Social Movement & Social Media:
A qualitative study of Occupy Wall Street

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“When it shall be said in any country in the world, my poor are happy; neither ignorance nor distress is to be found among them; my jails are empty of prisoners, my streets of beggars; the aged are not in want...then may that country boast its constitution and its government.”

Thomas Paine, 1791

Abstract:

This project is important to the research in both the fields of social movement and of social media and their growing relationship. This report has analyzed the responses of several key role players in one of the biggest social movements in American history, Occupy Wall Street. Social media was used as a tool for both communication and information gathering amongst all those who were involved in the movement in a variety of capacities. The relationship and change that is occurring between traditional media and social media as information sources is also examined. Through qualitative analysis the importance that the role that social media now commands in our society in the context of social movements specifically became clear. The results will show the significance of this work and its importance in understanding the role that social media will continue to play in future social movements in the digitized public sphere of the 21st century.
1. Introduction

There is no doubt that if citizens want for a change within their own life then a social action of some form must inherently be undertaken. Social movements can be, and have been, implemented in various forms and on different levels in order to transform societies. Today, however, social movements occur in an age in which digital communication technologies have created new possibilities for the world to bear witness, and for activists to connect and organize themselves. When writing this report, what I have come to find particularly intriguing is the ability citizens now have to act and enact change within their own world from amidst their social media ‘bubbles’. These bubbles that many people find themselves immersed in daily range from their Facebook and Twitter accounts, to the video library on YouTube, or the ever-expanding blogosphere. Indeed, the new tool of social media, which has grown in relevance and word-wide popularity over the past few years, has arguably helped people without a voice to get one. In the following report, I am attempting to understand this phenomenon and the impact it is having within a context of social movements, focusing on the social movement that originated as ‘Occupy Wall Street’ in New York City in 2011.

Occupy Wall Street (birthplace of the ‘Occupy’ movement) was not a great mystery itself in the terms of why it was happening, and the background to the events will be explained shortly. In brief, the movement set out to change the public agenda, and to draw attention to what was considered un-fulfilled promises by the elected government. It was, however, noteworthy in that it very quickly received extensive global media coverage, and in its use of social media platforms to spread its message. In these respects it relates to the social movements ignited across North Africa in the ‘Arab Spring’ of 2011, where unrest and protests were captured via social media platforms, mobile technology, and social networking sites (SNSs) that were employed heavily as one of the primary tool used by protesters in the social upheavals. The Arab Spring highlighted the potential of social media platforms for bringing social activism and opinions of those on the ground to the forefront of the international public’s media agenda, and spurred on public and academic debate about the uses of social media by activists and others in this socio-political context (see Anderson, 2011).

However, with the Occupy movement we witnessed a situation in which the populous is already a democratic state, and where the majority of citizens live with relative ease of accessibility to the multitude of social media platforms that are available. Along with the most modern technological tools, such as iPhones, at their disposal, it makes Occupy Wall Street a venue for study that could provide a look specifically at key role players’ involvement with
social media without having to entertain the political boundaries that other nations faced in other areas of social unrest. America is a land of free speech and democracy, therefore using a social movement that occurred within its borders allows the focus to be specifically on the movement itself rather than freedom of the press, media bias\(^1\), or technological disadvantages that some of the other sites of social unrest dealt with this past year. In short, Occupy Wall Street provides an interesting case study for questions about the more concrete role played by social media in a contemporary social movement. For example, how did role players in the social movement use social media as a tool – for information, information and updates on what was occurring, and for organization? How did how those involved in various capacities in the social movement find social media as news sources versus what they heard or saw via the traditional media outlets? In which ways are social media contributing to shape current social movements overall, and what might the future hold for them in the progressing Web 2.0 era and beyond?

### 1.1 The Internet, Social Media, and Web 2.0

To understand this report from the position of looking at social media more in depth as a tool within social movements we must look to the current state of the Internet, the emergence of social media platforms and what web 2.0 means, not only to the Arab Spring or Occupy but to the global community at large. Since 2000 the growth in citizens ability to access the Internet has been tremendous. In Jonny Jones (2011) article on *Social media and Social movements* he cites:

The website Internet World Stats, which aggregates information from a variety of regional providers, estimates that between 2000 and 2010 the number of people with access to the Internet grew by 448.8 percent, from 360,985,492 to 1,966,514,816. This represents 28.7 percent of the world’s population.\(^2\)

\(^1\)Although these were certainly present which will be further discussed in the background, the American government was certainly a more stable contextual area of study over many of the countries that rose up across North Africa and Europe.

\(^2\) [www.Internetworldstats.com/stats.htm](http://www.Internetworldstats.com/stats.htm) - These numbers are on a global perspective, the highest growth was in Africa, where 10.9 percent now have Internet access (from 4,514,400 to 110,931,700, an increase of 2,357.3 percent) (2000-2010) and the Middle East, where Internet access now stands at 29.8 percent of the population (from 3,284,800 to 63,240,946) an increase of 1,825.3 percent
These numbers are astounding, and to know that almost 30 percent of the world’s population is now connected is interesting because at such a growth rate, or one that will be rapidly increasing with technology, it could be put at 60 percent or higher by 2020.

The rate of the growth amongst social media platforms is also something to be marveled at. Here, Facebook is dominating in many categories when it comes to social media platforms and that is not new knowledge, but to look further at the numbers in detail here is certainly of relevance to point out when understanding the context of this report. From a 2011 study all of the following was calculated and displayed within an info graphic titled ‘The Growth of Social Media’. Facebook accrues approximately 310 million daily unique visitors, and has over 640 million registered users. Membership share amongst the major social media platforms is 63.46 percent for Facebook, Twitter is at 1.15 percent and YouTube is at 20.5 percent. Twitter though is currently in a constant state of growth exceeding 200 million users and, one in four Americans watch a video online via YouTube daily. To conceptualize this massive growth in terms of population, if Facebook were a country would be the world’s 3rd largest behind China and India. The expansion most recently is still notable however because of the aforementioned rapid growth rate, for example users accessing Facebook via their mobile devices increased by 200 percent from 63 million in 2010 to 200 million in 2011, and the growth rate of users of Facebook was at 82 percent between 2010 to 2011 (Henrikson, 2011).

Twitter was later in its emergence as a dominant social media platform than Facebook but it started steadily progressing upwards in amount of users in 2008. Their growth was at 26 percent from 2010 to 2011, going from 75 million registered users up to 95 million. The major growth for Twitter was in its Tweets per day, going from 27 million to 95 million a 252 percent increase (ibid).

The growth of social media platforms began making major surges around the year 2006. Communications theorist Joss Hands (2011, p.79, as cited in Jones, 2011) explains it was the year that Web 2.0 and social media made their breakthrough into the mass media. He defines Web 2.0 as:

A by now ubiquitous term that loosely refers to the proliferation of user-created content and websites specifically built as frameworks for the sharing of information and for social

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4 See appendix

5 Social network sites with at least 7 million site visits a day.

6 140 character messages that are created by users of the social media platform Twitter
networking, and platforms for self-expression such as the weblog, or using video and audio sharing.

A sign of it’s growing place in society in 2006 Time magazine made “You” as the person of the year - even giving it a reflective cover.\(^7\) Interestingly enough in 2010 Time gave the honor to Mark Zuckerberg\(^8\), and in 2011 Time magazine named their person of the year “The Protester”\(^9\), which was certainly a hat tip to the major uprisings in North Africa and many others around the world as was it to the social media king the year prior. Andersen (2011, p.1) describes the year of protest:

In Sidi Bouzid and Tunis, in Alexandria and Cairo; in Arab cities and towns across the 6,000 miles from the Persian Gulf to the Atlantic Ocean; in Madrid and Athens and London and Tel Aviv; in Mexico and India and Chile, where citizens mobilized against crime and corruption; in New York and Moscow and dozens of other U.S. and Russian cities, the loathing and anger at governments and their cronies became uncontainable and fed on itself.

Social movements were occurring in various parts of the world, for many reasons, but there was a definite outcry against how societies were being treated unjustly by their governments. It was a phenomenon on a scale that no one had witnessed before because not only was the outcry of the public televised, it was tweeted, videoed, printed, photographed – and all of the viral materials were available to anyone with an Internet connection.

### 1.2 Previous Research

Recent studies investigating social media are becoming more prevalent, and are continuing to be produced. We will see more studies on the rise as more scientific research is performed on what has been a historic year and a half for social movements worldwide. From the Arab Spring, to the economic crisis facing the Euro zone, to the Occupy movement the choices for study are indeed robust and vast.

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\(^7\) Grossman, Lev, 2006, Time’s Person of the Year: You • Time (13 December), [www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,1569514,00.html](http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,1569514,00.html)

\(^8\) Co-creator and chief executive of Facebook

\(^9\) Andersen, Kurt, 2011, “Time’s Person of the Year: The Protester” (14 December), [http://www.time.com/time/specials/packages/article/0,28804,2101745_2102132,00.html](http://www.time.com/time/specials/packages/article/0,28804,2101745_2102132,00.html)
In his work titled *The Political Power of Social Media* (2011, p.1) Clay Shirky theorized:

...Social media have become coordinating tools for nearly all of the world’s political movements, just as most of the world’s authoritarian governments (and, alarmingly, an increasing number of democratic ones) are trying to limit access to it. In response, the U.S. State department has committed itself to “Internet freedom” as specific policy aim. Arguing for the right of the people to use Internet freely is an appropriate policy for the United States, both because it aligns with the strategic goal of strengthening civil society worldwide and because it resonates with American beliefs about freedom of expression.

Indeed this is a two-sided conversation and many theorists are quick to point out the double-edged sword traits of social media. I too later point to the research done by the likes of Habermas to describe the public sphere and move it forward in a modern understanding of the world we are living in, as well as using Dayan and Katz’s theory on the way media events and the spread of information occur and that relationship with todays society.

Other work being done in this field of research is by Evgeny Morozov who points out in *Iran: Downside to the “Twitter Revolution”* (2009) that social media is as likely to strengthen authoritarian regimes as much as it will weaken them, this too is a sobering fact to many of the regions that rose up against their governments in search of a better and more equal society.

It was also important to note work down on the mobile networked society as much of what occurred during the major social movements of 2011 into 2012 were reliant on our mobile technology and society. In Castells’ et. al. *Mobile communication and society: a global perspective* (2007, p.246):

Technology does not determine society: it is society, and can only be understood in social terms as a social practice. This means that the uses of wireless communication are fundamentally shaped and modified by people and organizations, on the basis of their interest, values, habits, and projects.

Also their observations on sociopolitical mobilization were of great reference when analyzing the bypassing of traditional media sources via social media platforms that are all standard applications now on new mobile devices. Specifically, the wireless communication tools were the prevalent mobile technological devices being used in capturing video and photos at social movements that aimed to make a shift in the government by providing unbiased and unedited content to the public (p.256):
The case studies presented here of instances of sociopolitical mobilization based on the autonomous diffusion of information, bypassing official sources and the mass media, illustrate the potential of wireless communication to transform the political landscape.

Lastly in *Misunderstanding the Internet* (2011) in her work titled ‘The internet and social networking’ Fenton (p.130) writes on the debates if social medial allow or encourage deliberation and dissent through multiplicity and polycentrality:

An emphasis on communication and the multiple ways in which this can now take place with a variety of people through social media is suggestive of the pluralisation of social relationships…but social media are also claimed to aid democracy through an increase in the sheer number of space available for deliberation and dissent. This is an argument for information abundance freed from the shackles of a mass communication system that broadcast from one to many.

This was important research in terms of the social movement context for this report in that the claims made by Fenton about social media aiding democracy as well as the information abundance were integral in my own analysis. The abilities for the public to debate and discuss in terms of social movement and news coverage are two areas that are evolving in research and will continue do so with the growth of social media usage and the mobile technology it has formed a relationship with.

### 1.3 Research aim and research questions

The research aim of this report is to, through a small-scale, qualitative, interview study, describe and analyze the uses of social media as a tool for role players involved in Occupy Wall Street. To further understand how social media platforms have been used specifically and are understood by role players. The report thus attempts to provide a nuanced picture of the role played by social media in the initial Occupy movement. Researching and analyzing not only the experiences of activists directly involved but also of those who were involved in other capacities, such as law enforcement and journalism. Through this research I will add to further understandings of how social media platforms were used and experienced in a particular social movement, and provide insight into the perspectives of those who directly participated.

The objective of the report is based on the empirical research findings, to reflect more widely on the relationship between social media and social movements in contemporary
society. The context of Occupy Wall Street benefits such an objective because it is able to offer itself as a social movement that is not only recent but was widely recognized and rooted within social media platforms. It is not to say that other contexts, in which I have mentioned before, such as the Arab Spring, were not better suited for such an objective. Due to my personal experience of having been raised in New York City and with access to insight and opinion from others involved at OWS, this was something I found to be a benefit to my research. The fact that I did not have those ties or contact directly in countries such as Egypt or Syria made me less inclined to pursue them in initial proposals.

The research questions of the report are informed by my review of theory and previous research, when thinking about what it was that I wanted to answer and provide insight to in a way that was different and not sufficiently theorized or empirically studied elsewhere. The following interconnected questions are the nucleus for my report:

1. How was social media perceived and used as a tool for information, communication, and organization during Occupy Wall Street, by various role players involved in the social movement?

2. How did these role players in the social movement understand social media in contrast to traditional media within the context of a social movement?

3. Based on the experiences of those directly involved in with Occupy Wall Street, what did social media and traditional media mean for the framing of the news story ‘Occupy’ as a media event and as a social movement?
2. Social Movements in Context

Approaching Occupy Wall Street as a social movement, I will start by contextualizing social movements from a historical viewpoint and in terms of their relationship with the media. Firstly, however, it is important to define what exactly a social movement consists of, in order to justify that Occupy Wall Street was indeed a social movement, and, if it was not recognized as such in the early stages of its inception, that it would become one towards the end of September and into November 2011.

A long-standing and oft-cited definition social movements was put forth by Herbert Blumer in the late 1930s (1939, p. 199):

Social movements can be viewed as collective enterprises to establish a new order of life. They have their inception in the condition of unrest, and derive their motive power on one hand from dissatisfaction with the current form of life, and on the other hand, from wishes and hopes for a new scheme or system of living.

Gerlach and Hine (1970), in a later study of movement dynamics, identified five key factors that are operationally significant and which they believe must be present and interacting before a collectivity of whatever size becomes a true movement (1970, p. xvi-xvii):

1. A segmented, usually polyecephalous, cellular organization composed of units reticulated by various personal, structural, and ideological ties.

2. Face-to-face recruitment by committed individuals using their own pre-existing, significant social relationships.

3. Personal commitment generated by an actor or an experience which separates a convert in some significant way from the established order (or his previous place in it), identifies him with a new set of values, and commits him to changed patterns of behavior.

4. An ideology which codifies values and goals, provides a conceptual framework by which all experiences or events relative to these goals may be interpreted, motivates and provides rationale for envisioned changes, defines the opposition, and forms the basis for conceptual unification of a segmented network of groups.

5. Real or perceived opposition from a society at large or from that segment of the established order within which the movement has arisen.

These five factors contextualize Occupy Wall Street as a social movement because all of the factors were present. Granted, as analysis will open up the discussion further, the methods in
which significant social relationships and personal commitment were generated partly via social media tools. The ideology and opposition from the society at large was arguably present and became more poignant and widespread as the social movement grew from its base in downtown New York and moved into the global public sphere. The vision of changes certainly defined the opposition and the unification of groups, varied in many degrees, which has also been part of the history behind social movements historically and emphatically within America’s history of social movement.

2.1 The Rise, Fall, and Rise of Social Movement

Social movements have been occurring for centuries, and they have most often been connected with political and economic changes. As stated in Blumler’s definition of social movements, it is an effort to establish a new order of life. More often than not when changing the order of one’s life we must look to the government for which we are bonded.

The French Revolution, occurring in the late 18th century, is one of the most well known social movements in history. It took place in a period for monarchies, feudal law, upper class rule and religious authority. The working classes were fed up with King Louis XVI, and soon enlightenment principles of equality, citizenship, and inalienable rights were fought for. There were riots and the Storming of the Bastille\textsuperscript{10} and soon followed the collapse of the monarchy and the elite rule and unjust taxation of the working class was curbed (Davies, 1962). Similarly, Labor movements and social movements of the late 19th century around the time of the Industrial Revolution\textsuperscript{11} were also seen to be prominent beginning to what has become classified as a social movement. Changing political thought, and changing the system were the key components to these movements, with their rallying calls to do with opening paths for new ways of life and better standards of living. Things like the two-day weekend, minimum wage, and 8-hour workdays became the rallying cry of many labor unions. Communist, social democratic, and labor parties sprouted from these movements and shaped the political agendas of countries such as Great Britain, the United States, and The Soviet Union (see Ashton, 1969).

After the effects of the Second World War and the transition into the post-war era many new movements and developments began to occur in Western society. Movements that

\textsuperscript{10} July 14\textsuperscript{th}, 1789 in Paris, France, a medieval fortress and prison
\textsuperscript{11} 1750-1850
were no longer only about class and the rights of the everyday citizen. These movements became known as New Social Movements (NSMs). David West (2004) describes these movements in *Handbook of Political Theory*:

The term “new social movements” refers to a group of contemporary (or recent) social movements that have played a significant and, for most commentators, largely progressive role in Western societies from the late1960s. The identification of these waves of activism as “new” typically refers to their concern with issues other than class. The category normally includes peace and anti-nuclear movements, environmental, ecological or green movements, lesbian and gay liberation, second-wave feminism, antiracist and alternative lifestyle movements.

The further description of the global status at the time gave sense of stability and economic growth in many countries. The “long economic boom” and “social democratic consensus” after World War II corresponded to a period of political stability and even apathy, marked by academic pronouncements of the “end of ideology” (Lipset, 1960: 403-17; Vincent, 1995: 9-13, cited in West, 2004). It was as this stability became engrained and stagnant that Western societies began to look at issues beyond rooting out the Axis powers and creating a democratic Europe – which lead to the new social movements for improvement of ones livelihood. This would suffice for a period of time, but lest us now look directly towards the country which this reports contexts is based, the United States of America – and its most poignant return to social movement occurring in the 1950s and 1960s.

### 2.2 America’s social movements and media coverage

There was a time period of general complacency amongst many in a capitalist driven United States, which was experiencing a realm of political and economic stability. Even Herbert Marcuse, a left-wing critic of liberal capitalism, portrayed the prevailing social order in substantially similar terms—albeit negatively—as a “one dimensional society” that had outgrown the polar opposition of capitalists and workers (Marcuse, 1964, cited in West, 2004). Marcuse was also alert to other cracks in the facade of liberal democratic stability. From the 1950s in the USA, the black Civil Rights movement\(^\text{12}\) spoke for “outcasts and outsiders,” who were excluded not just from most of the material benefits of the “affluent society” but also from civil and democratic rights (Marcuse, 1964: 199-200, cited in West, 2004). Some of the

\(^{12}\) 1955-1968
biggest cases of the 1950’s was certainly Brown v. Board of Education\textsuperscript{13} and the Montgomery bus boycott of 1955\textsuperscript{14} – this would also bring the Reverend Martin Luther King Jr. into national recognition and later in 1959, Malcolm X\textsuperscript{1}

The media coverage of these events was interesting because before the beginning of the civil rights movement many African-Americans were treated unjustly by the law and the press, and that would be putting it extremely politely. The fact is that the people who were supposed to enforce the beliefs and principles of their jobs, like that of the police or news media, were not true to their oaths\textsuperscript{15}, in may cases they went in the complete opposite direction of what they had swore to uphold. However, it was the major events, many of them sad and tragic, that began to sway the media, like that of the mentioned Brown vs. Board of Education case. In 1955 Emmett Till, a fourteen-year-old African-American schoolboy was lynched\textsuperscript{16}, and when the black press outlets such as Jet Magazine and The Chicago Defender published photos of Till’s lynching, these photos gained the sympathy even of the white press (see Kasher, ca. 1995). Throughout the civil rights movement, some journalists recognized the role that the press had in furthering the cause against racial discrimination and even risked their lives to report on the civil rights struggle. During the civil rights movement, “the press” meant newspapers, magazines, and television (Nelson, 2001). It would however be television that truly put civil rights at the forefront of media attention.

Media coverage of peaceful activism and violent backlash by the state is widely believed to having contributed to the success of the civil rights movement, especially with regards to the spread TVs in the homes around the time. In 1950, only 9 percent of homes had a TV. One year later, 24 percent of homes did. By 1963, when Martin Luther King told the world his dream\textsuperscript{17}, 91 percent of America could have tuned in (Wade, 2011).

Figure 1.1 (from Wade, 2001)

\textsuperscript{13} 1954 Public school segregation violates the equal protection clause of the 14th Amendment and in 1955 orders that desegregation proceed "with all deliberate speed."
\textsuperscript{14} Year long boycott of city busses that would show the power of non-violent social movement on a massive scale.
\textsuperscript{15} An oath for a police officer is to uphold the law regardless of race, creed, or color. For news reporters it is reporting facts and telling the truth about what truly happened at an event regardless of the race of parties involved in a story.
\textsuperscript{16} Emmett Till was a fourteen-year-old black schoolboy, who was visiting relatives in Mississippi. Till was brutally beaten and shot because he had flirted with a white shopkeeper. His body was later found in the Tallahatchie River with a barbwire around his neck. His body was shipped back home to Chicago, where it was displayed in an open coffin for four days. More than a hundred thousand blacks stood in line to view his body.
\textsuperscript{17} August 28\textsuperscript{th}, 1963 at the Lincoln Memorial in Washington D.C., Martin Luther King delivers his “I Have a Dream” speech calling for racial equality and an end to discrimination.
That 9 out 10 Americans were able to watch the pivotal movement of the Civil Rights Movement on their home television illustrates the potential power of the media to influence change and create awareness in the public. According to Wade (2001), the media frequently covered the protests of the Civil Rights Movement positively, while the backlash was undeniably horrific. So Americans sitting at home watching the TV could be simultaneously inspired by the activists and horrified by the establishment.

Another historical social movement with a major impact and relationship with the traditional media came with the public outcry to end the Vietnam War. Protests against the USA’s war in Vietnam were both products and catalysts of emerging student radicalism, which was linked to a more diffuse “counterculture” of “sex, drugs and rock n roll” and a rejection of parent’s commitments to work and consumerism (West, 2004). This turning point in the favor to be completely against the Vietnam War would lead to a variety of clashes with authority, much of which were strewn across national news headlines. As television news became more and more popular throughout the turbulent years of the Vietnam War era\textsuperscript{18}, television coverage also brought images of the war home to the American public, yet, as pointed out by McLaughlin (1997, part I), these images were rarely a true reflection of the war itself. The social movements, and the eventual withdrawal of American troops from Vietnam, were indeed tied to the media however, as the eventually intensely negative media coverage of the war influenced both politicians and the public. With the massive loss of public support for

\begin{table}[h]
\centering
\begin{tabular}{|c|c|c|c|c|c|}
\hline
Year & Number of TV Households & % of American Homes with TV & \hline
1950 & 3,880,000 & 9.0 & \hline
1951 & 10,320,000 & 23.5 & \hline
1952 & 15,300,000 & 34.2 & \hline
1953 & 20,400,000 & 44.7 & \hline
1954 & 26,000,000 & 55.7 & \hline
1955 & 30,700,000 & 64.5 & \hline
1956 & 34,900,000 & 71.8 & \hline
1957 & 39,900,000 & 78.6 & \hline
1958 & 41,920,000 & 83.2 & \hline
1959 & 43,950,000 & 85.9 & \hline
1960 & 45,750,000 & 87.1 & \hline
1961 & 47,200,000 & 88.8 & \hline
1962 & 48,855,000 & 90.0 & \hline
1963 & 50,300,000 & 91.3 & \hline
\hline
\end{tabular}
\end{table}

\textsuperscript{18} Early 1960s-1975
the war, politicians initiated withdrawal policies to get the United States Army out of Vietnam and its surrounding areas (ibid, part II).

The Civil Rights Movement and the Vietnam War are only two examples of major social movements in the United States that were heavily impacted by the coverage of traditional media sources. By looking at the examples of The Vietnam War and the Civil Rights movement it is clear that America has been tied to its national news via television and press media when dealing with the coverage of social movements and that these media had a great effect on their audiences. Today, the technology and way in which citizens access their news media has changed vastly – yet there is no doubt that the American public still looks to traditional media as an important source of information and that these are valuable for social movements in order to get messages across. Moving on to the context of Occupy Wall Street, I will discuss further the public’s willingness to accept what was - or in some cases was not - being shown to them via traditional media, and how the Internet and social media played a role here.

2.3 Occupy Wall Street

On September 17th, 2011 the social movement Occupy Wall Street began – this became the core of a movement that would lead to the ubiquitous term ‘Occupy’ – a rallying call against corporate greed, economic disparity, and political corruption (and in latter stages police brutality). The movement was picked up by other cities across America i.e. Occupy Oakland, Occupy Chicago and later globally i.e. Occupy London, Occupy Rome. The movement’s encampment was head quartered in Zuccotti Park outside of the world’s financial capital and New York Stock Exchange, both located around Wall Street in New York City. A location which has disastrously become synonymous with capitalist greed; the home to many Fortune 500 companies that played a part in wreaking havoc on the American and global financial systems in 2009. The past few years have unfortunately become a dark period in the country’s history, one that has been heralded as the worst financial crisis since the time of the

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19 Occupy will also be used as short hand during the report in place of constantly referencing the entire title of the movement: Occupy Wall Street. Occupy overall as a social movement and message should be understood as it is described here.

20 Three top economists agree 2009 worst financial crisis since great depression; risks increase if right steps are not taken. (February 29, 2009). Reuters. Retrieved 2012-03-27
Great Depression\textsuperscript{21}. This was not the future that many envisioned back in 2008 when President Barack Obama took office and led a campaign that heralded slogans such as ‘Change’ and ‘Yes, we can!’ As of 2011 that promised change did not appear to have come, which had led to disappointment and frustration among some citizen groups. Occupy Wall Street was first initiated by a Canadian activist group \textit{Adbusters}, and the two prominent figures of the group Kale Lasn\textsuperscript{22} and Micah White\textsuperscript{23}. \textit{Adbusters} had come up with the idea of an encampment, the date the initial occupation would start, and the name of the protest\textsuperscript{24}. Ideas and planning began around June 2011, and then came to fruition with the encampment a few months later.

The reasons behind Occupy Wall Street are numerous and the movement’s agenda has sometimes been regarded as ill defined (see Klein, 2011), but there are some salient points in the messages of the social movement that people rallied behind. Citizens had become fed up with social and economic inequality and the relationship between the powerful corporations and government, and their ability to sway political agenda. This sentiment is illustrated in the title that many of the activists took to describe themselves as a group: “We are the 99%”. What it stands for is that the majority of the American populous, 99% of it, is on the back end of the economic growth ladder and is taxed unjustly comparatively to the upper echelons of society or the other 1% of society (ibid, 2011). The income inequality and distribution of wealth was a salient point that the activists would make for their rallying call, for since the financial collapse they had yet to see any real progress or ‘change’ occur to make their lives and quality of life any better.

Occupy was about direct action, camping outside of the worlds financial capital, a place that truly represents American and global capitalism. It is also home to many of the big banks that were major factors in the global financial crisis such as Goldman Sachs and J.P. Morgan Chase\textsuperscript{25}. It was a strong symbolic statement, as was put on display by the \textit{Adbusters} poster for the commencement of Occupy Wall Street on September 17th:

\begin{itemize}
\item Wall Street crashes in 1929 and sets off a worldwide economic depression.
\item Founder of \textit{Adbusters} Media Foundation
\item Adbuster’s senior editor
\item Financial institutions used their power to swallow up more and more of the wealth of society while the working class is plunged into economic and social disaster. Goldman Sachs announced that it made a record $3.1 billion in profits in the last quarter. It is scheduled to fork out $5.3 billion in bonuses to
\end{itemize}
The symbolism here is prolific – the Bull is a symbol for the capitalist market and it is located outside of the New York Stock Exchange down on Wall Street – where as the ballerina atop is symbolizing a state of peace with the a pack of activists shrouded in smoke ready to uphold their encampment behind her should their attempt at a peaceful protest be challenged.

From the encampments followed the massive march on Times Square that brought together about 6,000 people for a peaceful protest with the Occupy slogan and the ‘We are the 99%’ message in tow. The Occupy movement had many complexities to its inner workings and how it organized itself internally, aiming to have many anarchist traits such as horizontal-communication and no real leader or spokesperson. The overall message was dissatisfaction its team of bankers. (New York Times, Oct. 16) J.P. Morgan Chase had third-quarter profits of $3.6 billion, seven times higher than the previous year. (AFP, Oct. 14).

26 http://www.crainsnewyork.com/article/20111017/ECONOMY/111019895
with the government, the elite, and the power of corporations whom have such a powerful grip over legislation and the livelihood of those belonging to the ‘99%’.

Description of the inner workings of how the set up the website OccupWallStreet.org and how David Graeber a 50-yer old professor from the University of London would organize the New York General Assembly to be the voice for Occupy Wall Street are important but take away from my own aim within this report. This purpose here was to explain why Occupy began and the reason behind it – other inner workings and the relationship to social media and its presence at social media as well as how the traditional media picked up on the story will come about in the analysis of this report. The fact remains, Occupy was a non-violent social movement that was set up outside the financial capital of America, if not the world, with voices of people wanting their government and others around the world to hear the outcry - that they had enough injustice and inequality in a country that was supposed to be democratic and be about the pursuit of life, liberty, and happiness.

As this report will further analyze - the communication tools for a majority of the activists at Occupy Wall Street as well as those who began to champion the messages of the social movement were poured out via social media platforms. In the statistics graphic below you will notice the surge in visits starting with the initial occupation on September 17th:

![Fig 1.3](see appendix)

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In this graph you will see analytics of 1,000 days of global mentions for Occupy Wall Street, the highest tally reaching 55,663 Tweets on November 15th 2011, which was the day that the New York Police Department came and removed all of the activists and protesters from Zuccotti Park and the surrounding streets.

What became of note here in relation to my research analysis was that even by looking at these two graphics the public themselves started slowly on the uptake of the messages presented on the Internet and social media. The surge in Tweeting about Occupy Wall Street as well as visiting the homepage was intertwined with the public’s awareness and finding out about the social movement. The heightened spikes are also similar to the reaction of traditional media news sources which will come in latter chapters of the report.
3. Theoretical framework

The theoretical framework for this report was based on different theory that offered great avenue for my own analytical research and continued theoretical discussion. Thus the use of the public sphere, mediapolis and it place with new media is used as a departure point. Followed by theory on the relationship between media and social movement, specifically why social movements need the media. Lastly relating the context of social movement to an understanding of it as a media event.

3.1 The Public Sphere, Mediapolis, and New Media

Thinking about social movements and the media it is worthwhile to start by briefly characterizing the highly influential theory of the public sphere, as developed by Jürgen Habermas in *The Structural Transformations of the Public Sphere* (1962). He emphasizes the public sphere as ‘a realm of our social life in which something approaching a public opinion can be formed’ (ibid: 49), neither institutionally controlled nor dominated by private interests, as a necessary requirement for a well-functioning democracy. According to Habermas the public sphere also relies on rational and critical discussion between private individuals on public matters, to which access is guaranteed to all citizens. While Habermas’ historical claims of the bourgeois public sphere have been criticized (see Calhoun, 1992 and Couldry et. al. in Butsch, 2007, p. 28-42), we could today think of the media as providing the primary spaces for such discussion (Butsch, 2007). Involvement and participation in the public sphere has been changing throughout history, with many of the changes coinciding with the growth of technology and its subsequent affects on our media. From newspapers, radio, television, and the Internet: all manipulated the abilities of citizens’ engagement in the public sphere on different communicative levels (ibid).

Discussing the mediated public sphere, Roger Silverstone (2007, p. 31) describes an accompanying term, mediapolis: “The mediated public sphere where contemporary political life increasingly finds its place, both at national and global levels, and where the materiality of the world is constructed through (principally) electronically communicated public speech and action.” As the public sphere has changed in the decades since Habermas coined the phrase it has certainly come to a point in our modern culture that is overwhelmingly electronic indeed,
but now even 5 years passed Silverstone’s theory with the surge of technologies growth, the world has become a digital. Thus the relevance, or rather the significance, of our life in the mediapolis is digitized – and the platform in which people are currently experiencing a majority of their public sphere is via social media and their digital devices.

Further, Silverstone (2007) theorizes that the public is an aspect of what it means to be human, because people can only experience meaning in relation to others. We need insights that enable us to imagine what it would be like to be in someone else’s place, he argues: in other words, “we need a ‘media polis’ – a space in which people who come from differing places within the plural world can make an appearance to one another.” This will be substantiated within the analysis of this report and the Occupy Wall Street movement. As it was a movement that took place in New York yet through social media a global audience could bear witness, and many of those audiences would also be drawn to similar public opinions in their own socio-political contexts.

Discussing the mediated public sphere in relation to the expansion of digital media and especially the rise of the Internet, several scholars have considered these developments as potentially rejuvenating the public sphere, providing access to widespread information for interaction and public debate (see Nightingale, 2011). With the spread of social media such hopes have been further exemplified by Malcolm Gladwell (2010) he argues that social media are contributing to upend traditional relationship between political authorities and the popular, making it easier for the powerless to collaborate, coordinate, and give voice to their concerns. John Baglow (2011, p.2) also pointed out that “the new technologies…are egalitarian, instant, uncircumscribed, freely collective (one can opt in or opt out at any time), anonymous, and nonlinear – and hence deeply subversive.” Lastly Butsch (2007, p.162) clearly states his position on new media:

New media are interactive, conflating the information supply and conversation of this old conception and relocating both in a simultaneous virtual space. They disaggregate audiences, integrate media use into everyday life, and reconceive users’ relation to media…they share a digital foundation that has enabled rapid convergence of video and audio technologies…{new media} it has dissolved the dichotomy between public and private space, a social distinction underlying traditional concepts of public spheres…Today everyday life is immersed in media. Whatever we are doing some form of media is present…the interactive capacities of new media have been hailed as the basis for a new form of public sphere.
Thus the sphere has changed dramatically when looking to the context of how our relationship with media, the growth of the social media platforms and technology we use, and our lives all now intertwine. Thus putting all of these factors into the contextually of Occupy Wall Street, a major historical social movement, it proved for a salient avenue of research.

3.2 Media and social movements

Moving forward from the theory behind the public sphere and mediapolis and how new media has reshaped our understandings of them I move the theoretical discussion to cover a further important stage for the building of this report, how media and social movements have been in relation to one another and there progression. In the opening of *Movements and Media as Interacting Systems* (Gamson & Wolfsfeld 1993, p. 115) they explain in simple terms the conversation had by both parties: “Send my message,” say the activists and “make me news,” say the journalists. This emphasizes the inter-reliance on account of both parties, but also the different needs and approaches had by social movements and media organizations. Looking at this description from the contemporary perspective there has been almost 20 years of growth in the interaction of our media and movements, as stated prior new media has changed this relationship to an unparalleled place in modern history with the technology and tools available. Thus, thinking about the nature of these transactions in the current context, with the implementation the social media platforms at the activists’ disposal arguably requires a more complex analysis.

Nevertheless, defining these issues further with the base understanding of the three major purposes listed by Gamson and Wolfsfeld (1993) on why social movements need the news media still appear relevant:

1. Mobilization
2. Validation
3. Scope Enlargement

Taking a look at these three purposes that Gamson & Wolfsfeld is helpful when attempting to explain in further detail the relationships fostered between traditional media and the activists

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29 It is fair to note here that their reference to news media will be used in the context of my usage of traditional media, as their work was written in 1993 I find it to be a fair switch in the terminology, where as if it had been a work more recent I would need to explain specifically which news media outlets they were referring to in the Web 2.0 generation, however as stated that is not the case.
of social movement. The mobilization of not only the participants themselves but of their message and what it is that the collective group is rising up against and in the case of an occupation or a march where it might be happening. Getting coverage via media, especially when traditional media was the only source, is seen as validating to the point that although there might be misrepresentation or a framing of the message the coverage itself puts the spotlight on the social movement and gives it validation to the point that it is relevant enough for coverage by media then it must be doing something affective to be reported. That validation then will in turn lead to a scope enlargement by the public sphere because those unaware of the actions or perhaps reasons behind the movement will become aware naturally due to their consumption of media, which mentioned by Butsch (2007) in the case of new media, is now everywhere and surrounding us.

Expanding on the idea shared in Gamson & Wolfsfeld’s writing that movements, then, depend on the media to generate public sympathy for their challenge (1993, p.116). The dependence on traditional news media has subsided greatly as our technology and the emergence of the new media such as social media, blogs, and independent news organizations have emerged in large numbers. Exploring further, and to what extent, these characteristics that define our current public sphere have molded our existence and interaction with events appears a fruitful area for further study. The flipside of this point to be addressed is to what extent and how important is the social movement and an event like Occupy to the news copy of traditional media. Movement protesters tend to view mainstream media not as autonomous and neutral actors but as agents and handmaidens of dominant groups whom they are challenging (Gamson & Wolfsfeld, 1993, p. 119). There is not an escape from the traditional media entirely and may not be any time in the near future, they will be present regardless of feelings or opinions because they are stalwarts and will continue to have their readership and subscribers. The analysis of this report does ignore the fact that the power of traditional media is steadfast, thus with social movements occurring now and into the future the bond of coverage will not be severed but the methods of such coverage and other pathways are open and will be taken into account in this research.

Two hypotheses brought up by Gamson and Wolfsfeld (1993) are also points that will offer further avenues of analysis within my report:

1. The greater the resources, organization, professionalism, coordination, and strategic planning of a movement, the greater its media standing and the more prominent its preferred frame will be in media coverage of relevant events and issues (1993, p. 121).
2. The more the media actor emphasizes visual material in its news production; the more likely it is to produce action strategies that emphasize spectacle, drama, and confrontation (1993, p. 124).

The first is of interest to look at points specific to Occupy Wall Street – their media standing became so prominent that their message of ‘Occupy’ spread globally. How is it that other activists and the news outlets themselves champion the frame of the movements’ message, ‘Occupy’? Through analysis of the viewpoints of individuals I choose to use for this report such as modern activists, journalists, traditional activists, and law enforcement the reasons behind why Occupy gained such a prominent media standing could be elaborated upon.

The second hypotheses is also relevant in the case of Occupy and several other contemporary movements, where video and imagery that was showcased on various social media platforms in conjunction with modern digital tools such as smart phones that were used by protesters and thus made content from Wall Street available for mass global consumption. This theory of producing emphasis of visual material producing action and emphasizing the drama clearly rings out in the context of this report for as will later be discussed in the analysis it was viral video and photography that gained national and global media headlines. Justifying it as a requirement is an interesting debate, fact is you can bypass the point entirely. In the instance of drama and spectacle in the new media public sphere with smart phone technology everything will be shot and recorded by handfuls of those present. When it is on the scale of a social movement saying it is a guarantee almost seems an injustice to what really occurs, people will take pictures or video on a whim when normal things occur in their lives let alone something as grandiose as a protest or clash with authority.

While Gamson and Wolfsfeld emphasize a variety of ways in which social movement and media interlink and in the latter hypothesis make the point about how social movements adapt to the media through the provision of visuals, Michael Schudson (1989, p. 173) has similarly noted how:

… Social movements often act with the intention of making news, and so one might say that journalism indirectly manufactures events originating in these groups...they shape them, but they do not shape them just as they choose.

It can be argued, however, that social movements today do not need to act with a goal of making news headlines to the same extent, because the individuals around them, the technology, and social media tools will make it regardless of initial intentions. Popular social media platforms have the ability to provide a visual and auditory window into what is
occurring on a site of demonstration within the same hour of initiation. Schudson (ibid.) points out further that ‘Understanding how the institutions of and practices of news-making interact with 'events' should be a leading challenge for the sociology of news.’ This widens avenues of discussion towards my analysis behind the relationship of the social media and traditional media within the context of Occupy – the interaction between news-making practices and social movements has changed dramatically since his writing, the social movements and uprisings of the past year have solidified such a claim.\footnote{Trying to understand the social contexts in which these protesters exist allows for researchers to study how those social contexts might shape their technology use and perspectives. (Skinner, 2011)}

When discussing the relationship between social movements and the media it is important to also consider the movements’ own use of media, not only in terms of mainstream media outlets but in terms of what can be referred to as alternative media. John Downing (2001, p. xi) offers up this definition on the role of radical alternative media:

…to express opposition vertically from subordinate quarters directly at the power structure and against its behavior;" and "to build support, solidarity, and networking laterally against policies or even against the very survival of the power structure.

Within The Alternative Media Handbook (Coyer et. al., 2007) the work by Dorothy Kidd in ‘The Global movement to transform communications’ recognized the role of alternative and community-based media in democratizing communications challenging the top-down or vertical nature of mainstream media and allowing more horizontal and reciprocal communications between citizens. This is highly relatable and of interest when referring to the methods employed by the protesters at Occupy who championed a horizontal and reciprocal communication system which will be analyzed in the relationship it held in that facet and the manner in which social media platforms operate. Thus with the relationship that is present within media and social movements, lastly it is conclusive to explain that the social movement is an event in itself and the very reason behind why it has any relationship with media coverage in any shape or form at all.

### 3.3 Social movements as media events

The final addition to theory used within this report was the social movement as a media event, thus interlinking with the first two theories of the public sphere-mediapolis and social
movements relationship to media. Journalists confront the unexpected, the dramatic, the unprecedented, even the bizarre. In fact, they very likely confront more of this 'event-driven' news than they did a generation ago (Lawrence, 2000, as cited in Schudson, 2003, p. 173). A definition offered up on media events by Daniel Dayan and Elihu Katz (1992, p.15):

During the liminal moments of {media events}, totality and simultaneity are unbound, organizers and broadcasters resonate together: competing channels merge into one; viewers present themselves at the same time and in every place. All eyes are fixed on the ceremonial centre, through which each nuclear cell is connected to all the rest. Social integration of the highest order is thus achieved via mass communication

Often such events portray an idealized version of society, reminding society of what it aspires to be rather than what it is the portrait must be authenticated by the public, for the elementary reason that otherwise it will not work (Dayan & Katz 1992, p. ix). A more recent reworking of the media event theory in the age of globalization was presented in Nick Couldry’s et. al. (2009) work:

Media events are certain situated, thickened, centering performances of mediated communication that are focused on a specific thematic core, across different media products and reach a wide and diverse multiplicity of audiences and participants.

This sits much better with the public sphere the world is experiencing now than the work of Dayan and Katz (1992) because Couldry et. al. is able to display a meaning that encompasses the social media platform (see products). The reach is also a key factor how media events now spread nationally and globally.

In her work on media times and media spaces, Wark (1994, p.265) writes “the time of everyday life takes its distance and insists on its own rhythms. These times may occasionally synchronize, but mostly they follow their own beat.” The media event that was Occupy Wall Street and its place in time certainly followed a unique drum, but it would be naïve to overlook the time frame in which it occurred. The Arab Spring, specifically the major protest to oust Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak that took place in Tahrir Square, was only a few months removed from the headlines of major American news corporations. In many cases, due to the Egyptian parliamentary elections, many story lines were ongoing that were of great interest to

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31 The most cited date for Occupy Wall Street is September 17th, 2011 at the privately owned Zuccotti Park, New York City.
the American government and their storied relationship with the country.\textsuperscript{32} Yet as Schudson (2003, p. 181) writes:

...it is increasingly true that event-driven news is important and that it can displace even the most carefully orchestrated institution-driven grabs for media attention.

Clarifying an event in our modern public sphere is further explained by Wark’s term “weird global media events.” (1994, p. 266):

They are events because they interrupt routine time. They are media events because they happen within a space and time saturated in media. They are global media events because they traverse borders and call a world into being. They are weird media events because each is singular and none conform to any predetermined narrative. They introduce a new quality of time.

Social movements are now shown as real time events to the world on the Internet and vastly through the abilities offered up by social media platform giants YouTube, Facebook, and Twitter. This is the media saturation experience today, the protesters ability to produce and release material in the exact moment it occurred with an audience that was not only watching locally and nationally but also globally. A new wave of social activism being presented live to the world calling for unification behind messages of outrage towards corporate greed and government inactivity to solve their problems, these narratives were unseen in this manner on this scale in history.

Anthropologist Marshall Sahlins has written in a different context that 'an event is not just a happening in the world; it is a relation between a certain happening and a given symbolic system' (Sahlins, 1985, p. 153, as cited in Schudson, 2003, p.186) This certainly speaks to the theoretical process I have approached in this report by not only examining the social movement of Occupy Wall Street as a happening but the relationship to the symbolic system of the public sphere we all live in, the relationships held by media and social movements themselves as well as the role that alternative media is now playing to the coverage of it. That all encompassed under the umbrella context of a capitalist and democratic America that saw it’s largest social movement occur in over 60 years.

\textsuperscript{32} Egyptians voted in three phases over a six-week period – November to January, to elect the 498 members of the People's Assembly. Ten further members are appointed by the ruling military. (see: http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-middle-east-16665748)
4. Material and Methods

This study has been conducted during the early months of 2012 both in Sweden and in my home of New York City. My initial considerations were to choose a scientific project that would be able to look at the relationship between social media and social movement within a context of a recent citizen uprising. Initially that desire was to look at what had happened in North Africa during late 2010 and 2011 and what became the Arab Spring. Due to the limitations of this report and my lack of knowledge specific to each part of the North African region it became an unmanageable task. I was able to return to New York City in the winter of 2011 and early 2012 so my strategic choices began to form up around the possibility of using Occupy Wall Street as my context for social movement within this report.

4.1 The research process

I was able to spend time with people who had been directly affected by Occupy Wall Street in many different facets. I conducted many informal personal interviews in order to gain background understanding about the movement and I gathered field notes to further understand people’s relationship with Occupy and how they had used social media as tool for information, communication and other purposes. My initial considerations were that to scientifically approach my research questions I could not only talk to family and friends who had been affected by Occupy or who backed the messages that it stood for. I needed to gather respondents who through qualitative analysis and interviewing I could get a perspective from different angles.

Thus my choices became clear: I wanted to speak with activists who had been at Occupy and been actively involved with the cause and seen with their own eyes what the social movement was about. To be able to ask them about how they had used social media as a tool specifically to the social movement of Occupy Wall Street. I wanted to interview individuals who had been involved with social movements in the past and had experienced what it was like to be involved with a social movement when only traditional media outlets were at their disposal. This also allowed an avenue of discussion about their thoughts on Occupy as a social movement in today’s society and how they themselves, if at all, were using social media as a tool for information, communication, or perhaps organization. As well as questioning their thoughts on how their peers, who were activists and participated in Occupy and other movements over the past decade, transitioned from traditional media to social media.
Thirdly I wanted to get a perspective of someone directly involved with journalism that was producing stories and information about Occupy Wall Street on location. How did they see Occupy as an unbiased reporter and writer, and how they themselves were using social media to gather information for their own work or for themselves personally with regards to the movement—whether or not they saw a benefit in the use of such tools. Lastly I thought it would be a mistake not to also interact with law enforcement, to give a view and opinion not only from an activist perspective but also from someone who was on the other side of the fence. Tasked with doing a job of serving and protecting the public regardless of what was happening around them politically and emotionally. What had an officer of the law thought about the social movement? How they themselves interacted with their social media platforms during the occupation of Zuccotti Park and the peaceful protests—and where the lines were drawn between professionally sanctioned humane actions and their own personal beliefs.

My methodological choices and initial interviews in New York City were not recorded but field notes were taken and became the initial ideas and outlines for the report. These notes would then cultivate research questions and be the driving force behind finding workable academic theories. As my research progressed I began conducting qualitative research interviews, using Interviews: Learning the craft of Qualitative Research Interviewing (Kvale et. al, 2009). I set up interviews to record and then transcribe once back in Sweden. Using Kvale’s twelve aspects of qualitative research interviews allowed me to go further in depth than my original conversations while in New York. The aspects outlined by Kvale et. al. (ibid, p.28) allowed me to turn conversation into qualitative interviews—some of the main aspects that guided this portion of my research were instrumental in its process. One example was the aspect of ‘meaning’—I continually found myself getting respondents to clarify their views and opinions on social movement as well as their experience with social media in relation to it. Challenging and directing questions to bring out poignant descriptiveness, specific to the context of Occupy Wall Street was the driving factor. Using the aspects outlined by Kvale, I also remained sensitive to the various interpersonal situations of my respondents, as each one was a unique individual with different experiences and views on the social movement as well as their relationship to the tools offered by social media platforms, and aimed at creating an overall positive and relaxed experience throughout the interview.

After learning the different aspects of they way to approach my interviewees I then learned about the seven stages of an interview inquiry, which I used to mold the analysis for this report (Kvale et. al., 2009, p. 102). Designing the interviews was a unique process as I
aimed to cater the guide to each role player. For example I wanted to focus my questions about the relationship between traditional media and social movements with the traditional activist who did much of his work in the 1990s and early 2000s – pre Web 2.0 era. Transcribing and analyzing the interviews were certainly the two stages that provided the most material as well as used material for the report, and it was while transcribing and analyzing the interview material that the results came to light.

4.2 The respondents

Overall I spoke with approximately 20 different individuals regarding Occupy Wall Street, for this report four interviews were selected, recorded, transcribed, and the material was produced in a qualitative analytical manner.

Within the analysis specifically however I was able to accomplish my goal of speaking to one role player from each area that I deemed most important to make a concrete research analysis of the relationship between social media and social movement within the chosen context. My interviewees were as follows:

The modern activist: I interviewed a native of New York City man who is 30 years old, a father of two, and earns his living as a personal trainer. He is also a part time researcher, as well as a prominent activist in the New York City community. He is active in local politics fighting for educational rights as well as many of the messages put forth during the Occupy Wall Street movement such as changing the power of corporations’ within the political arena and economic inequalities faced by the middle and lower classes. He was present during numerous days and nights down at Zuccotti Park and was present at the march on Brooklyn Bridge.

The traditional activist: A 36-year-old native of New Mexico in the south west of America. He is a teacher and is currently gaining a second degree in teaching. His history with social movements and activism dates back 15 years. He was very active in raising consciousness and attempting to raise dissent in America about their foreign policy in Iraq during the sanction years, before the second Iraq war. He was part of the movement that attempted to change American policy on Israel’s occupation of Palestine, other work included movements focused on environmental issues, anti-racism, unjust incarceration of activists groups such as the Black Panthers from the 1960s and activists from his own generation. He
also travelled to Palestine on two separate occasions to perform activist work for a total of 6 months.

The journalist: This interview was conducted with a 28 year old writer native to Philadelphia and a business reporter for *Time* magazine and *Time.com*. He is a reporter and acted in that capacity, as well as also performing specifics on Occupy Wall Street and the encampment of Zucotti Park as it pertained to the economic state of America. He also performed his own interviews and observations while assisting on a video documentary project on some of the activities occurring at Occupy Wall Street while attending journalism graduate school at New York University.

The police officer: This informant asked to remain anonymous and thus will be referred to simply as ‘the police officer’ in the analysis of the report. The officer is a veteran of the New York Police Department and is also a native to New York City. During Occupy Wall Street his duty as an officer had him operating in and around the areas of the financial district as well as in Zuccotti Park, and the officer was also present during the march onto the Brooklyn Bridge.

The respondents were recruited through the ‘snow-balling method’ (Kvale, 1996) in which the interview while moving through respondents is able to ask for suggestions on others who should be spoken too or other parties that could be worth pursuing in context of the research material. I experienced all of the respondents to be open with their responses and quite generous with their time, with the exception of the law enforcement officer who still at the time of writing this report was quite weary of allowing for their responses to be used, even after repeated gestures to assure their anonymity on my part. The scope of the material was what I had set out for as I was able to interview the parties I set out for – current activists using social media tools, traditional activists who had experience prior to Web 2.0 with social movements, a journalist who reported directly on site at Occupy Wall Street and inside Zuccotti park, and the law enforcement officer who on location at Occupy Wall Street providing his services.

4.3 The interviews and the analysis of data

The interviews themselves were all on average about an hour long, with some of them extending to an hour and a half in length. I found the hour mark to be sufficient time for all of the questions I had developed in my interview guides - which I tweaked to fit within each of
the respondents specific area of expertise within the social movement. The willingness to participate was outstanding on all parts. Initially this was the case even with the police officer however that soon changed when word got out amongst his peers at work that he had spoken about specifics regarding his role and his precincts role during Occupy Wall Street. At the time of finalizing my analysis however I was able to use the majority of information I had intended to but was forced to leave some details out as well as keep the officer anonymous throughout the report. I transcribed the interviews – after recording the Skype call via Audio Hijack Pro I then transferred the mp3 file into a program called ExpressScribe. This program then allowed me to slow down the rate of the respondents speech which made the transcriptions easier to type, where as originally I had began trying to transcribe word for word with the recording which I found to be quite difficult and I consider myself to be a proficient typist. During the Skype interviews I sometimes encountered a problem in which the informant had trouble hearing the initial questions, therefore I would have to stop the recording, re-ask the question, and then begin recording again. It was more of an annoyance but thankfully with the Audio Hijack Pro recording program you are able to pause and record quite fluidly.

4.4 Ethics

When speaking to the respondents I practiced the principle of ‘informed consent’ (see Kvale, 2007), providing full information about my study and how the results would be treated before proceeding with the interview. The ethical considerations for the report came up specifically with the officer from the New York Police Department. All other respondents when asked about their feelings on confidentiality and remaining anonymous were comfortable being named in the report. When dealing with an officer of the law and asking opinions to a controversial social movement such as Occupy Wall Street it was understood why they would want to remain anonymous and I am thankful that in the end I was able to use the majority of the interview for my analysis.

4.5 Reflections on the method

The limitations I experienced were time and of course I would have like to have a plethora of choices from each of my chosen interview parties. This specifically was the case for law enforcement, which I found from the interview I did to have some of the most interesting view
points on how they used social media tools in conjunction with not only the movement of Occupy Wall Street, but their duties as an enforcer of the law as well as their use of it in their personal daily life. More often then not when I tried to seek contact with police officers I had little or no prior relationship with I was turned away.

The problems I faced with access were unfortunately met after I had returned from New York City thus creating an issue in getting all of the interviews with all of the respondents I initially wanted at the early stages of this report. Thus due to time constraints and scheduling opportunities I was only able to secure and do justified qualitative analysis on my four respondents, I was lucky enough that I was able to cover all of the view points that I did set out for however. I do hope that the research and analysis of this report and the context matter of Occupy Wall Street can contribute to further understanding of the relationship between social media and social movement. It is a small-scale qualitative study and is not intended for generalization, yet with an extended time frame and a clearer grasp on the end results I was aiming for at an earlier date further analysis could have been provided.

The material of the qualitative research interviews and the methods I employed are justified by the responses and pages of transcribed material they produced for the analysis of my research questions and the objective of the thesis which was to examine closer the relationship of social media tools and the social movement contextualized within Occupy Wall Street. I was able to reflectively use all of the information and interviews I conducted within the blend of my analysis and the theory I choose for points of departure in the discourse of the report. However, it should be noted that this is an exploratory and very small-scale case study, intended to shed some light at the issues at hand from the perspective of the respondents, but not for the results to be generalized to a wider population.
5. Results and Analysis

In the analysis of this report I will present and analyze the results from the interviews. Firstly, I will look at the response to how social media was perceived and used as a tool in a social movement within the context of Occupy Wall Street, and secondly, how participants involved in various capacities with the social movement understood information received through social media platforms in contrast to news from traditional media sources. Lastly, I will expand on what social media meant for Occupy as a mediatized event and a social movement whose message became a global phenomenon. Analyzing my empirical material as well as developing further the theoretical discussion through the gathered qualitative research interviews will achieve these goals.

5.1 Finding out information on the Occupy movement

To begin the analysis process of Occupy Wall Street and its relationship with social media it was important to research the ways in which role players within the social movement found out about the occupation that was initiated at Zuccotti Park on September 17th, 2011. I was not in America at the time of the initial occupation, I was curious to research the methods in which my interviewees both on the local level and national scene were finding out about the Occupy movement. From the modern and traditional activists, to the journalist, as well as the law enforcement officer; each individual provided various opinions and experiences in their information gathering processes.

The most active and prominent role player directly involved on site at Occupy Wall Street that I interviewed was the modern activist33. His involvement is primarily with activists’ organizations in New York City as well as researching historical social movements and current progressions in the political and geo-political arenas. He first learned about Occupy Wall Street early in September from blog posts that were circulating on the Internet, sites that are dedicated to political activism which he checks on a regular basis. Initially the posts he saw did not come as a major surprise because as he explained “If you dedicate yourself to politics, world events, and social movements there are always going to be groups online and on social media sites that will be advocating movements, protest, anarchy, and a promise of something

33 What is mean by ‘modern’ activist is that he was involved directly at Occupy Wall Street, was present during many days and rallies of the social movement, and was also participating in social activism before Occupy began. He was born in the 1980’s thus making him more of a modern day activist as he was not participating much earlier than 2006.
better for the future.” The fact is that much of what is talked about and prophesized never comes to fruition. This trend has really taken off over the past few years as people have become more involved with social media platforms and instead of simply being consumers of media on the Internet and watching YouTube videos or reading tweets – people are actively trying to become more involved according to the modern activist. It is this desire of becoming more involved and becoming a participant that laid the foundation in the early days of the Occupy movement, it was a slow build up, but a strong base was established from the inception.

The first few days of the social movement weren’t very prophetic to the modern activist in terms of a social movement that was going to become as substantial and large as it did, he explained:

…When I started seeing the occupation that lasted a few days and then a week it became something different because people weren’t leaving and that really was the difference between [...] attempts at social revolution that people have tried and something that was really going to catch attention. As I started [...] keeping track of it on the main Occupy Wall Street web site you could see a live (video) stream on there, you could get updates via Facebook and Twitter you got a sense that this was going to be a very long term and indefinite situation the longer it went.

This is certainly where the movement started taking shape as a media event, recalling Couldry’s (2009) definition: media events cross different media products and reach a wide and diverse multiplicity of audiences and participants. The live video stream, the setting up of the web site by Adbusters, and the growth of Occupy posts on Facebook as well as Twitter with #Occupy hash tags began to grow rapidly after the initial occupation began. Similarly to what the modern activist experienced - when I asked the traditional activist whose experience with social movements hailed from a more traditional-media era (1990s), he recounted how he learned the initial information about what was becoming Occupy Wall Street:

I have always kept up with corporate and mainstream media because I think it is a duty for somebody who has undertaken the commitments I have, or care about the things I do [...] yet I was aware that plans were being put in motion for Occupy back in August of 2011. Because along with following traditional media sources such as CNN, or the New York Times, I also check out Adbusters as well as Democracy Now weekly, if not daily, to keep up with what is going on within the activist community, and I look to

34 http://occupywallst.org/
35 The meaning behind ‘traditional activist’ is that they had experience with political activism and other social movements prior to the Web 2.0 era and the advent of social media platforms.
36 http://www.democracynow.org/ - A Daily Independent Global News Hour
Democracy Now for news that is not corporately backed and tends not to have a political agenda with its news coverage.

This point made was a like to that of the modern activist; you have two respondents who were engaged with political and social activism having knowledge about Occupy before the actual date of the encampment being set up in Zuccotti Park. Granted the traditional activist does not mention that social media was one of the tools he specifically used for finding out about Occupy Wall Street, but he did have strong opinions on its role in such a capacity, “I grew up before the technology boom. It stuns me everyday, it is an amazing thing to see the redistribution of intellectual power [...] all over the world as well as the ease with which we can now get information globally and instantly via Twitter and Facebook.” Although his two primary sources of information on Occupy weren’t social media platforms they were both online news sources, which was interesting to note in relation to the further analysis of the stance of traditional media versus social media and the coverage of social movements.

Taking this analysis toward the journalists’ point of view he explained his experience in finding out about the early stages of the occupation and how he began to follow it:

Social media made it very easy to find out what was going on. Once I heard the initial rumblings and talk in the news room, you could simply find who would be good to follow (on Twitter) by searching a few key words like ‘Occupy’ or ‘Zuccotti Park’. You could find out who was already reporting and who was best to follow {fellow journalists he knew professionally or knew of}, maybe it {the occupation} was really going on. I did some reporting on the culture guilds at Occupy Wall Street, a lot of events were being held– square dancing; drum circles, the general assembly and different sorts of communal events. If you follow{ed} the right people on Twitter you would know when something was happening and you could go down and check it out for yourself [...] it helped freelance journalists to have the same sort of access as a credited journalist might have or an organization who might be covering the event - which was huge in terms of reporting the movement at the start, if I had to put a date on it, I would say the third week of September.

Here we see social media being a catalyst to the initial information flow in a reporting capacity for Occupy Wall Street in the early stages. It is interesting how other ‘events’ within the actual social movement began to attract and draw people down to the area. The fact that the journalist used the Twitter accounts of fellow journalists and news reporters he respected to
find out whether a story was credible and if they themselves should be reporting it was fascinating. The method itself is such a historical change in terms of reporting; journalists would oft have to go and investigate a story on their own and gather information by using sources known to them prior. This style of reporting by the journalist allows for him to seek out whom he considers credible news reporters on a public social media forum and go with a story or a lead if it pertains to his own duties. The interpretation of his statement here is that with the amount of access today’s public is now offered locating news sources that one finds believable may lead to a new genre of news reporting, one that is quick and reliable in the users’ eyes. In terms of major newsbreak one wouldn’t have to wait for the morning edition of the newspaper or news broadcast – they can simply look to a social media account of a fellow journalist or reputable news agency and quickly assess a stories credibility and relevance.

Lastly I spoke with the police officer and the method in which they found out information on Occupy Wall Street and to what affect social media was a factor:

I usually check my Facebook in the morning before work and in the evening, I don’t own an IPhone so I don’t access it while I’m on duty or lunch. I would say somewhere around the second week of September I saw a few posts coming up in my news feed that pertained to ‘Occupy’ but the majority of my information and details about what was occurring day to day came from my roll call at work. {Asked to describe roll call} That is when the commanding officer will give a detailed account about anything that has occurred in our precincts area of duty over the past 24 hours. As we are responsible for the areas around Wall Street including Zuccotti Park as September 17th grew near we {fellow officers} were all aware of what was taking place […] and then of course I could see it for myself while I was on duty, but it wasn’t until the 17th and the occupation began that I fully understood how serious the situation was becoming.

In regards to the first part of their answer it was clear they were active on social media and received some pieces of information from their personal news feed, but it was certainly not the tool that they used primarily which alerted them to the Occupy movement. It is understood that due to the line of work and duties as an officer of the law in the specific area surrounding Wall Street they had a first hand account and observation of the progression from the 17th of September onward. The way in which someone may be able to interact with or on social media platforms can certainly be affected by their profession – it seems this was most poignant for the police officer and the journalist. It was also clear from my interviews that both the modern and traditional activists drew lines as far as using social media for information gathering versus voicing their political opinions, yet understood why many in the public were
inclined to use Facebook and Twitter as forums to share their thoughts and feelings surrounding what was happening during Occupy Wall Street.

5.2 Communication at Occupy Wall Street

The Occupy Wall Street social movements initially based much of its ideals and tactics to that of anarchists, and recall that *Adbusters* is an anarchist publication itself. The interview with the modern activist interviewee provided insight into the organization of Occupy and its methods of communication, and how its traits were closely related to the social media tools that they sourced throughout the movement.

The word anarchy itself means a state of disorder, but learning further about anarchist movements and the way that Occupy set up their communication and organizational tactics it was from disorderly. As the movement formed its base at Zuccotti Park collective decisions in the form of a general assembly and working groups focusing on basic needs became the norm of what was occurring daily and each facet was consistently being bolstered. The benefit to the Occupy movement was that veteran protesters and anarchists know how to organize and how to keep people united. One example of this community, the modern activist explained, a soup kitchen was set up giving out food for free, “a hallmark of anarchist gatherings, as well as the collective space and sleeping all together. It was very reflective of them but it [eventually] became more than just ‘anarchism’ down at Wall Street.” The Occupy movement used its online homepage and Facebook page to announce what was needed at the park: small items such as rain tarps and reading material, and more necessary ones such as food, water, and medical supplies.

Reform of dominant media often takes the form of trying to create spaces in which new voice can be seen and heard (Kidd, 2007, p. 238). Initially this space was created at Zuccotti Park by the groups of activists who arrived on the eve of September 17th. As the public began to hear about what was happening via their social media platforms they started to go and see it for themselves. Akin to what the journalist mentioned in his following members of the press on Twitter to learn when activities or town halls where scheduled and to be present for such events. The public was finding out about why the occupation was happening and what were some of the reasons this movement was taking place. This eventually lead to people from all social classes going through their own political evolution as they arrived, the modern activist explained further:
Whether it was at the park speaking with people or on the Internet through Facebook and Twitter [...] OWS was the background of all conversation - but then they were able to really develop their own political positions a lot clearer. People who were typically A-political they knew there was something wrong with the American political system, they knew there was a lot of greed on Wall Street, [...] as they got more involved speaking at Wall Street and then in their free time, {not everyone was camping} they were debating on Facebook they were reading stories. Occupy really brought the spotlight to a lot of the political philosophies that people had ignored for many years. They had been around for a long time, people have been protesting against corporate greed since Seattle in 199937 fairly extensively, but people generally disagreed with them {the activists} but the economic collapse in 200838 and beyond really made this conversation a lot more pertinent for people, and having a tool like social media allowed for their voices to be heard.

It was this process that led to Occupy Wall Street’s rallying call in terms of their overall message and inclusive nature of all social classes. The modern activists and journalist told of how they saw mothers, college students, blue collar workers, veterans of Iraq and Afghanistan, and unemployed middle class workers – the self proclaimed ‘99%’. All types and all walks of life from places far from New York City came out to show their dissatisfaction of the current state of the American nation as well as their solidarity. The modern activist explained the scene further “It was an open ended social movement; you could come in and make your point, it was inclusive of everyone. Occupy unlike other political movements or activists groups wanted you to come and join them on your own terms not theirs.” Members of the public, those on location, experienced what was happening - they then communicated and displayed their photos and video of their experiences via their accounts on social media platforms, this information spread through their networks of friends, family, and colleagues.

Dorothy Kidd explained (2007, p. 240) that the primary activity of alternative media activists is to construct communications spaces, which demonstrate what democratic media might look like with alternative content, modes of operation and overall philosophy. Social media platforms provided a place for exactly that. What Occupy was aiming to create was an open communication system where all could voice their thoughts; this did become a problem as the movement grew because there began to be opinion on top of opinion and suggestion after suggestion at the general assemblies. An initial message that grew from the outrage over

37 At the end of November 1999, Seattle saw major governments meet at a WTO ministerial meeting to discuss various trading rules. Seattle also saw free speech cracked down on in the name of free trade. Enormous public protests ensued. There were many differences in the perspectives of developing and industrialized nations on the current reality of free trade and how it affected them.

38 2008 global financial crisis (see previous footnote)
corporate greed and economic inequality for the 99%; soon however there were also outcries about American military spending and environmental polices as well.

We still must be weary of what all of this meant in the context of America and its government, as well as its political positioning in terms of how social media was being used for communication and other purposes, because it was simply a tool. Downing (et. al.) wrote (2001, p.30):

…Public conversation within social movements is still shaped within the powerful impulses of capitalist economies, racialized social orders, and patriarchal cultures. Power, hegemony, and resistance are everywhere etched into and suffused within the institutions and practices of public dialogue and social movements, just as popular culture may be elitist, sexist, racist, and the rest.

In closing, as Occupy began to solidify itself as a social movement in September 2011 it became clear that social media platforms were very useful in organizing and communicating, but ultimately it was only a tool that set up for relationships to be created amongst those who wanted to get involved or interact with the movement. The modern activist exemplified this point:

Fifty years ago towns hall were more common, people would socialize more locally. Now days American society is more or less compartmentalized you […] go to work, you put your headphones on the way to work and on the subway you don’t make eye contact {speaking specifically to New York}. People are generally fragmented but as Occupy Wall Street developed we saw social media as something that could really unite us, organize us, and allow us to make contact rapidly and with ease. Even if you weren’t having a political conversation you could have a strategic conversation.

For this activist social media clearly was seen as helpful for the organization and social cohesion of the movement, and as something that transcended all social stratifications. The ability for activists and interested members of the public to organize and strategize was they key to the early success. It did become something that could not be ignored, not everyone shared the same opinion but the public was able to come together on the tactics behind the communication and organization for the movement that was something historically unseen before in an American social movement. Getting the amount of people Occupy did to show up in person and become part of history was groundbreaking; there was also the peaceful march in Times Square that brought out about 10,000 which was astounding in its own right. Downing (et. al., 2001, p. 31) digresses: constructive social change must be built on the basis of mass activity, of self-mobilization. Effective communication within and by social movements is, therefore, a vital necessity for self-mobilization to emerge and prosper. Both
communication within and by the movement courtesy of the social media platforms is now a real and tangible possibility, and looking forward something that will continue to be present because of the success it has had in these specific arenas, not to say the movement as a whole was a victory or any great change has come which will be expanded in the conclusion – but too look at the matters of communication within and by a movement then via the tools of social media Occupy demonstrated a great prowess and diligence in exuding the potential for such traits.

In researching the methods of communication that were bolstered by social media I questioned what communication tactics were without a tool such as social media in previous social movements in America, the traditional activist spoke on his experience:

…Were you to remove social media from the {social movement} you would instantly go back to my experience from the ‘90s. Making flyers and paying to have them printed in large quantities […] passing them out and putting them on phone polls or bulletin boards, this is how communication of a social movements message worked. As well as organizing meetings with times, dates, and locations on each flyer. Who would waste there time with that now? With social media you don’t need to do that anymore. If you remove social media that is logically what we would go back to. You would have the hardcore activists doing things, which is what you’ve always had. Instead people are getting to communicate with social media - they can bring into the fold a much larger group of people who maybe don’t self identify as activists and probably don’t have a history of activism.

The feelings shared here by the traditional activist certainly point to some of the communication values offered by social media tools in regards to social movement. It is true that moving backwards in terms of technology is not something any individual is ever comfortable with. The majority of us feel uneasy when we are detached from having our mobile device because we have become so dependent on its functions within our daily life, yet there was a time, not even more than 10 years when there was not such a reliance on mobile communications – and we still managed to survive and relay messages, make appointments, and organize. The comfort level that one becomes accustomed to has its positive and negative traits and perhaps this will come out further as time goes on into the next decade of the millennium. Clearly the benefit in the case of using social media to communicate about a social movement on a massive scale has certainly had its benefits though in making it simpler and faster and with a wider audience base.
The journalist shared his opinion on the matter and thought it was almost too much of a coincidence in the context of Occupy Wall Street how their communication tactics mirrored that of what can is offered by social media platforms:

The youth of this generation, who grew up with technology, their lives are engrained in technology. So much of our lives are lived virtually it is more than a tool it is a medium in how we live and communicate with one another. How many of your relationships remain through social, media, how many people would you not be in touch with if not for social media? I don’t think Occupy Wall Street could have happened without social media. The way each are structured - it is too similar to be a coincidence it just was timing, both occurring at peaks {social medias accessibility and occupy happening when America is in a state of financial and political despair}. It is amazing how Occupy completely avoided hierarchy, major social movements in the past have a head and control think Martin Luther King Jr. for The Civil Rights for example, but nobody has lived up to their ideals {at Occupy}. You could not have had the communication for this social movement without social media but also not without the movement of Occupy itself.

The point here certainly speaks directly to the public sphere in which we are currently living, it is the mediapolis - one of social media platforms and mobile technology abound. The communication of social movements can certainly to a notable degree take place on those platforms. Society as a whole now is communicating at an extremely high level on social media, the respondents have exemplified the communication via their devices and chosen platforms like Facebook and Twitter. Looking at the public sphere it is also a fact that outside of the context of social movements and Occupy, social media platforms have become a medium of choice for communication overall as Mark Sedra (2011, p.1) writes:

There are more than 500 million Facebook and 200 million Twitter members in the world today, and the number is growing, particularly in the developing world. In fact, social networking is the Web communication medium of choice in the developing world, with those who are wired typically spending more time on social networking sites than e-mail.

Our communication has become shorter and more rapid, allowing for a multitude of messages and information to encircle us daily. Social media tools are exemplifying this – between Facebook wall posts to the 140 character tweets. The flow of communication is certainly changing from its previous forms, the benefits on the social movement are clear: rapid communication and the ability to disseminate information to extremely large groups and members at a moments notice, that is certainly something to be marveled at and has now changed the particulars of social movements for the future.
5.3 Traditional Media and Social Media

Moving on from how the public and activists gathered information, communicated, and organized using social media tools at Occupy Wall Street, what must be discussed are the perspectives of the respondents on the information and stories distributed not only via social media platforms but also through traditional media. The analysis leads to what stories began to be picked up by traditional media, and I will reference one specific example in the *New York Times* that was touched on by all parties as the ignition of national coverage of the social movement. In the interviews I questioned the respondents about their various opinions as role players in the Occupy movement to define their understanding of the relationship and how media sources, both traditional and social, reported on the mediatized event. This analysis aims to also further expand on the movement’s growth through coverage of traditional and social media and its spread nationally and globally in the public sphere.

Information gathering about the social movement via social media platforms has been analyzed, as well as the informant’s interpretations on communication methods via those tools. The analysis now moves toward further research in conjunction to the Gamson and Wolfsfeld (1993) theory behind why social movements need the news media: validation, mobilization, and scope enlargement. Movement protesters tend to view mainstream media not as autonomous and neutral actors but as agents and handmaidens of dominant groups whom they are challenging (ibid, 1993). There is not an ‘escape’ from traditional media entirely and may not be any time in the near future. Traditional media platforms will be present regardless of public feelings or opinions; they are stalwarts in the industry and will continue to have their daily audiences and subscribers. Analyzing these points and examining deeper the intricacies in which Occupy Wall Street operated with social media as well as traditional media is the purpose of this section.

As aforementioned in the theory section of the report movement protesters tend to view mainstream media not as autonomous and neutral actors but as agents and handmaidens of dominant groups whom they are challenging (ibid, 1993). I gained further perspective on this through the respondents. In specific regard to what was occurring in the context of Occupy the modern activist explained:

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39 From this report’s perspective, news media being traditional forms of such – television, newspaper, and mainstream corporate media entities that provide information to the public.
People are aware that traditional media, specifically television, is corporately owned in the U.S. So whether or not NBC or CBS\textsuperscript{40} has direct Wall Street ties to public knowledge, a lot of them do, even the NYPD have those ties \{in economic terms\}. There was a certain sense of a class identity within corporations. Corporations couldn’t jump on an anti-corporate agenda and give the protesters and activists of Occupy complete free reign to say whatever they needed to say, they wouldn’t give them the coverage to sensationalize it. They couldn’t be completely open to the message that Occupy Wall Street stood for because it was anti-corporate. People understood that the media was not going to be telling the truth 100\% of the time so social media became our media. It became a public media it was a free open source media for the public to come in and produce their own material.

Expressed here there is clearly a suspicious stance towards the powers that be in traditional media, which are considered interlinked with the interests of large corporations who are very often large financial backers and supporters of the media entity itself. Whereas social media platforms are perceived as at the disposal of the activist and as thus more open to alternative views and opinions without having any boundaries that are present within the traditional media platforms such as newspaper, radio, and television. An interesting discussion in terms of the understanding of media ownership which I will expand upon, it is an important facet describing the growing relationship of traditional media and social media within the context of social movement to know that traditional media in such a context as Occupy Wall Street found itself in an interesting predicament trying to figure out how to report on a social movement that was against much of the corporate deception that financed their very institution.

Fewer and fewer corporations control more and more of the American news media (Bagdikian, 1997, cited in Curran & Gurevitch, 2005, p. 176). Major media conglomerates control more and more of the world’s media. Where corporations do not control media, they are generally voices of the state (Curran & Gurevitch, 2005, p. 176). This speaks to the fact and understanding that you would not find traditional media and the press wanting to pick up or even support Occupy Wall Street - which speaks out against the government’s economic policies as well as the role that corporate greed has been playing in American society for an extremely long time and came to a head in 2008 when the big banks such as AIG and JP Morgan where found to have been participating in illegal operations as well as outright lying to their own clients.

Curran and Gurevitch (2005, p. 177) further expand the theory:

A strictly economic explanation of news is very appealing to journalists themselves. In fact, it is in many respects as obvious to working journalists as to critical scholars, that

\textsuperscript{40} NBC and CBS are two of the biggest television corporations in the United States and are available in every state via affiliates in all the markets.
pleasing Wall Street investors rather than serving conscience is increasingly the task of publishers, that editors more than ever are seeking news that will sell...

To further analyze the point one would wonder then why in this scenario would people still look to traditional media for answers if they were going to be one sided, this is where I found a generational gap where the insight of the traditional activist I interviewed shed light on possible generational differences with regards to attitudes towards traditional and social media. The traditional activist who spent much of the 1990’s and 2000’s fighting against the second American invasion of Iraq as well as American foreign policy in the Palestine-Israel conflict, described his views on why traditional media remains a powerful media entity:

You can’t dismiss the remaining and continuing strength of the mainstream traditional media, most people not much older than myself {he is 36}, my parents and people from their age bracket and above are still very much plugged into traditional media as their primary and maybe only news source. They are not going to stop following traditional media because social media has become what it is, they don’t know how to use it anyway. You cannot underestimate how powerful corporate media still is, but now you do have a way to sidestep them to some extent with social media platforms. When we see the exponential growth of Internet and technology it is hard for me to imagine that it will be a lot different 10-20 years from now - you will really have probing legitimate new sources as part of American life. Seeds have been planted and they are starting to sprout up which is huge, it is not an immediate victory but it is a huge change within our society. I don’t think people our age 20 years from now will be tuning into CNN, BBC etc. as the older generations are now.

This is a fair point and certainly will lead to further research opportunities when the Web 2.0 generation has gone through further time in sourcing the majority of their news and information primarily off of their social media platforms. The generational difference in media use, specific to social movements, is that traditional media used to be the primary source for news stories before the advent of the Internet. Activists attempted to get their story either on television news broadcast or be covered by a popular publication if possible – whether it was a headline in a newspaper or an article in a magazine. Take for example what occurred during the last period of major social unrest in America, the modern activist shared the following explanation:

In the 1960s during {protests against Vietnam War} and Civil Rights marches, there was a lot of organizing in the streets but there was also something in the message that united people. They didn’t need to be on the Internet for hours everyday, they just knew they needed to be somewhere and do something and eventually it could not be overlooked by the media…it was ‘news worthy’. Occupy had that too, the message of
greed and corruption in the government was what resonated with people – yet the Occupy activists didn’t only have the traditional media as news producers.

It is a strong and valuable point made here in the overarching report because there is certainly a positive light shed towards the potentials of social media within modern day movements. Ignoring the fact that social movements have occurred in history, not only in America but also globally, before the technological media boom that our public sphere is immersed in 2012 would be a mistake and is the reason this passage of the respondent was poignant. Putting people in the streets and making a united stand is certainly no different now than it was in 1960, the same actions need to happen. The action of going out in public and making a statement, the major difference separating earlier social movements is that no longer are the police or media able to be sole controllers of public action or coverage of the activists messages as they once had been. Social media, wireless Internet connections and mobile technology have now brought real time un-edited reporting to the front line of all movements. Thus giving people more power and the public more choice in how stories are reported and how they are accessed and vice versa.

5.4 Reporting and framing Occupy Wall Street

One of the specific examples from the events during the social movement that was mentioned earlier was touched on by all of the interviewees as one of the incidents that took the social movement onto mainstream media headlines nationally and globally. It was the coverage of a peaceful march that took place during the early phases of Occupy Wall Street. This example is used in an effort moving towards concluding remarks and to blend factors that have been explained in the chapters leading up – use of social media as a tool for information, communication and organization, and it’s relationship with traditional media within the context of a social movement.

The march made headlines of traditional media outlets as well as going viral on social media platforms and was one of the major occurrences that garnered national and international exposure. It involved actions of police brutality as well as the use of some unfavorable police tactics such as kettling. The modern activist participated in the march and was at the site of the unlawful incidents. The law enforcement interviewee was also present and on duty at the location. Perspectives on the coverage of the march were offered up by the journalist who delves into media framing of the specific incident in collusion with Occupy Wall Street.
The incident, a catalyst for this research report, in deepening understanding behind the young relationship of traditional media and social media in the context of news coverage of a mediatized event. The Occupy Wall Street social movement peaceful march took place on the Brooklyn Bridge in downtown Manhattan. It is walking distance from Zucotti Park and does not take much time to reach by foot – the way the activists arrived en masse to demonstrate together.

The implementation of the theory of Skinner’s (2011) cognitive paradigm is used as a departure point for this section of analysis:

...How protest-related content is interpreted and evaluated by the individual, and would mostly likely be employed through surveying individuals to learn how they interpret and appraise information...to look at how activists, journalists, and other parties engage with the issues...how protesters utilize social media, and how they see each form of engagement as helping or hindering their work.

By analyzing the interviewees’ responses I was able to research and provide theoretical analysis within a specific incident that had coverage in traditional and social media that transpired during Occupy Wall Street.

The incident occurred late in the afternoon of Saturday October 1st, 2011 during a peaceful march up from the Occupy Wall Street base at Zuccotti Park. What occurred next was told to me in two different versions: by the modern activist who was present at the march as well and by one of the police officers on duty at the time. The fact agreed upon by both parties was that protesters arrived at the Brooklyn Bridge, some were able to stick to the pedestrian walkways on the edges of the bridge while some others leaked on to the roadway and into the traffic lanes. The situation that ensued ignited a large media response nationally as more than 700 protesters were arrested, altercations with police were video taped and the media soon went viral across various social media platforms. Most notably on YouTube for the video footage itself, but posts to Occupy Wall Street’s Facebook page as well as conversations on Twitter about the clash spread rapidly.

The police officer explained in our interview that he warned protesters not to enter the roadway as that by blocking on coming traffic they were in violation of the law:

I told the marchers to please use the pedestrian walkways and not come onto the road, and we were told via our commanding officers to arrest those that would not adhere to the warnings and anyone entering into the traffic lanes. It was mayhem, I had never experienced this sort of crowd before, I have been on duty at numerous demonstrations throughout New York City but I had never witnessed something of this size, there
were just people everywhere and they just kept coming and coming. You may have seen on the video clips that went up on YouTube [...] was mayhem, too many people entered the roadway and it became extremely unsafe {he would not answer questions about tactics} I can say that I acted accordingly with my commanding officers direction and did what was necessary to protect the marchers from being harmed.

Many activists involved in what had set out as a peaceful march found themselves on the bridge. It was clear from what the officer explained that many of the people who were on the bridge had entered on purpose in his opinion. This however was not the case when I spoke to the activist who was also present that October day at the Brooklyn Bridge.

In pursuing further to expand upon the theoretical points of the validation of a story as well as understanding what would come from the scope of one of the more dramatic, if not the most, dramatic moments of the Occupy Wall Street movement I gathered the alternate perspective during the march from the modern activist who was participating in the peaceful march, his thoughts as the event unfolded:

What I experienced from the police was that they were basically funneling us onto the part of the bridge where we weren’t supposed to be, where the cars lanes are, where it was illegal {to be}. They were steering people into that with their hands, motioning for people to keep moving – they weren’t telling us to take that bridge. ‘Are you telling us? Do you want us to go there?’ {he asked a police officer} - he wouldn’t answer me. He {police officer} said ‘What do you think?’ – that is not the type of answer you get from law enforcement, they were setting us up. I said it was an entrapment, there was no response, he knew what he was doing. He could have warned us about arrest but he didn’t – some people went anyway to make a point. That is when they got caught on the bridge and were encircled by police officers using the orange mesh netting to pen them in, that is known as kettling

So we have now the two sides of a story from different perspectives as to what occurred during the march. What does this all mean in the relationship of traditional media and social media? It is interesting to note the classic phrase that there are always two sides to any story and now in our digitized public sphere the amount of stories about certain events such as social movements is multiplied. The ability of everyday citizens to simply use their mobile devices which double as a video camera and in many societies will have Wi-Fi access it leads to an enormous amount of factual (video) evidence being produced in real time. This amount of information is often uncontrollable on a mass scale in America, thus a lot more truths are being found out and exploited, as was the case in this specific scenario on the bridge. The fact

41 A controversial tactic used by law enforcement, because it often entraps innocent bystanders. Police officers move to contain a crowd within a limited area. Protesters are left only one choice of exit, determined by the police, or are completely prevented from leaving at all.
remains that many people were arrested and the police’s tactics as well brutality inflicted on activists was caught on video and went viral via social media – thus beginning to stir much of the public outrage which would spread Occupy Wall Streets cause.

Looking at this incident from the perspective of its media coverage and how it was reported and framed became very interesting in the dichotomy of traditional versus social media. The article on the clash on the bridge presented by the *New York Times* first stated one cause and then changed it to another. This was what was intriguing about choosing this specific coverage by a traditional media source because it spoke exactly to the two separate accounts about the incident. Dissecting the different parts of this image from the *New York Times* one can understand how it soon became wildly circulated through social media platforms. It leads to further analysis of how Skinner’s cognitive paradigm (2011) ties in to how social media as a tool for social movement has become a new and affective way of championing the meaning behind a movement along with how protesters see each form of engagement as helping or hindering their work (ibid.).

![Figure 1.5](see appendix)

The modern activist explained the initial reaction and his thoughts on the production of this image via a traditional media source:
That picture went viral and that was something that was only possible with social media. We could have taken the picture and known the truth in our hearts but the paper, if social media wasn’t available the majority of the American public would have just assumed that the paper had no reason to lie and that was it. But that is where editing comes in, someone told that reporter to take the original wording out and change it. The Times or even more biased media organizations are ultimately going to be editing or framing stories to minimize the voice of a group that is representing dissent or possible seeds of social revolution.

There are multiple avenues that this media image from the New York Times opens up for analysis. The thoughts from a journalist who did not cover this story but was able to speak on his opinions behind event driven news versus institution driven news, two of the last major points that I want to discuss. Specifically in regards to this burgeoning and changing relationship that traditional media is facing with social media allowing for media coverage to be presented on its platforms without much regulation or the ability to stop it completely.

This coverage in The New York Times is a glaring example of how the traditional media is still framing media events in our society today. The image was able to go from hundreds of views to millions via social media, again being the prophetic tool that was wielded so strongly by the Occupy participants. The first point speaks to the experience of the modern activist I interviewed:

After allowing them onto the bridge, the police cut off and arrested dozens of Occupy Wall Street protesters.

Again depending on whether you were to side with what was told to me by the police officer or by the activist – the caption definitely puts a negative perspective on the tactics being used. Kettling is not illegal in America, but frowned upon. Granted the police officer I interviewed was performing his duty, my question of motive would thus rely on the higher power within the police force and the supervisors ordering the tactical strategy on the Brooklyn Bridge. When asked about the incident on the bridge in terms of this specific example the police officer did not have much to say except, “I was doing my job.” He was rather mum about the fact that a traditional media source had reported it one way and then changed its story and caused criticism by the public once the story went viral.

A short time after the initial story was produced we see the editorial change by the New York Times, this is made blatant in the overlapping neon pink text on the image “It only takes 20 minutes to shift the blame.” The second version of the story produced via the traditional media outlet was:
In a tense showdown over the East River, police arrested hundreds of Occupy Wall Street demonstrators after they marched onto the bridge's Brooklyn-bound roadway.

Now this reads that the Occupy activists were the ones to blame for the incident for marching onto the bridge, and to a reader of the news source it would go on to justify that questionable tactics and reaction of the New York Police Department. If the blogger who originally had caught this change had decided not to make it public it might have gone unfounded and without affect. Once the image began to be tweeted and spread via social media and went viral along with support from video clips taken at the bridge that day showing the police using questionable forceful tactics in their arrests the public outcry was not to be silenced and Occupy would have its moment that would be inundated by news media headlines and publications.

In the interview with the Time magazine journalist he made an interesting observation about the rise in media attention for something that is event driven as opposed to institution driven:

In many ways traditional media still is in control of the game {news} – you can’t pick and choose […] when Occupy Wall Street became as big as it did, but the incident on the {Brooklyn} bridge and the actions of the NYPD {law enforcement} could not be ignored, and that is obvious with the New York Times article. They {traditional media} don’t like to be scooped on a story, especially if there is something going on and people are becoming aware of it. Traditional news media feels if they didn’t pick it up first or hear about it initially it was can’t be very important. The attitude of my peers was ‘who are these people and what are they doing?’ {regarding Occupy activists} The timing was strange because the {bank} bailouts42 were in the past – they {journalists} think very highly of themselves and they couldn’t figure out ‘why now’. I think that was the reason why there was such a dismissive attitude towards Occupy at first. As people got down to Zuccotti and saw what was going on and the interesting messages being voiced a lot of the media attitudes began to change and they realized how interesting and relevant the movement was on a national scale, let alone soon to be International.

42 When the US government ’bailed out’ a lot of the major financial institutions that were responsible for much of the global economic crisis, nationally and globally since 2007-2008.
Learning from the previous sections in the report about how the traditional media does have an agenda and has to keep in mind that not all event driven news is going to be accepted by media agencies that are corporately backed is important. The fact is that had that story not been picked up by a blogger and then made viral via social media tools it would not have been such an integral example to my research on why the Occupy movement took off, and would not have done so in such an extreme fashion had it not been for social media tools.

Referring back to the theory of the weird global media event (Wark, 1994) Occupy Wall Street was singular and did not conform to any predetermined narrative. If this social movement can be hailed as, according to Adbusters editors Kalle Lasn and Micah White, "the greatest social-justice movement to emerge in the United States since the civil rights era," the disparity in coverage by the traditional media versus social media certainly justifies a point that social media, in terms of coverage of social movements, has become prolific in its abilities as an information source, for communication and organization and creating awareness within the digitized public sphere.
6. Conclusion & Summary

This report set out to examine the role of social media in the context of a social movement, Occupy Wall Street. The goal was to answer a variety of questions that would help scientifically research and further understand this relationship. The perception of social media and its use as a tool during the social movement proved to be a prominent communication device and a source of information.

Social media can certainly be used to create change and sway public opinion in a social movement atmosphere; the abilities of today’s prominent platforms such as Facebook, YouTube, and Twitter generate awareness and publicity to the cause and its messages. Analyzing deeper the role that social media has inherited in the world’s mediated societal movements, and the relationship between these two factors has been a focal point for this report. The transformation is certainly shifting from the earlier dominance of traditional media outlets, although not completely by any means. Continued research must be prompted to theorize and understand not only empirically but what scientifically it might mean for the future of our digitized public sphere. This overarching question of whether or not social innovation has equaled social change is one that, within the limitations and small scale of this report was a driving point behind the research, but a full answer will be forthcoming with further studies. Along with the progression of our world’s history and growth of technology our heavy usage of social media platforms will continue to be a constant source of media and cultural research.

Traditional media sources were not the first to pick up the social movement nor did they believe that Occupy Wall Street had the ability to turn into the phenomenon that it did in New York City at Zucotti Park between September and November 2011. The coverage of this social movement would seem to be one that if it holds up in traditional media newsrooms in the future, a lesson on understanding the position that social media has taken. In terms of information and communication for the public it would not make sense to further distance themselves from a public sphere that reliance on social media platforms for the majority of their news is growing. It is not this report’s position to detail and describe future pitfalls or vice versa of this issue but further research could certainly entertain such scenarios in future movements and their media coverage (see NATO summit Chicago 2012). The generation that is growing up alongside social media will not have known, or have ever known, a reliance on traditional media for news and information. It would not be a shock to any researcher to find out that an 18 year old in 2012 if asked in 2022 about their use of a newspaper, television or
radio broadcast would find out there was very little if any at all.

Livingston and Bennett (2003, cited in Curran & Gurevitch 2005, p.178) find that new technologies such as the videophone and other mobile, convenient, hand-held equipment for live reporting from remote locations have increased the amount of event-driven rather than institution-initiated news. I believe that from my analysis and research an interviewing the varying participants of Occupy Wall Street that this has become even more prominent today and will only continue to grow. As social media platforms continue to be ingrained into our daily life then the coverage of our world and the accompanying technology that cater to these platforms will remain dominant. Goldenberg (1975, cited in Curran & Gurevitch 2005, p. 182) wrote that ‘resource-poor organizations’ have great difficulty in getting the medias attention. This is something that is easily being sidestepped now with social media as the tool of activists, and that was certainly witnessed at Occupy Wall Street.

In her article *The Weird Global Media Event and the Tactical Intellectual [version 3.0]*, ‘No matter how many channels we can get, our main news feed comes from few hands indeed.’ (Wark 1994, p. 267) This is changing and perhaps at a rate that the news corporations and former major news conglomerates are incapable of keeping sole control of. It also highlights the affect that the social media, the new media, is having on the traditional forms of media. Noted however is ‘media that feed us are not only more concentrated but increasingly global in both ownership and extent’ Wark states ‘The people make meaning, but not with the media of their own choosing’ (ibid.) this statement has drastically evaporated in its relevance with the emergence of social media platforms being a primary tool within social movements.

**6.1 Information**

It was clear from all of the role players within activism and the Occupy Wall Street movement that information gathering was very prominent online and via social media platforms. The modern activist exemplified this by detailing his use of Facebook, Twitter, and the Occupy homepage that offered a live video stream. As far as coverage goes something like a live video feed has certainly changed the role of social movements in which any citizen can go online and see what is occurring whether they are in the same city or thousands of miles away. It is raw and unedited a real honest look at actions and the presence of those on site. Now it is no longer a reliance to look at television news broadcasts, which due to its relationship with corporations might only choose to show a video of protester being arrested but nothing else. This is obviously in relation the ideal behind framing a story and putting information out to the
wider public that is edited or molded into a certain way to sway a public opinion. With the advancement of social media platforms as exemplified by the traditional activists comments messages are now able to get out in an instant and go global it is much harder now than 10 to 15 years ago to keep a social movement or a public political uprising out of mainstream news.

The journalist explained how information has become that much easier to be accessed because of the social media platform Twitter. His use of it to follow other reputable news sources or journalists he trusts was a new tool for gathering material and facts for a news story. Looking to social media to quickly validate a credible news story is certainly a change in action, however that is you know from whom you are getting the information. You cannot rely on everything produced on social media channels in terms of the information, much of the information isn’t factual and the tools have been a double-edged sword in this matter. This is not something new in terms of information on the Internet, in general it would be my understanding that most citizens in the digitized public sphere know they can not believe something solely on the fact it is on the Internet because many of the social media platforms are not regulated in terms of what information and stories you can post. It comes down to each person’s own discretion and what they will choose to take as factual information. Even the police officer explained his position on using social media definitely had information purposes, but due to his line of work his facts about situations and Occupy Wall Street came verbally from his superiors, he might have known there was something going on but he choose to hear it from his colleagues and then was able to make his own judgments once on location as a witness.

Information is always going to have a thin line between factual and non-factual and it is certainly an awareness any further research will have to consider within the context of social media and social movements. People with the disposal to voice their opinions via the platforms is certainly a fantastic progression in free speech and being able to have a say on issues. To claim all information as fact and that if it is on Facebook or Twitter it can be trusted would be a damaging mistake.

6.2 Communication & Organization

The methods of anarchist groups have long been debated in the media and much of their ideals and goals have been misconstrued due to what traits come tied to a word like ‘anarchism’. In the context of Occupy Wall Street the way that social media tools provided for communication and organization tactics was paramount to it successes, and indeed some of its failures. Social
media tools allowed Occupy to set up and build a community down at Zuccotti Park as well as creating an environment of collective space of the general assembly welcoming all social classes and any member of the public. As mentioned in Kidd (2007) creating spaces for new voices was something Occupy excelled in with their anarchistic principles and the tools of social media. A problem that came out of this was that the movement became in a way too inclusive. People certainly found out and arrived down at Wall Street via social media and were able to have conversations and debate on Facebook which was a phenomenal historical moment in the history of American social movements. The movement however went from solely being a major vent on frustrations with American financial institutions and government policy and soon spread into outcries about military spending and environmental policies. The messages flooded in because of the inclusiveness and that unlike other social movements Occupy preached that it was about the individual’s message and not about their own, well many in the public did not hesitate to voice their concerns over social media platforms with Occupy Wall Street as their backdrop for doing so. In the context of America and its government: communication and organization was certainly assisted on a grand scale by social media tools and that is what has been answered clearly in the report. Moving forward, as we can see by ongoing events today such as the NATO summit in Chicago on May 19th and 20th 2012 - which brought out thousands more protesters many claim to be representing Occupy New York or Occupy Boston - the continuation of this social movement has certainly found a way to attach and still be a part of the call for governmental change.

As Downing (2001) critiqued the communication of radical media his explanation was clear that the conversation that came out was shaped within powerful impulses of capitalist economies, racialized social orders, and patriarchal cultures. Not only did America fit within these traits, they exude them and have so for much of the country’s history. Power, hegemony, and resistance etched everywhere (ibid.) indeed and Occupy Wall Street was the social movement that along with its abilities to communicate and organize via social media allowed for much of these tensions to be heard and felt on a massive global scale.

6.3 Traditional & Social Media

In the chapter on the growing and changing relationship between traditional media sources and social media platforms the perspectives of respondents were shared. What was learned and answered by the analysis were the different techniques used by role players to learn about Occupy Wall Street as it occurred and the attention steadily grew from September 17th
onwards. Occupy was able to spread through social media at an astounding rate, and specific to this report it was quite historical in terms of social movement in America. As it continued to be picked up as a news story both nationally and eventually globally there is no doubt that the inner workings of the digitized public sphere have shifted due to the rapid emergence of social media platforms.

As highlighted by the theory of Gamson and Wolfsfeld (1993) social movements need the media. The change that has occurred and was learned throughout the analysis of this report is that social media has now entered as a new form of media. A new form in terms of allowing many voices to be heard as well as a place for unaltered video and the like to be displayed without any major corporate control or regulation. This has thus changed drastically the way in which media interacts with a social movements validation, mobilization, and its scope enlargement. They can be validated on social media platforms by media such as viral videos via YouTube for example, or things that are directly posted onto Facebook pages and Twitter, certainly a major historical change in the overarching context of social movement as well as uprisings. The mobilization factor has also become fascinating as along with the growth of mobile technology and wireless Internet access the actions of social movements can be broadcast in real time from any location, which was never the case when traditional media was the only choice for activists. Lastly, the scope enlargement has become paramount, as messages are able to go global in an instant via social media platforms that are connecting people worldwide.

It is important to state here that although much of this report champions what social media has been able to do, in terms of being a tool for change in social movements, that traditional media sources are certainly not defunct. Via the analysis of the respondents it was clear that social media has not and may not be able ever to completely escape from traditional media. A stalwart in the industry with a consistent audience base and demographic that rely on them solely, mainstream media in no way has completely fallen. Has it taken a blow and been lessened in its power? Absolutely, and that is a credit to the power of social media tools in the context of social movements. This report clearly answers the fact that Occupy Wall Street was certainly not solely reliant on social media and it was in fact traditional medias picking up of the movement that led national and eventual global press and headlines. Social media has provided a way to sidestep traditional media to a certain extent, but it is clear that traditional media is going to remain in our public sphere, moving forward future research will be able to document the change as our world continues to become more mobile and digital in a the fastest growing period of technology in the worlds history. As the traditional activist
admittedly explained seeds have been planted for change by social media and it may not be an overall immediate victory in terms of legitimate and unbiased media coverage, but it is a major evolution.

6.4 Reporting & Framing

Through the scenario of the peaceful march on the Brooklyn Bridge that took place during the early phases of Occupy Wall Street this chapter set out to further research the process of reporting a news story now via traditional media with the presence of social media in the public sphere. It was clear that once the story had been written and then edited by *The New York Times* there was still a powerful underhand of traditional media framing of a story. To fit the character of what corporate powers wanted the public to understand about the movement and its participants and how the public would perceive it both nationally and internationally. It was aiming to put the blame of those days events on the activists themselves, unfortunately this was not the cases and much of the truth was able to be produced and made available to the masses courtesy of social media tools. Whether it was the image used in this report that went viral courtesy of a blogger who noticed the edited story 20 minutes after the original or the viral YouTube videos of police brutality and questionable tactics, there was no more covering up as had been historically the case in American social movements. Of course stories will continue be covered up and kept under wraps, but now when dealing with a mass social movement like Occupy Wall Street there are too many cameras, video recorders, and mobile devices to record what is actually happening on the street.

As pointed out in the theory of Skinner’s cognitive paradigm (2011) they way in which protesters utilize social media and how they see each form of engagement as helping or hindering their work in the context of Occupy Wall Street it certainly was a victory. A victory in terms of allowing the greater public to see for themselves what was happening and a real raw unedited version of the events. Then it is up to the public to interpret this protest related content and evaluate individuals and how people engage with issues for themselves. There are many who may remain stagnant with their belief that Occupy Wall Street was a bunch of anarchist with only a desire to cause havoc, but when video footage of blatant police brutality goes viral on social media platforms for all to see it becomes quite difficult to ignore facts.

There will always be two sides to any story and that was taken into account and answered justly in this report by the responses given by the activist and police officer that were present. Occupy Wall Street did get its major mediatized moment in this case and it came
from everyday citizens producing factual evidence by using the technology and mobile devices at their disposal. Truths were thus exploited via social media and were the cause in stirring the publics outrage as well as gaining national attention to the social movement itself. Traditional media may still be in control of the mainstream media news ‘game’ but an incident like the one at the Brooklyn Bridge and the actions of the police could not be ignored and that was thanks to the content produced on social media platforms. The old way of thinking for traditional media that if they did not get the story first it could not be important has now drastically changed moving forward. For the future of news reporting is now going to be in the hands of citizen journalists who are armed with mobile phones and wireless Internet connections.

6.5 Final Thoughts

Occupy Wall Street was a loud outcry that was able to spark similar protest in cities throughout America and eventually onto other international destinations as far as Melbourne, London, and Beijing. It is an immense effort in our public sphere to get attention on such a large scale and social media tools are providing citizens with a unique way in doing so. Wall Street and the American government were not going to change overnight, but the dissatisfaction of the public and the importance of the major issues has become very clear. Occupy Wall Street may have encompassed a lot of the anger and despair that citizens were feeling about the lack of jobs and the declining economy but it also provided a place for solidarity and enjoyment in many ways as well.

Not everyone agreed with the tactics or stance of Occupy Wall Street but it stayed strong for as long as it was possible and it brought more and more people in each day that it did. Communicating via Facebook and Twitter along with the media production crews that were able to upload video and live stream the whole movement. Social media projected what people were doing in a way that was historic for an American social movement. People are struggling in America and regardless of the boundaries drawn in this research report between traditional media and social media, many of the people who are employed by traditional media sources are suffering themselves – the issues presented by Occupy are all inclusive.

Social movements have so much to do with tactics and timing and the world was reacting to the uprisings occurring around the globe from the Arab Spring to the Euro zone crisis. Occupy Wall Street and the push for the occupation of Zuccotti Park by Adbusters came at the right moment. Social media was then able to be a voice for many people who had
felt so disconnected for a long time with their government and what ‘change’ they had been promised by the Obama campaign in 2008. Someone had to be blamed for the lack of jobs and the fact that the political system was not responding was certainly a major driving force behind a movement that operated in the shadow of Wall Street.

Sure there were faults at Occupy: not having any visible spokes people or any alliances as did the civil rights and anti-war movements of the 1960s. They still pushed forward and spread across the nation to show that it was not a singular expression of discontent but a national one, and soon it became a global one. It was so affective because social media is global and so is traditional media and when both these forms took on coverage of the movement there was certainly a victory in that alone. All media helps when it covers something and I think the world at large was ready to see Americans be upset and stand up for themselves in terms of what has happened to the nation since the 2008 financial collapse. It ignited a movement, not a revolution, but nonetheless something that will not historically be forgotten and still is showing its presence. They continue to be proactive and make the powers that be look somewhat shameful as was the case in May 2012 at the NATO summit in Chicago, Occupy was represented quite well in its stand of solidarity against the military alliance.

Nothing in the context of social movements is predictable it is a part of history and its constantly adapting to changes. As the Karl Marx stated back in the 19th century: people make their own history, but not as they please. The future of social movements and its relationship with social media will continue to adapt and grow, but it will certainly be intertwined moving forward. The human spirit is something that will not change and it will be the defining cause of any societal change, and we may have yet to see what the next tool for change might be.
**Bibliography:**


Appendix:

Interview guide

General

• Speak about your experience and your role within the Occupy Wall Street (OWS) movement in Sep. 2011.
• Please highlight some overall positives and negatives of your experience
• When did you feel that the OWS started to gain national attention? Global attention?
• What was it about going to the streets and how OWS took to the streets with their encampment at Zuccotti Park that made a difference?
• Do you believe it was a general feeling for people to initiate change they need to put boots on the street? To be seen or taken seriously by the public and media at large?
• Would you say the issues/the major issues raised by OWS or the ones they wanted to get most attention drawn to, where do they lie in terms of importance for the average American citizen?

Media Specific

• How did you find out about OWS?
• Speak briefly on your current understanding of social media – as it is one of the newest tools being implemented by protesters and activists today
• Is there a disconnect within blogs, social media platforms etc. Is it too much? Is there ‘data smog’ that we deal with that hinders social movements?

Media

• In what ways did you use social media in the context of OWS? A) For communication B) Information gathering C) Media i.e. video
• In what ways did you use or experience the use of traditional media in terms of the reporting of what was happening with OWS?
• Can social media be used as a long-term tool that could strengthen civil society and the government?
• In your opinion could you say that alone, social media was behind OWS, to spread the message? Or was it just the message behind OWS that was put out that inspired so many?
• Is everything now for the news and media now event driven – are stories, news worthy stories are they event driven rather than being institution initiated news stories?
Graphics

Figure 1.1 - http://www.tvhistory.tv/facts-stats.htm
Figure 1.2 - http://www.ibtimes.com/articles/251058/20111116/occupy-wall-street-art-protest-posters-global.htm
Figure 1.3 - 1.4
https://docs.google.com/presentation/d/1spXu_uuSJXtYKvyWr_MpwXGxW3LCd7_q1HtK4acuS1M/htmlpresent
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Infographic