

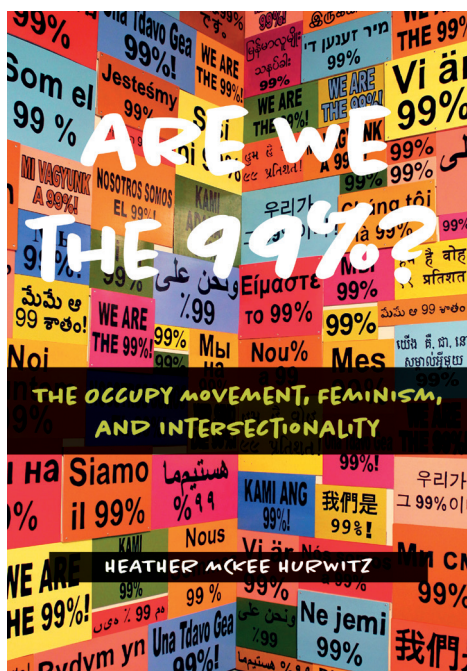
ARE WE THE 99%?

THE OCCUPY MOVEMENT, FEMINISM, AND INTERSECTIONALITY

INSTRUCTOR'S GUIDE

WHY CONSIDER ARE WE THE 99% FOR YOUR CLASS?

- Illuminates the gender, race, sexuality, and class dimensions of contemporary social movements.
- Suggests ways to improve inclusivity and diversity in activist and other organizations.
- Provides an overview of many of the most important issues in contemporary activism from 2010-2019.
- Synthesizes the course of the Occupy movement.
- Draws on original in-depth interviews, ethnography, and movement documents, to reveal depth stories about the Occupy movement's media, tactics, strategies, culture, leadership, and feminist activism.
- Opens up critical conversation about the range of competing messages and frames that activists use in their social media campaigns.
- Illustrates how feminism is no longer isolated only to women's movements.
- Explores how feminism spilled over into and influenced the Occupy movement and also how Occupy activists influenced feminists.
- Models rigorous feminist and intersectional research.
- Offers an online free open-source digital archive of the book's media and cultural data, as well as a curated list of links to Occupy-related YouTube videos and films, sample lesson plans, assignments, and research guides at DOI 10.17605/OSF.IO/6V9ZF
- Compliments courses on social movements, contemporary politics, sociology, feminist studies, American studies, and media studies.
- Accessible for undergraduate and graduate courses as well as reading by the general public
- Available in paperback, hard cover, and e-book formats



Are We the 99%?: The Occupy Movement, Feminism, and Intersectionality
by Heather McKee Hurwitz

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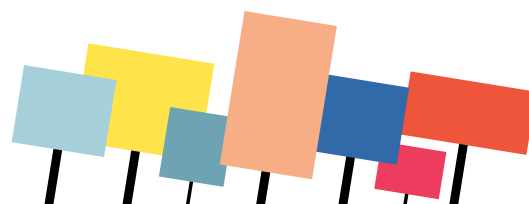


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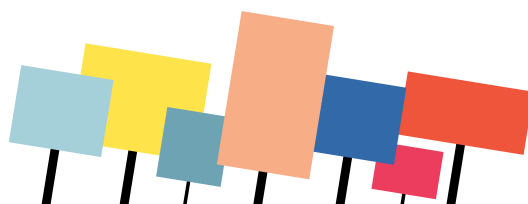
SUMMARY OF THE BOOK

The protestors that comprised the Occupy Wall Street movement came from diverse backgrounds. But how were these activists—who sought radical social change through many ideologies—able to break down oppressions and obstacles within the movement? And in what ways did the movement perpetuate status-quo structures of inequality? *Are We the 99%* is the first comprehensive feminist and intersectional analysis of the Occupy movement.

Conflicts over gender, race, class, and sexuality issues are crucial areas of infighting and debate within contemporary activism. Despite cries of “We are the 99%,” signaling solidarity, certain groups were unwelcome or unable to participate. Moreover, problems with racism, sexism, and discrimination due to sexuality and class persisted within the movement. Feminists, racial justice activists, students and other activists responded quickly to infighting and discrimination. They created innovative tactics and strategies for change. However, other activists left the movement, created separate organizations and networks, and continued or transformed activism after the peak of Occupy movement activity.

Using immersive first-hand accounts of activists’ experiences, online communications, and media coverage of the movement, *Are We the 99%* compares findings from the Occupy movement to other contemporary and historic, national and global, protest movements. Lessons gleaned from the conflicts within the Occupy movement suggest strategies for future movements to avoid infighting and embrace greater diversity and inclusivity.

The introduction provides an overview of the Occupy movement and the research study. Each chapter provides intersectional analysis of conflicts within the movement about collective identities (ch.1), framing (ch.2), leadership (ch.3), and feminism (ch.4). The conclusion reveals lessons for future social movements.





INTRODUCTION

THE INTERSECTIONAL IMPERATIVE

After an opening vignette about visiting a vibrant, artistic Occupy encampment, the introduction reveals the economic and political context in which the movement arose. The Great Recession, a global financial crisis that started in 2007, caused stock values and home values to plummet. The economic downturn initiated government austerity measures around the world, and social movements responded to those measures. The Occupy movement followed several other movements, emerging in New York City in the fall of 2011, and then spreading through the United States and globally. The movement developed the “We are the 99%” key slogan to represent solidarity among everyone except the wealthiest 1%. While primarily focused on class inequality, Occupy protests – which often took the form of overnight protest encampments – also became spaces to discuss sexism, feminism, racism, and other forms of inequality. Occupy encampments aimed to be radically democratic spaces where anyone could speak, start a protest, start an organization, or become a leader. However, in practice, encampments varied in the extent to which they acted on intersectional analyses of inequality and injustice.

Intersectionality is understanding and evaluating the multiple and interrelated structures of inequality (gender, race, class, etc.) that condition the relative privileges or disadvantages that an individual endures. Several movements have used intersectional praxis, using an intersectional analysis of inequalities to shape their goals and strategies. Activists who utilize intersectional praxis to create more inclusive movement dynamics accomplish three processes, or “the intersectional imperative”: they address multiple forms of inequality with specificity, they depict the lives and stories of people who are multiply marginalized, and they encourage coalition building. Each of these processes relies on evaluating structures of inequalities as multiple and interrelated.

The chapter closes with details about the research study including descriptions of each field site.

QUESTIONS FOR IN-PERSON DISCUSSION OR ONLINE DISCUSSION THREADS

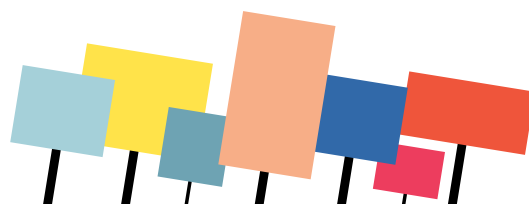
1. Describe the Occupy movement in your own words. Consider the movement’s goals, protest actions, culture, infighting, etc. How is the movement distinct from other social movements?
2. What was the Great Recession? Were the government responses and/or social movement responses to it appropriate? Sufficient? How so or how not?
3. In your own words, explain, what is intersectionality? How do activists use intersectionality – or intersectional praxis - within social movements?
4. When conflicts about intersectionality emerged in historical movements or in the Occupy movement, what were the various sides of the conflict? Are these conflicts justified? What could be done to mitigate conflicts?
5. Compare and contrast the movements that are the main focus of this book’s research study: Occupy Wall Street in New York, Occupy Oakland and Occupy San Francisco in California.
6. Why did Hurwitz undertake the research study for this book? What were the main research questions? What research methods did she use to conduct the study?

(CHAPTER 1 ARE WE THE 99%? CONFLICT ABOUT COLLECTIVE IDENTITIES

Chapter one reveals that participants of various racial, gender, sexual, and class identities critiqued the “We are the 99%” collective identity. Collective identity is the process within social movements of defining the shared boundaries of solidarity among participants. While the 99% identity appealed widely, it also generated infighting. Participants argued that lumping everyone under “the 99%” failed to specifically recognize women’s and genderqueer persons’ and/or people of color’s distinct experiences during the financial crisis. The chapter explores how new groups emerged from within the movement and developed oppositional collective identities, collective identities that critiqued the main movement identity. While infighting about collective identity is not new to social movements, the extent to which different subgroups within the Occupy movement more specifically addressed the racial, gendered, and sexual dimensions of class inequality was staggering. Participants airing grievances on social media facilitated the groups’ emergence.

QUESTIONS FOR IN-PERSON DISCUSSION OR ONLINE DISCUSSION THREADS

1. Why is forming collective identity so important to the development of social movements? If it is so important, why has there been so much infighting about it?
2. Participants formed a boundary between themselves as the 99% in opposition to the 1%. What does it mean to be a part of the 99%? Illustrate your response with rich vibrant details from the text.
3. Considering the racial dynamics of the 99%, should the Occupy movement have changed its name to Decolonize?
4. Many separate groups formed to critique the 99% identity and provide a “free space” for people who were not white men to participate actively. Considering your own personal interests, what were the most intriguing groups that formed to oppose racism, sexism, classism, and/or discrimination based on sexuality?
5. Was it beneficial or disadvantageous that so many separate groups formed within the Occupy movement?



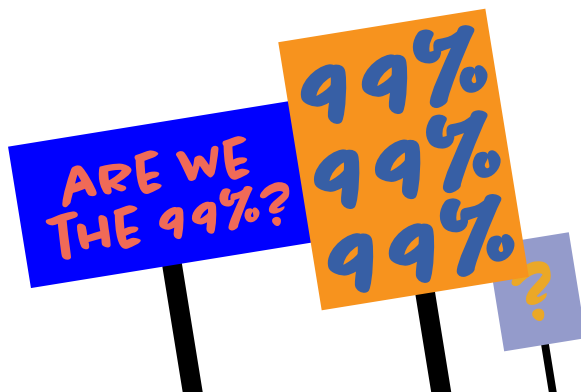
CHAPTER 2

"SORRY FOR THE MESS. NEW PARADIGM UNDER CONSTRUCTION": INCLUSIVITY FRAMES IN THE MOVEMENT'S MEDIA AND CULTURE

The chapter begins with a vignette about the internal debates when a few men created the Hot Chicks of Occupy Wall Street video and website. Although the video and website embraced the movement's (and American's) value for freedom of speech, feminists viewed the media as sexist and in opposition to women's legitimate participation in the movement. This chapter features the movement's art, cultural products, online and traditional media. Participants framed media and messages to include or exclude particular groups. Media and cultural products varied in their use of three different inclusivity frames: the 99% frame, the dominance frame, and the intersectional frame. Each sparked debate and divisions. Items using the 99% frame provided a foundation for including everyone, but recognized no one specifically therefore failing to highlight individuals' unique experiences. Media characterized by the dominance frame often featured the Charging Bull or other symbols of whiteness or masculinity, limiting the extent to which this media and culture framed inclusivity for women and genderqueer persons of various races and ethnicities, and especially for people of color. Intersectional frames, on the other hand, recognized specifically individuals who endure class-based injustice and other oppressions simultaneously.

QUESTIONS FOR IN-PERSON DISCUSSION OR ONLINE DISCUSSION THREADS

1. Consider the 99% frame. How inclusive was it?
2. Why were there so many different frames in use in the Occupy movement? Did this strengthen or weaken it?
3. Choose one of the media and cultural products featured in the dominance frame section. How would you modify it to make it more inclusive and appealing to audiences other than white men?
4. Why did the intersectional frame appeal to feminist participants and how did they deploy it? Who was not represented by this frame?



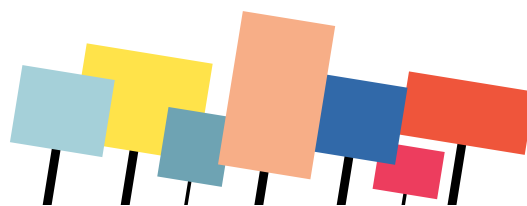
CHAPTER 3

DISCRIMINATORY RESISTANCE: GENDER AND RACE DYNAMICS IN A LEADERLESS MOVEMENT

Chapter three examines the gender and race dimensions of leadership within the movement. The Occupy movement espoused an open, voluntary, non-hierarchical, and rotating leadership structure. Participants designed the leadership structure to mitigate inequalities and encourage broad participation, especially by persons who identify as women, genderqueer, and/or people of color. Yet, the study reveals how even within the non-hierarchically organized movement, participants marginalized women and genderqueer leaders, especially people of color. Followers used “discriminatory resistance” to limit the legitimacy of women and genderqueer leaders. Rather than facilitating diverse leadership, followers fell back on gendered leadership standards prominent in hierarchical settings. Women who attempted to lead endured a “double bind”: followers evaluated their leadership as either too aggressive and too masculine to be appropriate women, or too feminine and not aggressive enough, and therefore not quality leadership. The chapter also reveals the harassment, male dominance, and hostile culture that became a “labyrinth” of challenges and barriers that limited women and genderqueer persons’ access to and accomplishment of leadership.

QUESTIONS FOR IN-PERSON DISCUSSION OR ONLINE DISCUSSION THREADS

1. What is relational leadership theory and how does it differ from other ways scholars have analyzed leadership?
2. Even within the Occupy movement, the “double bind” and the “leadership labyrinth” persisted. How did women and queer persons experience barriers and challenges to taking on leadership responsibilities?
3. Were leaders and/or followers responsible for discriminatory resistance? Who should take responsibility for stopping it?
4. Reflecting on the range of leadership and followership experiences in this chapter, how can organizations design more equal and more accessible leadership structures especially for women, genderqueer persons, and/or people of color?



CHAPTER 4

WOMEN OCCUPYING WALL STREET: MOBILIZING FEMINISM WITHIN OCCUPY

Feminists influenced the Occupy mobilizations in a variety of ways. Individual feminists and preexisting feminist organizations contributed resources. Feminists, especially transgender and cisgender women and genderqueer persons, spearheaded new organizations that emerged from within the movement. Feminist organizing within the Occupy movement often embodied the intersectional imperative and critiqued activism bereft of intersectional praxis. Feminists advocated gender and racial equality within the Occupy movement and society broadly. They used three processes to mobilize feminism even from within the not-explicitly-feminist Occupy movement: participants developed feminist collective identities, feminist “free spaces,” and feminist bridge leaders. Feminist Occupiers used these three processes to mobilize the Occupy movement and spread feminist politics, ideals, and protests. Feminists responded to the sexism, racism, marginalization of queer people, and harassment within the Occupy movement and used these conflicts as a political opportunity to take a stand for intersectionality and feminism.

QUESTIONS FOR IN-PERSON DISCUSSION OR ONLINE DISCUSSION THREADS

1. Define feminism and feminists in your own words. Why did feminists become involved in the Occupy movement? How did they contribute to it?
2. How did the Occupy movement’s goals, participants, culture or other aspects influence the feminist activists?
3. How was it beneficial to both movements that feminism spilled over into Occupy and Occupy spilled over into feminism? How was it detrimental?
4. What are feminist free spaces? How are these spaces distinct from other spaces within the Occupy movement?
5. Should feminist bridge leaders become a more formalized aspect of social movements?
6. Upon studying the scope of contemporary feminism within the Occupy movement, what can you surmise about the state of feminism in the 2010’s?





CONCLUSION

INTERSECTIONALITY LESSONS FOR MASS MOVEMENTS

The conclusion reviews the scope of gender, race, class, and sexuality related divisions within the Occupy movement. Also, the conclusion analyzes the transformation and continuation of the movement after the peak of activism in 2011-2012. The chapter closes with lessons gleaned from the conflicts within the movement. Notably, Senator Bernie Sanders' presidential campaigns continued to expose the inequalities between the 1% and the 99%. Many of the participants in the Occupy movement supported the campaign using the established online and offline networks that they had developed years prior. Globally, individuals continued to create social movements that utilized tactical repertoires and organizing structures similar to the Occupy movement, and endured parallel problems with gender conflict. Yet future social movements can avoid infighting and develop movement dynamics, strategies, tactics, media, and culture that uses intersectional praxis when they fulfill the "intersectional imperative." In response to thoughtful intersectional critiques and infighting, future social movements must find ways to create nimble structures and build inclusive leadership and coalitions.

CONCLUSION DISCUSSION QUESTIONS / FINAL ESSAY PROMPTS

1. Take a stand and make an argument: Is the Occupy movement one that you would consider joining? Why or why not? Back up your argument with quotes and details about the movement that illustrate your argument.
2. Men, women, and genderqueer persons contributed to the Occupy movement. How would you evaluate the gender dynamics of the movement? Was there gender equality, inequality, or something else? Back up your argument with quotes and details about the movement that illustrate your argument.
3. Choose one or more of the following to discuss: What are the similarities and differences between the Occupy movement and the Civil Rights movement? Occupy and #BlackLivesMatter? Occupy and feminist movements? Occupy and Bernie Sanders' presidential campaigns? Are there commonalities across all of these movements?
4. Considering the movements active in the 2010's from the Arab Spring, to Occupy, to the range of movements nationally and globally inspired by this period of activism, how should we assess the state of social change and social movements in the United States and globally? How far have activists come? Moving forward, on what goals and strategies should activists focus and why?
5. What are the most important lessons about creating more diverse and inclusive groups for social movement activists or anyone involved in an organization? Why?
6. Why is it important for social movement participants to not only create social change in society broadly but even within the progressive social movements themselves?