



The Role of Hispanics in Occupy Wall Street and Occupy Puerto Rico



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Hypothesis: The Occupy Wall Street Movement has been portrayed by followers as being different from previous protests. They claim to break away from the standard patterns by taking away any type of hierarchical structure and, making it a movement for everyone. This has resulted in criticism as people question the possibility of creating and fulfilling definite goals if there are no leaders; and doubt as to whether it is possible for such a movement, one that declares itself diverse, to break away from traditional prejudice. This investigation seeks to examine whether race has a role within the structure of the Occupy Wall Street movement with an emphasis on Hispanic Participants and their perspective within the movement. Furthermore, we seek to find the connection between Occupy Wall Street (OWS) and Occupy Puerto Rico (OPR). We strive to argue that the concept of race does not play a notable factor in determining the role of a member of the movement.

Objectives:

- The *Occupy Wall Street Research Project (OWSRP)* aims to:
- Determine the demographic profile of the OWS movement
 - Provide a picture as to where Hispanics fall within the social stratifications of the movement
 - Find possible connection between OWS and OPR

Theoretical Framework:

Our research took the task of supplementing the Resource Mobilization perspective on social movements defined by Turner and Killian as

“collectivity acting with some continuity to promote or resist a change in the society or group of which it is apart. As a collectivity a movement is a group with indefinite and shifting membership and with leadership whose position is determined more by the informal response of the members than by formal procedures for legitimizing authority” (1972, 246)

The change of focus to the organizational structure of a social movement came in the mid-1960s with the work of Gamson, Tilly and Zald who explored a new perspective with collective action and an emphasis on the structure of social movements (David et. al., 2005). This focus is expressed through the resource mobilization theory in which the study of movements breaks away from the traditional collective behavior theory, where movements are seen as derived from irrational and breaks away from determined social structure, and determines that social movements are determined by the rational and the mobilization of the collective to achieve the movement’s common goal. This investigation looks to examine whether race has a role within the structure of the Occupy Wall Street movement with an emphasis on Hispanic participants and their perspective within the movement and how the structure of the movement affects the connection it has with Occupy Puerto Rico. We strive to argue that the social movement’s goals do not need to be defined for there to be mobility within the movement.



February 2nd, 2011
Call To Occupy by Adbusters

September 17th, 2011
2,000 people rally in NYC.

Occupation in Zuccotti Park begins

September 24th, 2011
Occupy spreads nationwide

October 5th, 2011
600,000 people take their money out of major banks in response to “Bank Transfer Day” March

October 13th, 2011
The Sweep
Major Bloomberg calls for eviction of protestors because of cleaning regulations. Protestors call for cleaning and avoid eviction.

October 15th, 2011
Protest spread to 951 cities in 82 Countries
Occupy Puerto Rico emerged

Methodology:

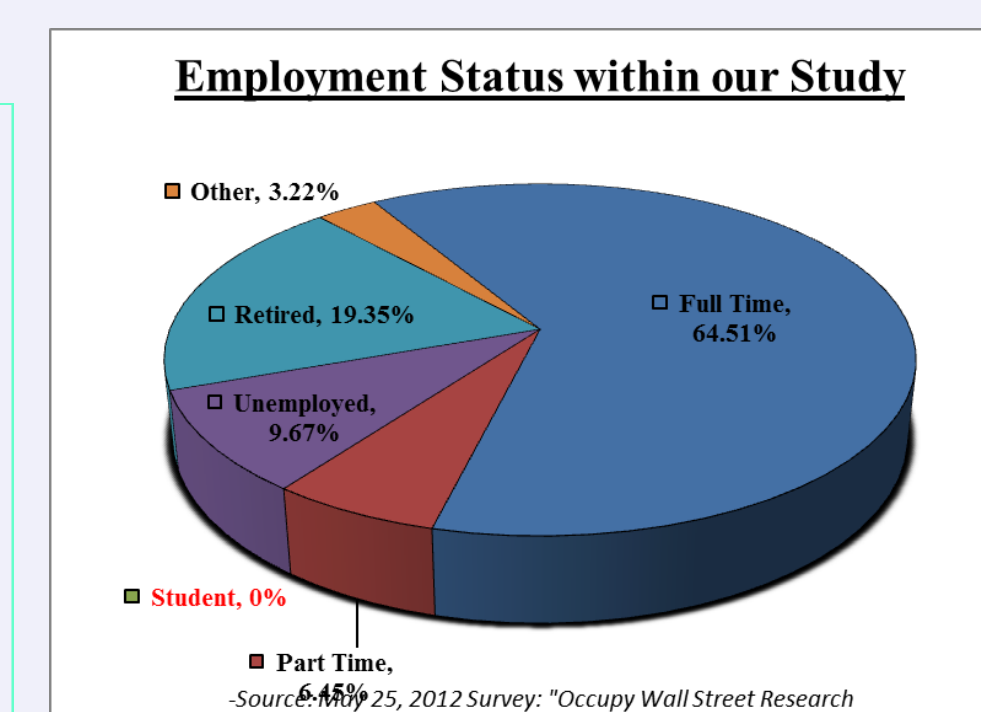
The investigation composed of two phases; the New York phase and the Puerto Rico phase. Within the New York phase, the team was split into two separate groups, one of which did field work in the *Occupy Wall Street Movement* while the other group researched the historical background of social movements and the events that influenced *Occupy Wall Street*. The second phase consisted of research and video analysis in Puerto Rico and interviews with community leaders, academics and the media about *Occupy Puerto Rico*.

A survey was conducted at an *Occupy Wall Street* gathering in New York City’s Astoria Park, on May 25, 2012. Out of the 12 questions that we selected for our survey, 10 were multiple choice. A total of 16 interviews were conducted with individuals that included active members of *Occupy Wall Street* and *Occupy Puerto Rico*, academics, reporters and community leaders. From these interviews 6 hours of video documentation was gathered.

Findings:

Upon analyzing the information we had gathered and compared it to various academic resources, as well as a relevant investigation conducted by Dr. Cordero-Guzman, Ph.D. from Baruch College of the City University of New York, (CUNY) the team reached various findings.

- The *Occupy Movement* is
- A racially diverse movement were the largest racial group identify themselves as Caucasian.
- Majority of the individuals were of 40 years of age or older
- The vast majority of the members present were employed Full Time.
- The vast majority of individuals that answered our survey were predominantly Middle Class.
- The movement worked from a decentralized organization were work groups were formulated with specific tasks and decisions were made in the form of General Assemblies through census.
- The connection between *Occupy Puerto Rico* and *Occupy Wall Street* was non existent.

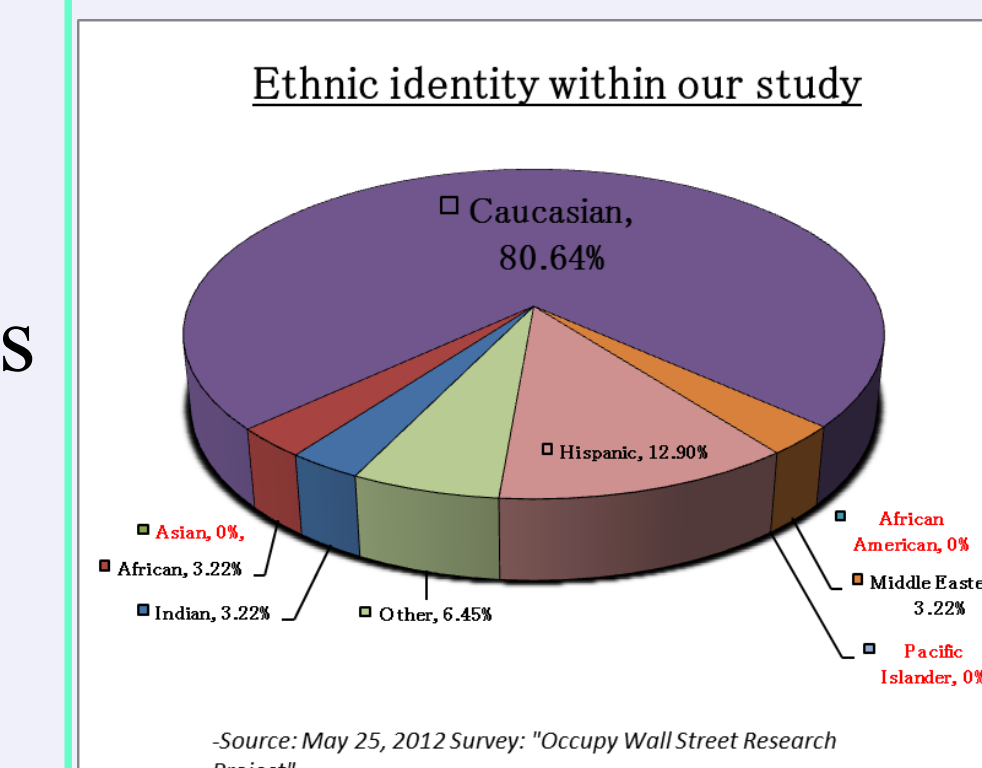


Conclusion:

Occupy Wall Street is a decentralized movement that seeks true equality in all aspects of life, primarily motivated by the current economic crisis, lack of jobs, and social inequality. Through the use of numerous worker groups and a general assembly the occupiers maintained a horizontal leaderless movement that accepts all ethnicities, ages, political and sexual orientations. However, extensive interviews with a sample of occupiers show there is an internal structure that is driven by head organizers that resemble organizational leaders.

To an extent our hypothesis was proven given that the data collected from Hispanic occupiers also reveals that a history of racial prejudices seeps through the movement’s strong claim of ethnical equality. Even though the movement does take measures to stay horizontal and has an unprejudiced approach with the decentralization of worker groups, (for example allowing minorities to voice their concerns first in the general assembly), the people that make up the movement have a historical background and socialization patterns that forms the foundation for their perception. Such is manifested, for example, in passing over Hispanics who want to voice their opinion during a meeting or not giving importance or priority to their words and so on.

Although these inequalities are present, they are not detrimental to the movement since it looks to do away with those prejudices. All the worker groups and participants of the movement are united by the means of cyber communication that allows this decentralized movement to expand and be present globally were each branch of Occupy has their own agenda but share the common value of political and social equality.



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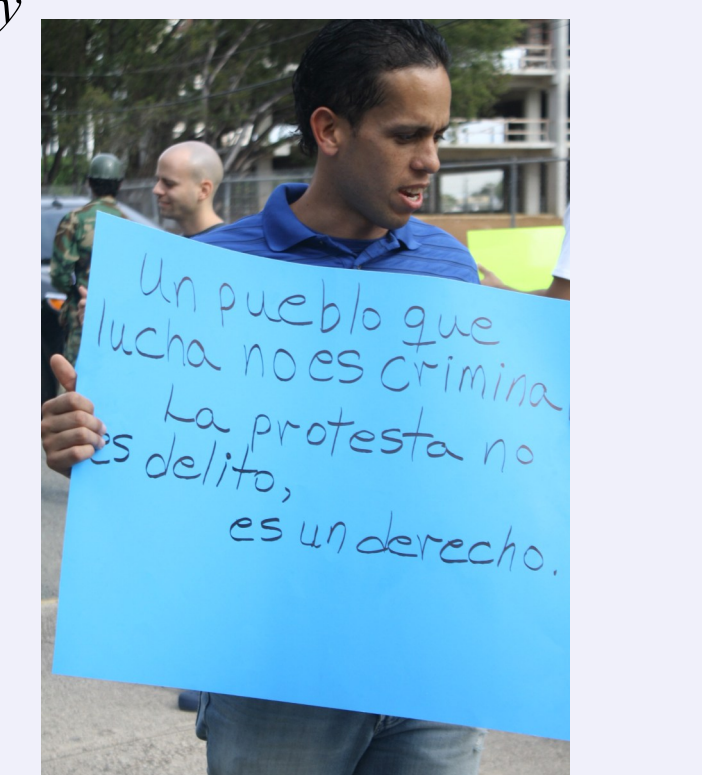
Advertisement inducing Hispanic participation in event



Spanish Newspaper for Occupy Wall Street



Occupy Wall Street manifestation



Occupy Puerto Rico participant