change in this system. Present during the police raid on November 15<sup>th</sup>, this occupier was kicked out of the park before our interview because of having an “oversized” bag. The police/security was fearful of him trying to camp out in the park again because he may have a sleeping bag or tent with him which are banned from the park. In fact, he had no other place to keep his personal items but with him. The ban on camping limits outsiders from being involved unless they have a hotel to stay in.

Initially reluctant toward the movement, another interviewee described how he decided to join Occupy Wall Street after realizing that it was a movement for the people. He spent a good amount of time characterizing the Occupy Movement as a “movement of awakening”. The goal, this interviewee explained, is to open the dialog in our society between capitalists and socialists as well as about the injustices of our economic system. In a rather atypical answer for an occupier, he disagreed with people labeling Occupy Wall Street as anti-capitalist as he expressed that “it should be easier to

be an entrepreneur.” One could see how this solution would help some people; however this does not align with the goals of the movement. As budget cuts passed in the United States hurt the working and poor classes, this participant felt motivated to join the Occupy movement. According to him, the issues being voiced are sentiments that most have had and are now coming out. He mentioned that since the start of the cold and the police raid, the movement has undergone some professionalization. The occupiers have been setting up offices in New York City to maintain the movement through the winter.

Visiting Occupy Wall Street and conducting interviews provided me with valuable knowledge into the personal motivations of occupiers, the ways in which they see the movement, as well their strategies to engage others and their willingness to take criticism without dishing it back out.

## **Conclusion**

The Occupy Movement addresses the issue of corporate influence over the government that millions in the United States are suffering from. The Task Force on Inequality and American Democracy observes that “Citizens with lower or moderate incomes speak with a whisper that is lost on the ears of inattentive government officials, while the advantaged roar with a clarity and consistency that policy-makers readily hear and routinely follow” (Task Force 2004, 1). While the poor and middle class have trouble “staying afloat” while two parents work, the rich and the superrich have accelerated in wealth since the 1970s (Task Force 2004). The disparity between the income of the rich and that of the other social classes in the United States has grown

more sharply than in other advanced industrial democracies. The Occupy Movement as a whole sees these disparities and the lack of social justice. Although there are no specific policies the Occupy Wall Street movement calls legislators and the president to enact, except for their demand of a presidential commission to end corporate influence over the government, does that make it weaker? In maintaining with consistency with their main goal, "**DEMOCRACY NOT CORPORATOCRACY**" they do not have a policy agenda because they perceive the system as broken. What would be the point of pushing a policy agenda at the legislature if there is no democracy and therefore no say for the people doing it?

The Occupy Wall Street's own ways of *contentious collective action* is almost entirely disruptive direct action. By occupying space near Wall Street they disrupt the daily functions of the companies and the police. This occupation is part of the *repertoire of contention* inspired by the Madison, Wisconsin protests. By remaining in place and interacting with the crowd, they not only tie up the police, who in their view protect the corporatocracy, and gain the attention of the people passing by and the media. Occupy Wall Street sees itself as directly challenging the social injustices caused by the corporatocracy that is in place.

A social movement must have a common purpose. While specifics vary there is a common purpose and a common mission which have led the occupiers to band together to voice the claims against their opponents. Their purpose is to end social injustice, end corporate influence over the government, and create a more fair society and system. Their mission is to challenge and ultimately topple the corporatocracy in place. This

challenge to corporatocracy was adapted from Wisconsin's *master collective action frame*. The occupiers have voiced their numerous claims against the political system. Their common interests and values of social justice join them together in solidarity.

The occupiers have been able to act collectively because of their solidarity in their common interests. Their solidarity is incorporated into their *repertoire of contentions*. As we will see in the next chapter, solidarity is one of the main concepts implied in the tweets; however used less than in Madison. This movement, since it has no clear leader, the solidarity has been formed by the perceived common interests of the ninety-nine percent by the occupiers as opposed to deeply rooted identities such as nationalism, ethnicity, or religion. This movement is based upon social class identity but is not just one of the low, middle, or upper classes; this is divided by the bottom ninety-nine percent and the top one percent. This is almost entirely a Marxian division of social classes the proletariat being the bottom ninety-nine and the top one percent being the bourgeoisie.

Occupiers have a common purpose, solidarity, and collective identities. They have been able to sustain their collective action for the past 175 days. The symbols they draw from society will, as Tarrow suggests affect the magnitude and duration of their collective action. Occupiers draw heavily on the American affinity for Democracy. The United States has made bringing democracy to other countries one of its primary goals. But how can we share with others what we do not have?

Occupy Wall Street also draws heavily upon the American notion of justice. Why did the United States go after Afghanistan after 9/11 (in the most idealistic terms)? To

exact justice upon those responsible. Why does our society respect police officers? (Ideally) Because they bring criminals to justice. On the same note, why do Americans love shows such as Law and Order and CSI? Because at the end of episodes the police always bring the monstrous criminal to justice. Although they draw upon our notion of justice, they have the task of convincing more of the population that what they propose is justice.

Furthermore, while occupiers may not identify as Marxists and the movement may not specifically promote Marx or use Marxist literature; Occupy Wall Street has Marxist undertones. Marx explains that in our epoch society is splitting into two great classes Bourgeoisie and Proletariat (Marx, *The Communist Manifesto* 1978). Somehow, the occupiers' narrative about the top one percent and the bottom ninety-nine percent echoes Marx's discussions on the Bourgeoisie and the Proletariat.

Marx also develops the idea that the Bourgeoisie has control over politics. By centralizing the means of production, the Bourgeoisie can "concentrate property in a few hands"; hence the top one percent controlling over half the wealth (Marx, *The Communist Manifesto* 1978, 477). The consequence of the concentration of property is political centralization in which all local governments are put under one government and one class-interest, the bourgeoisie interest. Marx and Engels warn that even with no hope of winning, the workers must put up their candidate against the bourgeois-democratic candidate in order to maintain their independence (Marx and Engels, *Address of the Central Committee to the Communist League* 1978). At least for president the workers' candidates cannot happen due to the requirement of resources

for a person to run, at least for president. Essentially Marx's Bourgeoisie-democracy can be considered a corporatocracy because the Bourgeoisie controls the corporations. This is the form of government that Occupy Wall Street is opposed to. Therefore, they wish to gain control to the bottom ninety-nine percent, or the Proletariat.

## Chapter IV

### Wisconsin, Occupy Wall Street, and Twitter

*“The “Arab Spring” in Tunisia, Egypt and elsewhere in the Mid-East heavily relied on the Internet, social media and technologies like Twitter, TwitPic, Facebook and YouTube in the early stages to accelerate social protest.”*

*– socialcapital (Thomas Sander) on Social Capital Blog*

#### **Introduction**

In both the protests of Madison, Wisconsin and Occupy Wall Street Twitter was an integral part of the protests. The Tweets about these two sets of protests took multiple forms. Some Tweets were organizational by telling people vital information about where to go and what was going on. Other Tweets voiced support for the protestors as well as opposition. Most of the opposition came from people who support the Tea Party movement as the Tea Party is referenced and the hash tags of #teaparty and #tcot were used. Both the Wisconsin and Occupy Wall Street protests have similar patterns of Twitter usage. This use of Twitter encompasses one of the major repertoires of contention for these two protests and more importantly, suggests that these two cases are events in the same social movement.

The Tweets analyzed were the #wiunion hash tag from February 17<sup>th</sup> until June 30<sup>th</sup>, the #occupywallstreet hash tag from July 26<sup>th</sup> until October 25<sup>th</sup>, and #ows from

October 6<sup>th</sup> until October 27<sup>th</sup>. From these hash tags, 1,312,947 Wisconsin Tweets and 4,050,812 Occupy Wall Street Tweets between the two hash tags were combined and analyzed. These Tweets went through a number of analyses gathering information on: user contributions, the Twitter activity over time, the key words used in tweets, and the hash tags appearing. The goal of analyzing the tweets about these protests is to validate the connections between them, ensuring that a new social movement is taking place.

### **Users' Contributions**

The user contributions were analyzed based on counting of their total tweets, original tweets, and retweets. Also, the contributions of users who tweeted for both movements were counted. Common patterns in usage of Twitter were revealed by these counts.

### **Wisconsin**

The counts of the top 1000 users in the #wiunion hash tag reveals a sharp drop off of usage as shown in *figure 1*. There are a few users who tweeted many times with a large number who tweeted much fewer times. There were 86,525 users who used this hash tag. Out of the 1,312,947 tweets the top ten users contributed 5.36 percent tweets including retweets. Adding the next fifteen top users, those twenty-five users made 9.31 percent of the tweets. The top 100 users that are shown in *figure 2* contributed 20.05 percent of the tweets. Less than one percent of the users made half of the tweets while only 6.54 percent of the users tweeted eighty-percent of the over a million tweets.

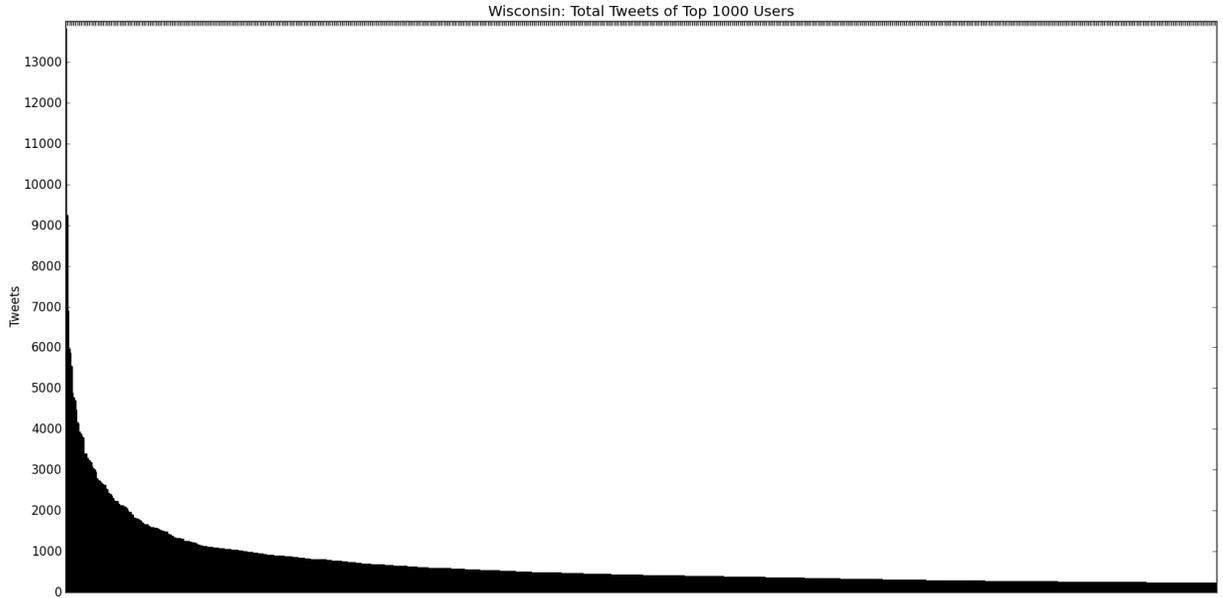


Figure 1: Top 1000 #wiunion Users

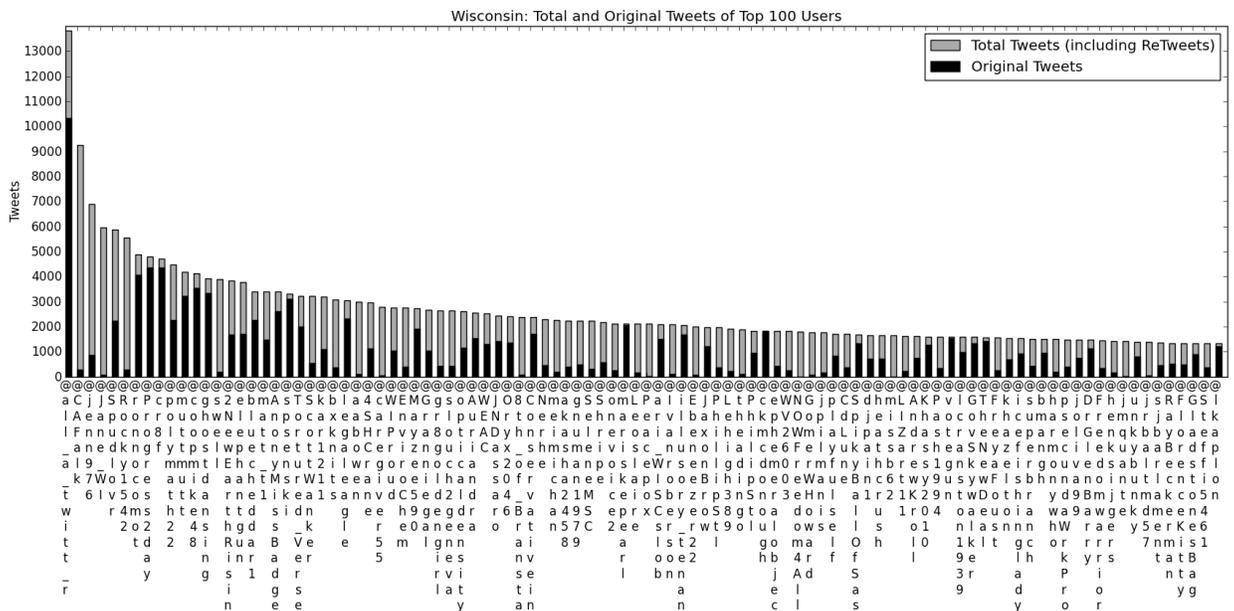


Figure 2: Top 100 #wiunion Users

In figure 2 the total number of tweets for each of the top 100 users is shown in blue with their number of original tweets shown in red over the original count. Most of the users in the top 100 mostly retweeted including the second highest user @CAFalk with 9241 tweets of which only 286 were original. These users did not contribute many

new ideas and information for the protests but were involved in emphasizing important concepts and directions.

### Occupy Wall Street

The tweets related to Occupy Wall Street from the #occupywallstreet and #ows hash tags reveal somewhat more widespread participation by users. This more widespread participation can be seen in *figure 3*. Out of 4,050,812 tweets analyzed, the percentage of tweets posted by the top ten, twenty-five, and one hundred users were 1.82, 3.15, and 6.97 percent respectively including their retweets. Of the 487,467 users 1.52 percent of the users posted half of the tweets however, the percentage of users who contributed eighty percent of the tweets rose to 12.83.

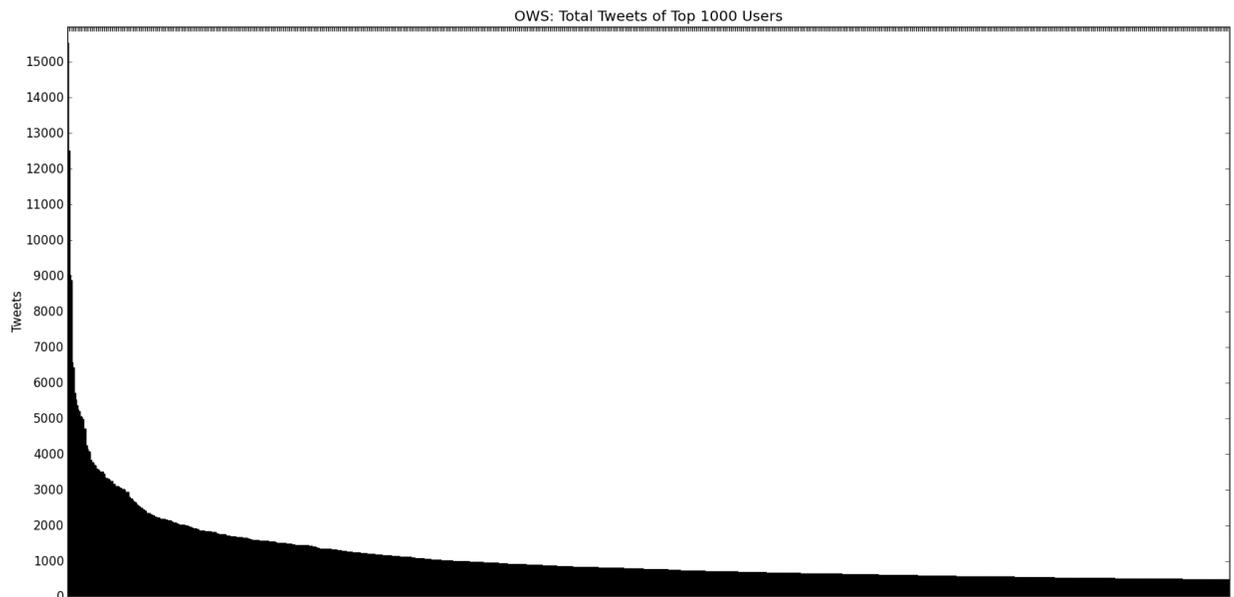


Figure 3: Occupy Wall Street Top 1000 Users

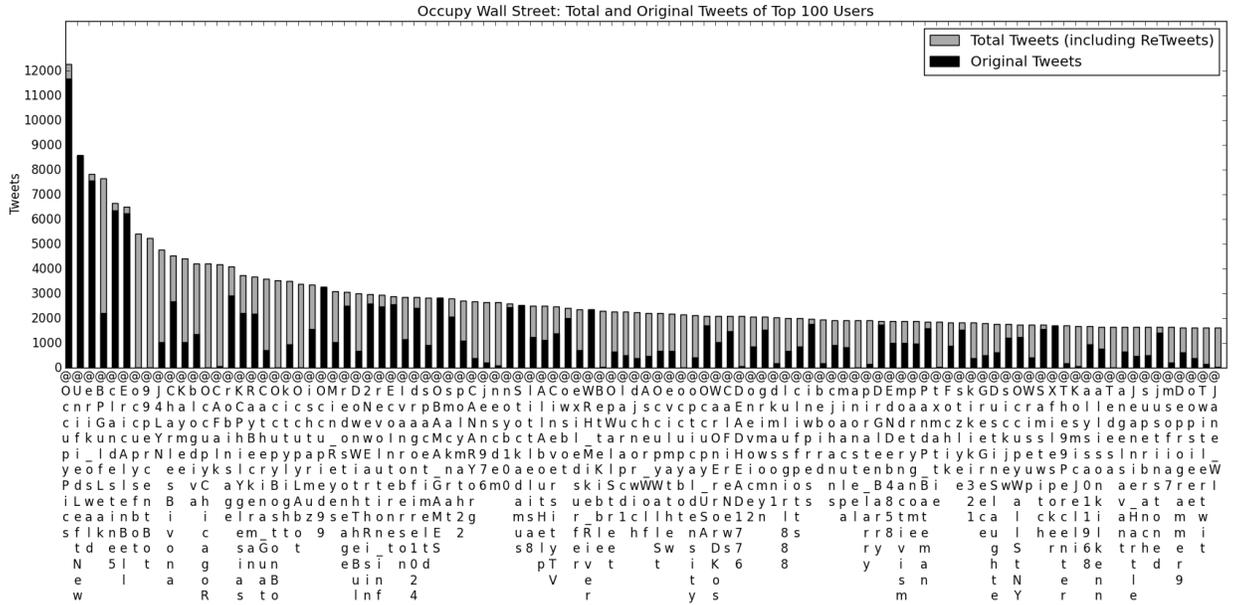


Figure 4: Occupy Wall Street Top 100 Users

Figure 4 is done in the same fashion as figure 2 and reveals that many of the main users posted almost all original tweets. The top user @OccupyPics has mostly original tweets which probably consist of links to picture of Occupy Wall Street.

### Common Users

There were some users who tweeted under both hash tags. Out of the total 540,328 (after subtracting the number of common users) users, 33,664 (6.23 percent) tweeted under both hash tags. Figure 5 shows the top 100 common users and reveals their individual number of tweets in each of the hash tags. Most of these users were significantly more active in the #wiunion tag and contributing only a little to Occupy Wall Street. The opposite is true of some of the others with only a few users who contributed almost equally to both.

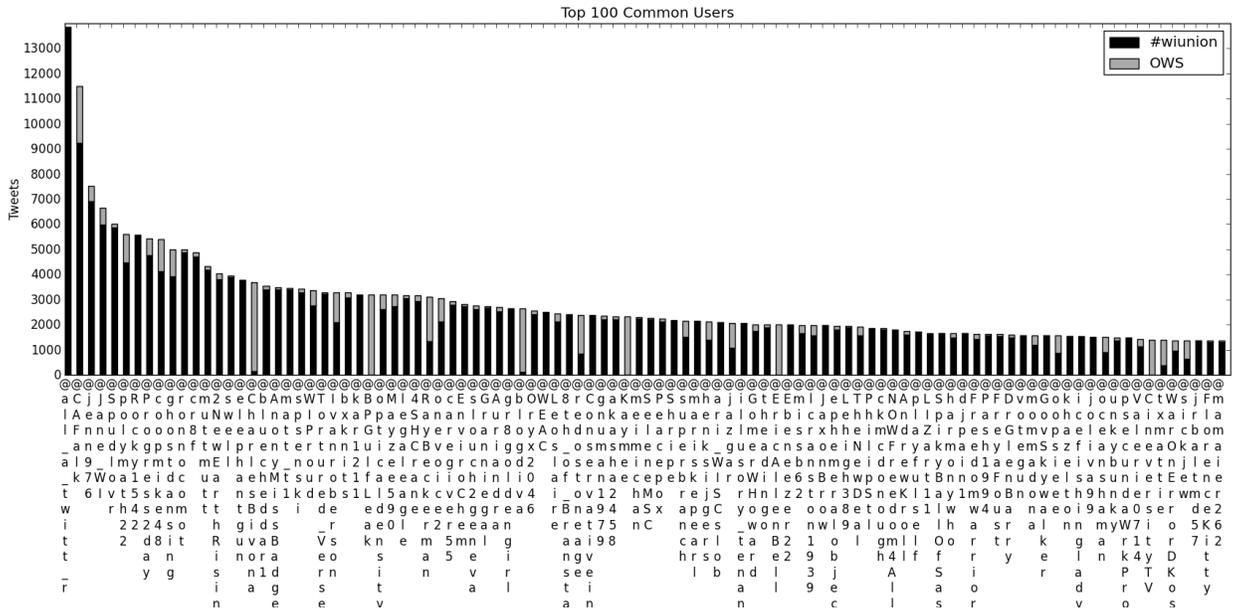


Figure 5: Top 100 Common Users

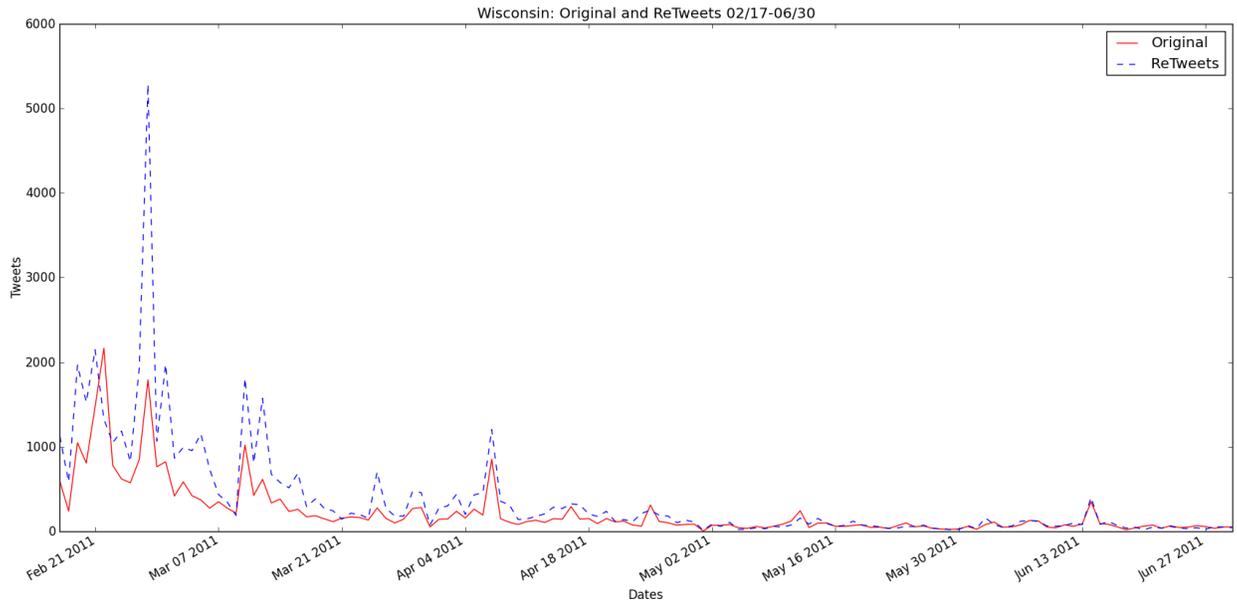
This pattern of usage implies that even the common users did not participate in both protests. Since most users did not tweet about both protests, and most of the common users tweeted much more about one protest than the other, it reinforces the fact that Twitter was used extensively by the protestors themselves. However, 6.23 percent of users that tweeted about these protests found a common link between them because they had tweeted about both.

### Activity Over Time

Charting the activity over time in these two cases reveal spikes in the number of tweets on certain days. These spikes align with real world events in the protests and take on two different forms. Twitter activity experienced a spike in tweets before some events, during them, and after others. It is likely that the rise in tweets before and

during a major event implies the tweets took more of an organizational tone while a rise after major events shows that the tweets were conceptual and commentative in nature.

## Wisconsin



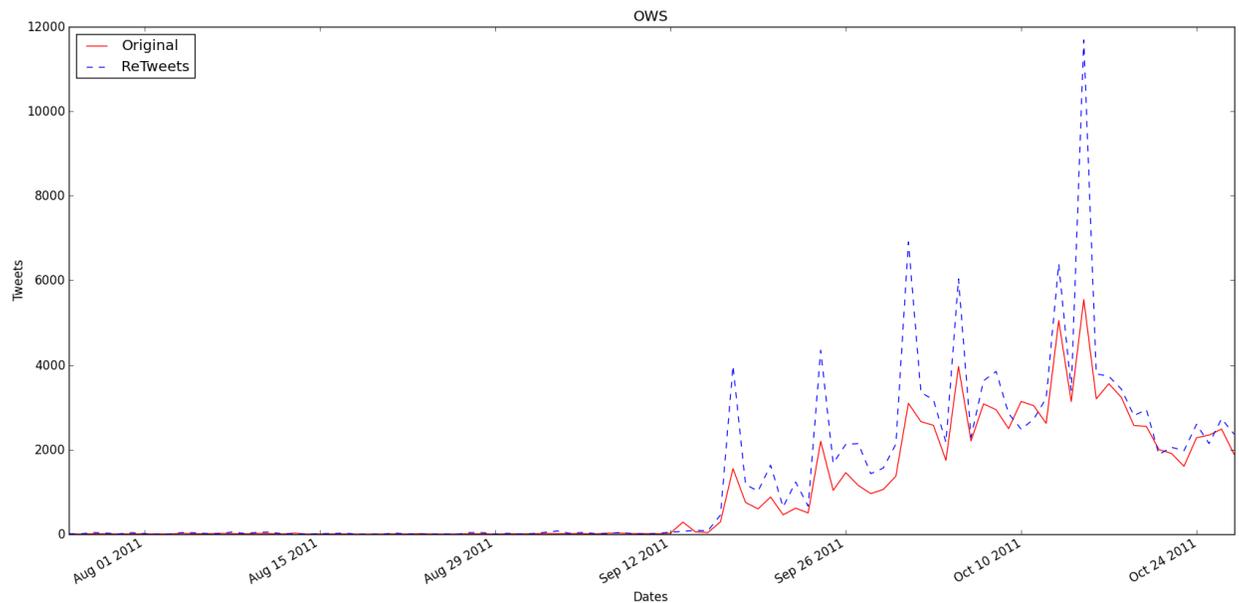
**Figure 6: Wisconsin Tweets Over Time**

Figure 6 shows significant spikes in tweets on the dates: February 18, 20, 21, 26, and 28; and March 9 and 11. Also, on March 8<sup>th</sup> the number of tweets dropped to its lowest point since my data started on February 17<sup>th</sup>. Significant events occurred around the times of these spikes. On February 18<sup>th</sup> the Wisconsin State Senate Democrats fled the state so these tweets are likely in support of the absence. Between the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> Governor Walker had defended his position and the website defendwisconsin.org was down for two days (Quick Facts: WI protests -- a timeline 2011). The Wisconsin Democratic Party accused the Republicans of shutting down the website and therefore, infringing on the First Amendment rights of protestors.

By February 26<sup>th</sup> the protests had spread to Ohio and the day before, the Wisconsin Assembly passed the Budget Repair Bill by rushing a vote on the bill. On March 8<sup>th</sup> the tweets hit the lowest part since the data began. This may be attributed to Governor Walker offering some concessions on the bill giving back many of the collective bargaining rights that he sought to take away (Quick Facts: WI protests -- a timeline 2011). The next day however, the senate passed the Collective Bargaining Rights Bill. This bill was identical to the Budget Repair Bill except for the budget provisions. By 1 a.m. on the 10<sup>th</sup> the bill was passed in the State Assembly. The rise in tweets on March 11<sup>th</sup> was most likely due to Walker signing the bill into law on that day.

The last two spikes in the tweets likely relate to the recall process called for by the protestors. On April 7<sup>th</sup> Wisconsin Democrats filed a recall petition for Republican State Senator Randy Hopper (Kleefeld 2011). At this point the Democrats had already filed one for another Republican State Senator, Robert Wirch. The last spike occurred on June 14<sup>th</sup> when thousands of protestors started to protest the bill again (Kilkenny 2011). They protested again because the State Supreme Court reinstated the collective bargaining rights bill that was voided by Judge Sumi the previous month.

## Occupy Wall Street



**Figure 7: Occupy Wall Street Tweets Over Time**

Like *Figure 6*, *Figure 7* contains the number of tweets over time from the beginning of the call to action by Adbusters until the end of October. There was minor Twitter activity since the call to action until September 17<sup>th</sup>, when the number of tweets, including retweets, spiked to over 5000. Since this was the day that Occupy Wall Street began, the tweets probably took on an organizational theme because of the action taken that day. By September 23<sup>rd</sup> the media had been covering Occupy Wall Street more heavily and may have caused this spike in the tweets.

The first day of October about 700 protesters were arrested during a march across the Brooklyn Bridge (Occupy Wall Street: A Protest Timeline 2011). The protestors arrested claimed that the police waved them into the street so they could cross the bridge, but as soon as they were in the roadway, the police began arresting

them. Some of these tweets possibly were organizing the march but many were more likely a reaction to the police officers' actions. The next spike occurred just three days later on October 4<sup>th</sup> which was the day before the largest labor unions in New York City joined for a march which swelled the number of protestors to about 15,000 (Occupy Wall Street: A Protest Timeline 2011).

The largest rise in tweets in my data set occurred on October 14<sup>th</sup>. The day before Brookfield Properties, the company that owns Zuccotti Park, announced that the park needed cleaning and that the occupiers would have to pack up and leave the park for four hours. While the occupiers stood their ground the company called off the cleaning. One can conclude that these tweets were both reactions to the company's announcement and organizing more people to come to the park to prevent the cleaning.

### **Key Words**

Both sets of data contain within their top 100 most used words concepts that are important to the movements of which some are the same. Others reveal that there was some political disputes over the protests because the hash tags of #tcot and #teaparty were used which refer to top conservatives on Twitter and of course the Tea Party movement, respectively (#tagdef). These could have been tweets written by the opposition or written by protestors to challenge the ideas of the Tea Party and conservatives. In *Figure 8* and *Figure 9* the top 100 words used, including hash tags and excluding words from retweets, counts are shown with a few exceptions. *Figure 8* excludes #wiunion which appears in all of the tweets, and #Wlunion which was used in



meaning behind the prominence of these words because collective bargaining rights are rights of the workers. The concept of workers' rights (supporting this idea leads one to oppose corporations) develops into part of the master collective action frame of the Madison protests.

However, key concepts to the protests are not the only thing that we can see within these top words; also included are some organizational and declarative words. The word capitol appears which was occupied by the protestors. Words such as support, stand, and fight are used either to direct peoples' actions, or to voice the declaration of what side that person agreed with.

### **Occupy Wall Street**

As with the Wisconsin protest, the top 100 words of the Occupy Wall Street tweets reveal the important concepts to the movement. Appearing in the top three words are wall, street, and occupy. While the movement is called Occupy Wall Street, it derives its name from the tactics it employs and therefore, embraces its repertoire of contention. Solidarity is also an important concept to the movement despite the fact that the word "solidarity" did not make it into the top 100 words; however, the tags #solidarity and #Solidarity were used 20,869 and 8628 times respectively and other words and concepts used imply it. Appearing in these top words is the hash tag #occupytogether which serves a dual purpose of defining the tactics and the manner in which this tactic is to be employed, together. This certainly has the connotation of the protestors occupying in solidarity. The contrast between the concepts of the 99 percent and the 1 percent imbued the protestors with a sense of solidarity in that they are all (or

mostly all) part of the bottom 99 percent of people in our society when categorizing based upon wealth. Another key concept is revolution. The protestors are attempting to spark a revolution with their occupation of the financial capital of the world.

The usage of revolution in the tweets is also a call to action and inspires others to join their cause. Other organizational concepts appearing are join, support, message, change, and of course occupy. These words direct others to act and to join Occupy Wall Street.

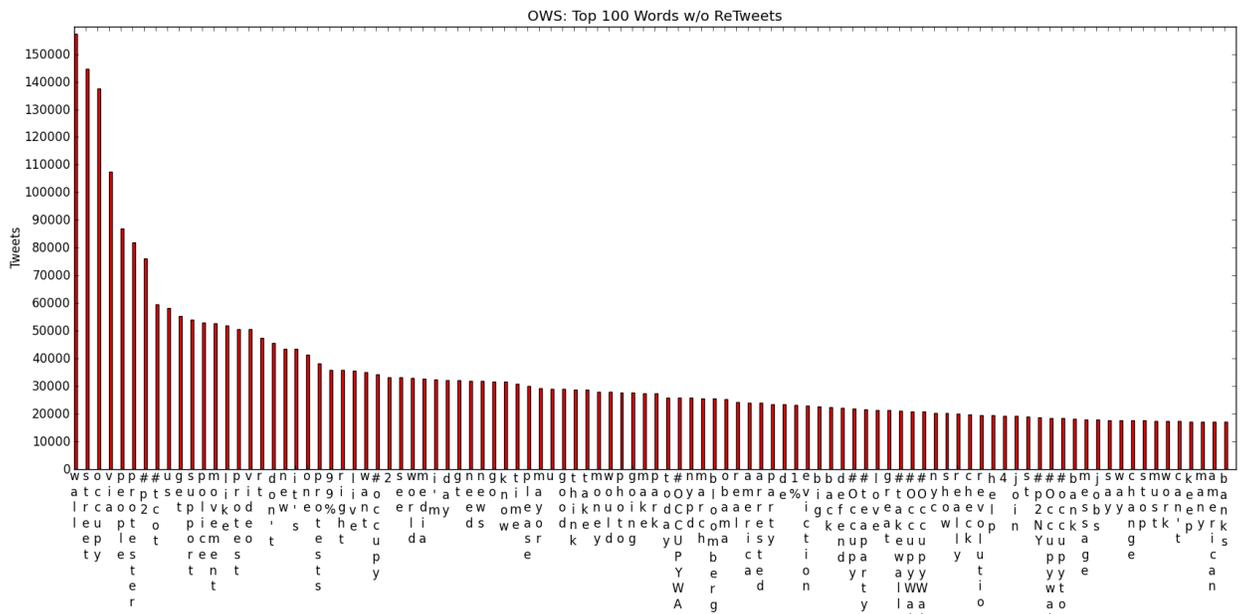


Figure 9: Top 100 Occupy Wall Street Words Excluding ReTweets

Through just these 100 words and a basic understanding of Occupy Wall Street one can see the collective action frame take shape. By mentioning banks, money, police, and arrests the collective action frame of opposing corporate influence in the government is clear. While protesting against the banks and their influence, the police continually arrested the protestors demonstrating the link between the government and corporations.

## **Common Concepts**

Using the concepts that appear in both the Wisconsin and Occupy Wall Street tweets, a connection between the two events can be drawn. The concept of solidarity is important to both cases by holding the protestors together to continually fight for change. However, the actual word solidarity does not appear in the Occupy Wall Street tweets. Most likely, the higher prevalence of solidarity in Wisconsin tweets is due to it being more labor oriented and thus resembling the labor movement of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. What develops from these two cases is the clear connection between the government and corporations, and the execution of corporate interests by arms of the government. Also, the use of calls to action, such as support which appears in both top 100 words and others such as stand, fight, and join, shows that there is a commonality in the usage of Twitter for these two cases.

## **Hash Tags**

Tweets can easily include more than one hash tag. Sometimes these hash tags are almost synonymous with each other such as #occupywallstreet and #ows. On the contrary, tweets may include hash tags of opposing views such as #ows and #teaparty which shows the presence of dialog between groups. Also, tweets may reference other events even though the user is talking about one of the events in particular.

## **Co-occurring Wisconsin and Occupy Wall Street Tags**

As one would expect the #wiunion tweets did not contain any tag relating to Occupy Wall Street because my data set ended just after the call to action by Adbusters

in June and before Occupy Wall Street started in September. However, there was some use of hash tags relating to occupation in general as well as #occupyca and #occupywi. However, what is interesting is the mentioning of tags relating to Wisconsin in the Occupy Wall Street tweets. Between the two hash tags #occupywallstreet and #ows there were a total of 16,283 usages of Wisconsin related tags out of the 4,050,812 tweets. This works out to be about 0.4 percent of the tweets. This seems like a too low of a percentage to imply any significant link between the two. However, there are common users and common concepts, and 16,283 times when people tweeted they mentioned the Wisconsin protest. The reason this is not higher is that the Occupy Wall Street tweets mostly included talk about events and concepts of the occupation.

## **Others**

In addition to the tags about these two protests each of them had some other key hash tags within the tweets. These tags can be broken down into two different types, progressive and conservative.

## **Progressive**

Since these protests were progressive and leftist in nature, the main leftist hash tag that appeared was #p2 which is a tag for progressives using social media (#tagdef). In the Wisconsin tweets the hash tags #p2 and #P2 were used a total of 199,208 times, if they were not used in the same tweet 15.17 percent of the tweets contained these hash tags. The tweets from Occupy Wall Street displayed less use of these hash tags with a total of 163,488 references used in only 4.04 percent of the tweets. The Democratic Party did not embrace the Occupy Wall Street movement as it did the opposition to

Governor Walker's bill. The #p2 hash tag is used by those who primarily believe in empowerment and are not necessarily anti-capitalist (#tagdef).

### **Conservative**

The conservative hash tags that appear are a combination of Tea Party tags and other general conservative tags. Those that appeared were #teaparty and other variations of that tag, #tcot and a variation tag #TCOT and the #tlot hash tag that refers to top libertarians on Twitter (#tagdef). The Tea Party was referenced many more times with the hash tags of #teaparty, #TeaParty, #Teaparty, and #tpp, which stands for Tea Party Patriots (#tagdef), in 51,145 of the Occupy Wall Street tweets as opposed to 30,146 in the Wisconsin tweets. Conservatives as well as the Tea Party were referenced in Occupy Wall Street more often than in Wisconsin, with 97,271 tags counted over the data set as opposed to 80,622 in Wisconsin. However, in the Wisconsin tweets it is much more prevalent being mentioned in 6.14 percent of the tweets while in only 2.40 percent of Occupy Wall Street tweets.

The same holds true for libertarians with 13,101 for Wisconsin and 18,970 in the Occupy Wall Street data. Although for Wisconsin the hash tag counts represent a higher percentage of tweets because Wisconsin had about one fourth the amount of tweets as Occupy Wall Street in the data set, the raw counts represent that there was more activity of people who opposed the Occupy Wall Street protest than the Wisconsin protests.

## **Conclusion**

The analysis of tweets from both the Wisconsin and Occupy Wall Street protests reveal important aspects of the two cases in relation to social movements. Looking at the participation by users reveals common patterns between both sets of tweets. Both experienced a small number of users that tweeted a large amount where many sparsely did so in comparison. The analysis of common users implies that users mostly tweeted when they were involved with the protests. Most of the common users have many more of their tweets relating on protest or the other.

The patterns of usage in relation to how many tweets per day match in both Wisconsin and Occupy Wall Street because both experience a rise in the number of tweets before, during, or after significant events. When the number of tweets rises before or during an event, this implies that Twitter was used in an organizational and planning way. On the contrary, when they rise after a significant event, it is more analytical and reactionary tweeting taking place.

The usage over time and of individuals reinforces that Twitter was one of the major repertoires of contention for both the Wisconsin and Occupy Wall Street protests. This repertoire was developed by Wisconsin with influence from the Arab Spring, and then picked up by Occupy Wall Street as an effective and trademark part of the protests.

The development of the repertoire of contention using Twitter is not the only thing that can be deduced from analyzing the tweets. The top words in both data sets reveal one manner in which Twitter was used and the common key concepts. In both Wisconsin and Occupy Wall Street many tweets included organizational words; which

reinforces the repertoire of using Twitter. The main concept of solidarity appeared in both data sets, while relatively more prominent in Wisconsin, the idea was present in Occupy Wall Street as well as other words and ideas that imply solidarity such as the concept of the bottom 99 percent versus the top 1 percent and the extensive use of #occupytogether. Wisconsin was more representative of the 20<sup>th</sup> century labor movement which might have caused the word solidarity to appear more frequently. The concept of solidarity is part of the repertoire of the Wisconsin protests, which was later used by Occupy Wall Street.

Another aspect of social movements validated by the Twitter data is the master collective action frame developed by Wisconsin and adopted by Occupy Wall Street. Within the most used words for Wisconsin the concept of workers' rights appears which the protestors supported in opposition to Governor Walker's bill. Curtailing workers' rights is a corporate interest that was being carried out by the Governor. From Occupy Wall Street we see the same idea of opposing corporate influence over government and therein, the use of the master collective action frame developed by the Wisconsin protests. Occupy Wall Street tweets mentioned arrests by the police, while the movement is opposing banks and corporations.

Overall, the analysis of Wisconsin and Occupy Wall Street tweets reveals important concepts aligning with the social movement literature. We can see through these tweets alone the development of repertoires of contention such as the key concept of solidarity and the use of Twitter itself. The tweets show the development of

the master collective action frame of opposing corporate influence over the government.

## Chapter V

### Conclusions

*America began with an uprising. And, now, in a city named for the essential author of the Constitution, on the streets where the Bill of Rights was forged and ratified, on college campuses and in union halls, in small towns and on capital squares, the American uprising is beginning anew.” – John Nichols, in Uprising pages 164 to 165*

Through Sidney Tarrow’s main concepts of social movements the protests in Madison, Wisconsin and Occupy Wall Street are parts of the same social movement. The Wisconsin protests resemble the 20<sup>th</sup> century labor movement and developed the *repertoires of contention* and *master collective action frame* for the new movement with influence from the labor movement and the Arab Spring and initiated the *cycle of protests*. Occupy Wall Street continued the movement by adopting the repertoire and frame from Wisconsin and continued the *cycle of protests*. John Nichols argues that the Madison protests “outlined so many of the themes and tactics of the Occupy Wall Street movement” (Nichols 2012, 164).

Returning to Sidney Tarrow the *repertoire of contention* of a social movement is the tactics it employs and its main concepts involved in their contentious actions. As the protests in Madison, Wisconsin resemble the labor movement of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, part of their repertoire was borrowed from this previous movement.

Protestors in Wisconsin adopted the tactic of occupation. Many worker strikes in the 20<sup>th</sup> century labor movement involved occupation of the factory floor. While these protestors did not occupy their workplace, they occupied the Capitol building in Madison, the headquarters of their employer, and later camped outside of it. The use of occupation by Wisconsin protestors inspired the Occupy Wall Street protests to use this tactic, except they occupied the financial capital of the world, Wall Street, to protest corporate influence over the government.

Included in the repertoire of Wisconsin is the concept of solidarity. Drawn from the labor movement as the tactic of occupation was, solidarity became even more important in Wisconsin because of the widespread participation in the protests, as people who were not members of public-sector unions, and some not in a union at all, gathered to oppose Governor Walker's Bill. Wisconsin accomplished an amazing feat in bringing people of all professions together in support of public-sector unions. This concept appeared frequently in tweets relating to the Wisconsin protests reinforcing the importance of the idea. Occupy Wall Street maintained an important call to solidarity between the bottom 99 percent of the population to oppose the top 1 percent and corporate influences over the government. The concept of solidarity within a diverse group of individuals for a common goal is the same between Wisconsin and Occupy Wall Street. The tweets from Occupy Wall Street verify this with the extensive use of the hash tag #occupytogether.

The extensive use of Twitter first in Wisconsin and later in Occupy Wall Street, inspired by the Arab Spring, is another defining aspect of the *repertoire of contention* for

both protests and the broader social movement that they make up. The patterns of usage mirror each other as Twitter was used for organizational purposes and for analytical purposes. Protestors were able to organize easily before a protest and able to receive important information before and during protests.

The *repertoires of contention* for this new social movement developed from the Wisconsin protests with influence from the 20<sup>th</sup> century labor movement. Wisconsin protestors succeeded in developing and transforming this repertoire into one usable by other protests. The occupiers in Occupy Wall Street used the same repertoire as the Wisconsin protestors.

As with the *repertoire of contention*, the *master collective action frame* of Wisconsin was in part adopted from the 20<sup>th</sup> century labor movement but developed into a frame that became the focus of Occupy Wall Street challenging corporate influence over the government.

The Wisconsin protests started in support for the public workers' collective bargaining rights. Defending workers' rights, the master frame of the 20<sup>th</sup> century labor movement, was not the only goal of the Wisconsin protests because of the politics involved. Governor Walker was influenced by the corporate interests to limit unionization in the public sector, an action that represents a danger to private sector unions because it injures the concept of unionization. Wisconsin developed a new *master collective action frame* of opposition to corporate influence in the political system because of significant campaign contributions to Walker by the Koch brothers and corporations.

The main goal of Occupy Wall Street is to bring about a Democracy in the United States as a replacement to the Corporatocracy. Adopting the new master frame from Wisconsin, Adbusters called for people Occupy Wall Street to demand an end to corporatocracy in America. The common use of this master frame in Wisconsin and Occupy Wall Street created an undeniable link between the protests into a new social movement with a common goal.

Currently we are experiencing a period of *cycles of protest* in a new social movement critiquing the United States' politico-economic system. The Wisconsin protests initiated the current *cycle of protests* in the United States and Occupy Wall Street has continued it. Following Sidney Tarrow's definition of such a period we are seeing heightened conflict, the expansion of the repertoires of occupation, solidarity, and the usage of Twitter, new organization such as the New York City General Assembly and its subordinate groups, the creation of the new master frame of opposing corporate interests influencing the government, and the intensified interaction between the protestors and the police. The initial demand of Wisconsin protestors for the State legislature not to pass Governor Walker's bill, by following corporate interests limited the collective bargaining rights of public sector unions, and their protests against the budget giving corporations tax breaks while cutting school funding, opened the opportunity for Occupy Wall Street's demands of ending corporate influence in the government.

Qualitative research, following Sidney Tarrow's concepts of social movements, reveals that these protests are unified by their common *repertoire of contention* and use

of the same *master collective action frame*; the Twitter activity supports the qualitative findings. The transformation of a borrowed repertoire and the development of a new master frame represent a learning process taking place from Wisconsin to Occupy Wall Street. The Madison, Wisconsin and Occupy Wall Street protests constitute a new social movement critiquing capitalism and the United States' political system and represent a learning process in opposing corporate influence in government.

While participants in this new social movement may not identify as Marxists and the movement may not specifically promote Marx or use Marxist literature; this new social movement critiquing the United States' politico-economic system, has Marxist undertones. Marx explains that in our epoch society is splitting into two great classes, Bourgeoisie and Proletariat (Marx, *The Communist Manifesto* 1978). This new social movement is one of the Proletariat opposing bourgeois control of the government.

Marx argues that the Bourgeoisie, the corporate economic elites, has control over politics. Through the centralization of the means of production the Bourgeoisie is able to "concentrate property in a few hands"; hence the top one percent controlling over half the wealth (Marx, *The Communist Manifesto* 1978, 477). The consequence of the concentration of property is political centralization under one government and one class-interest, the bourgeois interest, resulting in a bourgeoisie-democracy; a pseudo democracy ruled by and for corporations and the rich, or a corporatocracy. This is exactly the form of government the new social movement is calling for to end, and for power to be returned to the people, or the Proletariat.

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