

Occupying Identities: Hierarchical Divisions and Collective Identity in the Occupy  
Movement

By

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### **Abstract**

This thesis looks at collective identity formation within the Occupy movement through an ethnographic study conducted over the autumn and winter of 2011-2012 at three sites, including New York, New York; Victoria, British Columbia; and Edmonton, Alberta, with an examination of problems of frame resonance with the major movement boundary frame of a collective 99%. The conclusion offers a way forward for new social movements through a shifting network of solidarities rather than an attempt to create a stable, unified collective identity across a broad range of movement actors.

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## Introduction

In 2011, the Occupy movement swept across cities and towns, drawing attention to social, economic, and political inequality and a growing anger with austerity and corporate greed. The movement represented an evolution of the anarchist-rooted global justice movement and other forms of anarchist/radical groups that emerged in the late 1990s and early 2000s, one which then drew in other activists as well as parts of the broader left including more formal civil society organizations (unions, NGOs, etc.). It also attracted an unaffiliated but outraged public contingent representing a range of political positions. The movement came to the attention of the public on September 17, 2011, when approximately one thousand protestors marched on New York's Wall Street, followed by an encampment in Zuccotti Park that would last nearly two months and similar occupations in hundreds of communities across the United States, more than 20 Canadian cities, and internationally in more than 30 countries spread across every continent except Antarctica. The majority of the camps were cleared by police forces in November and December of 2011, but at its peak, some camps' populations numbered in the hundreds, with thousands coming out for protests and marches that shut down streets and gained massive media attention.

The movement began several months earlier, inspired by what the North American media dubbed the Arab Spring (Farrell, 2011), the UK Uncut movement, and the *Indignados* of Spain's 15-M movement, with deeper roots in earlier movements such as the anti-globalization/global justice protests of the late 1990s and early 2000s. On July 13, 2011, Vancouver-based culturejamming magazine *Adbusters* published a call to action: "On September 17, we want to see 20,000 people flood into lower Manhattan, set up tents, kitchens, peaceful barricades and occupy Wall Street for a few months. Once there, we shall incessantly repeat one simple demand

in a plurality of voices” (Adbusters, July 13, 2011). Activists began to come together and plan the action in New York, attempting to create that plurality and identify a unifying message for the movement, which resulted in the now-famous chant, “We are the 99%.”

One of the most iconic images from the movement is a poster that appeared in the September/October 2011 issue of *Adbusters*. The black-and-white image shows a ballerina standing in a calm arabesque atop Arturo Di Modica’s *Charging Bull*, a large bronze sculpture of a bull that stands in Bowling Green Park in the New York Financial District, while in the background a group of protestors and police in riot gear can be seen emerging from a cloud of smoke. Above the dancer, in red text, is the phrase, “What is our one demand?” That demand proved difficult for the movement to identify, which became one of the major criticisms of Occupy: the lack of a coherent or consistent position that could be readily understood by the media or the public at large.

The value of a unified demand or message has been debated among Occupy participants and commentators. Nadja Millner-Larsen describes the demands of the Occupy movement as what the Situationists described as impossible demands, which through their framing as multiple “one demands” created a rhetorical demandlessness that opened possibility (2013). Others called for a redefinition of what it means to demand, arguing that rather than demanding anything from rejected power structures, Occupiers should instead demand of themselves a “simple ethic of intersubjective relations throughout global society that provides all with the conditions to articulate all of our capacities” (Brincat, 2013, p. 133). For some, this became a refusal of the authority of traditional powers such as governments entirely, shifting from a demand for autonomy to a rejection of those structures (Sitrin, 2014). Demandlessness was an outgrowth of the movement’s horizontality and leaderlessness, which constructed the Occupiers as a

consensus-driven, inclusive 99% that was less about a specific demand for change than a prefiguring of a new society that the “inner movement” hoped to build (Gitlin, 2013).

However, within the construction of the unified 99 percent, divisions emerged around political philosophies, tactical approaches, and social identities (Gitlin, 2013; Kreiss & Tufekci, 2013). One repeatedly emerging concern was over the experiences of marginalized people participating in and relating to Occupy. Some of the earliest criticisms of inequities within the movement came from feminist participants in the movement (Occupy Patriarchy, n.d.). Other groups also pointed out ways in which broader hierarchies around class, race, disability, sexual orientation, and other identities were playing out within the camps and online communities surrounding the Occupy movement (Schein, 2012). In particular, many Indigenous communities expressed concern over the idea of occupation in the context of North American colonial histories (Keene, 2011; Montano, 2011; Yee, 2011). Without a clear unifying demand, it became difficult for the movement to build a clear collective identity (Benski, Langman, Perugorria, & Tejerina, 2013).

These divisions over identity created barriers to solidarity within the movement that were a contributing factor to the movement’s eventual decline. Other issues also played a role in the end of the camps and the fading away of the majority of the protests, such as police action against the movement, the dismantling of the camps, and the onset of winter, as well as the simple unsustainability of occupation as a long-term tactic (Calhoun, 2013). However, the internal divisions in the movement played a significant role in the lack of retention of protestors in the long term. Without a clear rallying message and with fractured solidarities at play, Occupy has faded from the activist landscape, although fragmented groups still exist in many cities, and

the echoes of the movement can be heard in ongoing conversations about economic inequality and wealth distribution and in ongoing anti-austerity and antipoverty movements.

The purpose of this research is to understand how the major boundary frame of the 99% affected collective identity formation within the Occupy movement in order to better understand how marginalized groups' participation in new social movements is influenced by frame resonance. Through an ethnographic study undertaken in three sites in Canada and the United States, I examine participants' experiences and their experiences of identity within the Occupy movement during the fall and winter of 2011-2012.

### **Collective Identity and Occupy**

Langman states that Occupy and similar movements such as the *Indignados* and Arab Spring should be understood through New Social Movement theory, which “looks at the salience of culture, meanings, collective identity, and social networks” to the way movements are formed and how movement actors are motivated (2013, p. 511). The assemblies and encampments of Occupy can be interpreted as an attempt to create a pre-figurative model where collective identity could be formed through a symbolic performance of equality in which the “we” of a collective struggle could be constructed and reinforced (Decreus, Lievens, & Braekman, 2014). Prefiguratism in anarchist movements is founded in the idea that one may build a new world within the shell of the old. As Graber (1994) notes, the chant “This is what democracy looks like,” which was one of the rallying cries of the global justice movement carried forward into Occupy, is not merely symbolic; it is a literal statement that reflects the horizontalist, direct-action-oriented structures that participants in that movement hoped to bring to society as a whole. That same desire is reflected in the structures of the Occupy movement. Langman states that

Such movements are trying to change the very nature of collective identity by themselves negotiating and articulating alternative identities that provide both economic redress and transformations of culture and identity based on sharing, caring, participatory democracy and personal fulfillment, self-development and self-fulfillment rather than competition, hierarchy, and the acquisition of material things. (Langman, 2013, p. 520)

Occupy included a number of mechanisms to create a sense of a collective identity across a broad constituency of participants and movement supporters (those who believed in Occupy's aims without necessarily going to camps or taking part in protests). The phrase "We are the 99%," which was adopted in the pre-camp organizing phase as the main slogan for the movement, became the rallying cry for the movement quite literally, with masses of people chanting in public squares and on marches. The 99% motif, along with the word "Occupy," appeared on posters, t-shirts, buttons, bumper stickers, and other materials, allowing people to brand themselves as part of the movement, reinforcing their sense of identity as part of a broad majority demanding change. The idea of being part of a broad 99%, standing in opposition to a small 1%, offered a powerful, inclusive identity that allowed people to see the movement as including their concerns and aspirations, whatever those might be, under an umbrella of unified purpose. The idea of the unified 99%, disenfranchised by a powerful 1% who hold the majority of economic and political power, was one of the core diagnostic frames of the movement, establishing both an adversarial framing of the powerful 1% and a broad boundary frame that included virtually everyone else (Benford and Snow, 2000).

Additionally, the practice of camps and the frequent General Assemblies were powerful tools for identity formation, reflecting what Fomiyana noted was essential to fostering collective identity within the global justice movement, which in many ways formed the foundations for

Occupy: “For groups based on autonomous principles, the assembly is the core around which new projects are generated with important ramifications for the latent and visible movements of collective action and therefore for the process of collective identity formation” (2010, p. 397).

Decreus, Lievens, and Braekman state that within Occupy itself, “the assemblies were, apart from being a form of self-representation, also a performance that showed people a different society might be possible” (2014, p. 141), allowing people to imagine themselves as part of a new, horizontalist, fully participatory democracy in which all voices were heard and valued.

These inclusionary practices served to open up the movement to a wide range of participants from nearly every socioeconomic background, including people who themselves would belong among the 1% (such as celebrities and progressive-minded business and political leaders), academics, professionals, working class and labour movement activists, environmentalists, feminists, antiracist organizers, social justice organizations, students, the unemployed, and homeless people, representing a range of sexual orientations, gender identities, ethnic backgrounds, (dis)abilities, and on and on. Almost inevitably, those disparate groups brought with them the same hierarchies that existed within the broader cultures within which they lived, leading to divisions around whose goals would inform the direction of the movement and which issues received priority.

These divisions also served at times to further marginalize already-marginalized groups and contributed to the decline of the movement once the unifying structures of the camps were gone, especially in smaller groups without the numbers to sustain a critical mass of participants to have much political or social impact once those marginalized groups drifted away. This created a challenge to the framing of the movement as that of a united 99% against an all-powerful 1% as those within the movement questioned how internal hierarchies reflected the

core values of Occupy as a universally liberating social movement. Occupy's framing of itself as a struggle of the broad 99% did not adequately reflect the intersectional realities of many movement participants, who experienced varying degrees of oppression and marginalization and at times struggled to find solidarities as more privileged groups came to set the agenda, challenging the frame resonance of the movement (Okechukwu, 2014).

Bunnage identifies collective identity as a critical element to the long-term retention of activists in social movements (2014). Poletta and Jasper state that "identities need to be integrated with injustice and agency frames so as to clearly distinguish 'us' from opponents and bystanders" (2001, p. 292). They note that one of the major causes of movement decline is when collective identity no longer aligns with that of the movement, whether that is because participants come to believe that the movement no longer represents them or people find their identities adequately represented outside the movement because of social or political changes. In the context of Occupy, many participants who were members of traditionally marginalized communities felt that while the framing of the movement's identity around a united 99% seemed to represent them, their experiences within the movement eventually began to contradict that frame, leading to a loss of a sense of identification with Occupy over time, which was reflected in decreased participation in the movement.

### **Method**

As someone who has spent much of her life in activist movements, I was in the position during the emergence of the Occupy movement to build on my lived experience of social and economic justice movements as an insider and to bring together that knowledge with a research interest in the organizational culture of leaderless, non-hierarchical social movements. I had already been invited to participate in the organizing stages of the Occupy group forming in Edmonton,

Alberta, and this opened the opportunity for a political activist ethnography drawing inspiration from David Graeber's *Direct Action: An Ethnography* – Graeber himself being one of the founding actors in the Occupy movement (Graeber, 2011; Graeber, 2013). Data were collected through participant observation from the autumn of 2011 through the spring of 2012 in three cities — Edmonton, Alberta; New York, New York; and Victoria, BC. In addition to participating in organizing meetings, General Assemblies, and working groups and spending time in the camps and on protest marches and actions in all three cities, I participated in facilitation training and acted as a facilitator and stack taker for assemblies. I also engaged with the Occupy movement in its online form through blogs, social media, and other internet sites. I conducted a series of six extended semi-structured interviews (60-90 minutes) with participants in the movement, representing a range of identities and backgrounds (age, gender identity, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, disability, sexual orientation, political orientation, and occupation). Additionally, I collected data through photography, audio recordings of protests, and material objects such as pamphlets, zines, stickers, and other print materials as well as objects produced by activists in the movement including buttons and t-shirts.

I examined how interview participants understood their identity in relation to the movement through how they framed their participation in the movement and their identity within it as well as their perceptions of any identity conflicts that affected Occupy. I also considered the language used in documents collected at Occupy camps and rallies and the physical markers of Occupier identity produced by participants as well as the construction of camp spaces, both in who was present/absent and how campers related to each other through the organization of those spaces. Additionally, I reflexively examined my own experiences in the movement and how my participation in Occupy shaped my identity as an activist.

Through this project, I intend to show how these divisions functioned within the movement to create sites of unity and division among participants. Using the framework of New Social Movement theory, particularly as it relates to framing and collective identity (Fominaya, 2010; Poletta & Jasper, 2001, Benford and Snow, 2000), I examined participant experiences as well as materials produced by the movement and the physical elements of the camps themselves to understand how social hierarchies were reflected, reinforced, and resisted within the Occupy movement at three sites and how those hierarchies posed a challenge to the movement's central boundary frame of a unified 99%. I analyzed the data looking for themes related to identity, coding them in five major themes: gender; race and colonization; class, poverty, and homelessness; political and tactical divisions; and sexual and gender minorities.

## **Findings**

### **Gender**

A group of people sit in a circle under a hand-lettered sign that reads, "Think Tank. Current topic: Are women sidelined at OWS?" I edge my way into the circle, hoping to join in the conversation. The discussion is led by an older woman in a blue hat and a shawl who is acting as a facilitator. The circle is a mix of women and men, but despite the numbers being even, male voices dominate. A couple of the men circumvent the normal flow of OWS-style facilitation (the raising of hands indicating one wishes to speak, followed by "stack taking" in which speakers are either added to a speakers list in a first-come, first-served order, or, in the case of "progressive stack," by being sorted additionally by social position, with members of traditionally marginalized groups given speaking priority) by repeatedly using the gesture for "direct point," two fingers sticking out, waving back and forth between them and the person speaking, allowing those speakers to jump ahead in the speaking queue — a signal intended to allow someone to add

directly pertinent information, but which could at times be abused to circumvent the stack process to allow speakers to dominate discussions. In one of my photographs of that circle, a man leans in overtop of a seated woman, his hands raised, gesturing across at a man sitting on the other side of the circle. The seated woman's head is turned away, looking down. The facilitator, standing beside him, is leaning away from him, her arms folded.

This kind of domination of the speaking process was not uncommon in the experience of women in the movement. One woman described the response to her attempts to address the ways that privilege was playing out in the General Assembly, including making suggestions that her group implement the progressive stack model: “a few times, when I tried to speak about the space that we’re creating, checking our own privileges, and talking about how is systemic oppression playing out in our own organizing, why don’t we talk about that? There are times when I could hear people sighing or huffing and puffing behind me or straight-up challenging me or other people about the relevance of any of that: ‘You’re wasting time.’ So just being shut down or being challenged, having my voice discounted because of that.” Other women described experiencing outright interruptions or men “throwing blocks” (holding the arms up crossed in front of the chest with fists clenched — a signal meant to indicate absolute opposition) as a silencing gesture. The lack of ability to participate fully and freely in the General Assembly process had a negative impact on women’s collective identity formation within the movement, reflecting Fominaya’s observation that in movements based on autonomous principles, the assembly process is critical to the identity formation process (2010, p. 397).

Women began drifting away from the movement, and this then contributed to fewer and fewer voices being present. One interviewee described how women drifted away from the group as the weeks went on: “Occupy, um, went from being, like the group expands and contracts, all

these things, and at one point, it contracted to the point where there were almost exclusively men everywhere. Like at the camps, and at the meetings ... and there are women around too, but they're not very vocal all the time. And there are very few outspoken women in that, and just lots of men." The increasing predominance of men's voices and men's presence reinforced the sense that Occupy was a movement that only represented the masculine half of the 99%.

However, it was not only experiences within the General Assembly process that made women feel uncomfortable at Occupy. At the Occupy camp in Edmonton, women became increasingly less and less visible as the weeks of the encampment went on. Stories began to emerge of sexual harassment, both of participants and of women passing by the camp on the adjacent sidewalk, with allegations that some of the harassment was committed by members of the camp's marshal group who were patrolling at night. Eventually, the remaining women in the group came together and demanded that the de facto leader of that group be removed from his position, but by this time, the rumours had spread far enough for the movement to become the focus of criticism among women's studies faculty and students at the University of Alberta and for most feminists to feel that Occupy was unsafe and unwelcoming to women's concerns.

Experiences of marginalization continued. A feminist working group was formed to try to address women's experiences, in part in response to increasing perceptions that Occupy Edmonton was not a safe place for women. The first meeting included three women who planted a sign in the grass stating that they were claiming women's only space and began a discussion of how to make Occupy more inclusive of women. Following that, a larger women's discussion was planned and was held in front of the library tent, but that discussion was repeatedly disrupted by several men from the group demanding to know why women were excluding men, asking women to help them perform various tasks in the kitchen tent, and accusing the women of

sexism. Following that meeting, the feminist group dissolved. By the time the camp was shut down by police, only one woman remained among the regular campers.

Sexual harassment was not only limited to Occupy Edmonton. One woman from Victoria, a young woman of colour, described her experiences of harassment:

My personal experiences have had to do with, like, objectification and sexualization of who I am. And it became this issue where I wasn't, I wasn't always heard, I was just seen or sexualized or objectified. Because I'm single as well, there was this concept that, um, you know, that I'm available and that is what people wanted out of me, or what a lot of men wanted out of me, was that sexuality and that availability and that, that I'm going to date you and all those sorts of things. And it became difficult because I'm already busy, and doing so much with Occupy that having to deal with another issue around being young and female and single and whatever? It just became a hassle and an irritant, right, and it's not flattering, and a lot of the reactions would be like, "oh, you should be flattered that three guys or four guys or whatever are vying for your affection, vying for your attention." But it's not that, it's absolutely not that. I'm not flattered, and I'm more just frustrated by it, and I feel like it's slowing down other things that I could be doing. And I'm not being listened to appropriately because of it. And I think the same thing happens in media and the same thing happens with my interactions with politicians as a part of this movement, right? So it's upsetting.

At times, this harassment reached levels that would be considered criminal violations. Reports emerged of sexual assaults at some of the camps (Occupy Wall Street sexual assault survivors team, 2011). While in some camps, including at OWS, police were contacted following sexual assault incidents, in other places, distrust for police and criminal justice systems led

groups to decide to address assaults internally, whether by chasing perpetrators from camps or using other internal systems to address the behaviour (Newcomb, 2011, November 3). At Occupy Edmonton, one camper was accused of stalking a woman in the group. The General Assembly decided that the problem should be addressed internally, and so the group called a meeting in a private community space specifically to address the harassment and confront the alleged stalker. The meeting became increasingly heated, with a faction wanting the woman who had accused the man of the behaviour to make peace, with some asking her to admit that both people were responsible for the circumstances. Another group, mainly women, insisted that nobody should be forced to continue in a group with their abuser. Eventually, the man was told he would be restricted from participating in the group, and he left the meeting shouting and slamming the door as he exited. After the meeting, I spoke to other women from the group, who said that they feared physical violence from the man following this experience and that when they left the building, they were watching for him, expecting a possible attack. The woman who was the target of the harassment went on to experience frequent comments from other men in the group accusing her of driving the man away and causing division in the movement.

These incidents served to make women feel that their voices and views were not adequately represented in the movement. While women continued to be a vocal presence, the struggle for fair representation and inclusion was an ongoing issue (Seltzer, 2011), leading many feminist activists I spoke with to decide to dedicate their activist energies to broader social change rather than change within the Occupy movement. The perception was that the movement had become dominated by what were often called manarchists — young, white, male activists without a good understanding of solidarity or intersectionality — and that it was better to work for gender equity through other channels.

This division between feminist activists and broader social movements has long historic roots. Many women who later became involved in the second wave feminist movement initially became engaged in activism in other areas such as the civil rights movement (Urban, 2002). Even earlier, women such as Emma Goldman fought for gender equality within their movements as much as outside of them. Okechukwu (2014) found that gendered marginalization played a role in women's attendance at and participation in a conference of youth activists in 2010, where the class-consciousness frame established by the conference's organizers failed to adequately address queer and women's issues.

While common, the conflict between movement frames and intersectional inequalities related to gender are not insurmountable. Within the Spanish *Indignados* movement, for example, while conflict arose in the movement over feminism and the complaint that "the revolution is not a gender issue," careful work by the Barcelona and Madrid feminist assemblies to increase awareness of the complexity of inequality and the role of gender led to the adoption of feminist proposals and manifestos by the general assemblies in both cities (Lopez and Garcia, 2014). Feminists active in Occupy attempted similar consciousness raising but did not achieve similar success.

### **Race and (Anti)colonialism**

In early October 2011, at the second pre-occupation General Assembly for Occupy Edmonton, a large group gathered in a classroom in the humanities building of the University of Alberta to organize the October 15 rally and march. The discussion of the day included possible sites for a camp, the proposed speakers, and a draft statement of unity for the group. However, the discussion devolved into argument around the idea of including Indigenous elders and speakers and recognizing the land on which the city stands as stolen land. The dispute spilled

over onto the Occupy YEG email lists as well. The draft statement, which was revised to include language around treaty rights and racial diversity (Occupy Edmonton, 2011), came under fire, with opponents describing it as divisive, self-hating, extremist, and racist against white people. Supporters defended it as an important statement, stating that Occupy was already becoming an increasingly white, middle-class oriented movement and that by calling the language self-hating, opponents of the inclusion of language around race issues were showing that they perceived the movement as being primarily for whites. A third faction believed that a statement of unity must only address universal issues, and that talking about issues for Indigenous or racialized minorities made the statement no longer one about a unified 99%.

The debate over the meaning of inclusion, solidarity, and unity would become an ongoing thread not only at Occupy Edmonton, but throughout the movement. At OWS, on my first morning in New York as I ate breakfast from the kitchen tent, a black activist told me about his deep frustration with getting solidarity around opposing the New York City Police Department practice of “stop and frisk.” As a Canadian, I was unfamiliar with the term, but once he described it, I recognized that it was a similar practice to those of Canadian police forces in cities such as Toronto, where it is known as carding — police stop people of colour, mostly young men, and ask for identification and/or search them on the suspicion of drugs. The OWS activist told me he wanted solidarity from white activists, explaining that it was one of the clearest examples of police as agents of state control, but that he felt that many people were not fully on-board in support or even understanding of the problem. People of colour were underrepresented in Occupy Wall Street, with 62% of respondents in one survey identifying as non-Hispanic white, as compared to 33% of New York residents (Milkman, Luce, & Lewis, 2013).

One woman I spoke to described broad alienation from the movement among people of colour and Indigenous people in her community: “A lot of people in my life who have felt alienated because of experiences of racism or colonialism, or different forms of oppression that they’ve experienced at either meetings, or just from the general sense of what the message is have felt really alienated – it’s been generating a lot of good conversations about what needs to happen, how movements can look different, or why something is so alienating.” The movement generated significant criticism, particularly among Indigenous people, who identified the word “Occupy” as problematic in the context of North American colonization (Keene, 2011; Montano, 2011; Yee, 2011).

In New York, an Indigenous group called Decolonize Wall Street had a table set up in the park to educate Occupy participants about the problematic nature of Occupy, and one of the posters on display was widely distributed, with the demand, “Decolonize the 99%.” The poster was criticized as representing a number of stereotypes of Indigenous North American culture that did not appropriately represent Algonquin people or accurately state that Manhattan was the territory of Lenape people (Keene, 2011); however, others argued that the use of readily recognizable clichés of American Indians would make it more relatable and effective for a non-Indigenous audience (Brady & Antoine, 2013). Regardless, these efforts seemed mainly directed at raising awareness among non-Indigenous movement participants and did not reflect widespread participation in or identification with Occupy by Indigenous people.

In some groups, the efforts to include an anticolonialist lens in the Occupy protests achieved success. Occupy Boston created a memorandum of Indigenous solidarity that became the model for similar documents adopted by other Occupy groups (Occupy Boston, 2011). In Victoria, the pre-occupation General Assembly included intensive discussions about whether it

would be appropriate to name the group Occupy Victoria at all. One participant explained that the debate around the name was part of what drew her to participate in the movement:

I noticed in the email callout that one of the first items on the agenda was “should we use the word Occupy in our name or not?” because obviously some people had already been talking about it, and I was like “No, we shouldn’t!” So I really wanted to go down and see what people were saying about that because it sounded like already people were engaging with the notion that it could be really alienating, so, that was cool, I was excited to see that, and I wondered if people hadn’t been open to discussing that, if I would even have gone, because I was already like, ah, you know, it’s just going to be another attempt at a social justice movement that totally ignores its own oppressive behaviour, which happens all the time, and I’m really not interested in wasting my energy on movements that do that.

The main group in Victoria eventually arrived at the name “People’s Assembly of Victoria” (PAOV) to recognize the specific treaty context in much of British Columbia, although a splinter group continued to operate as Occupy Victoria. Most of the province is still unceded land with ongoing and complex land claims processes. The city of Victoria stands on traditional Coast Salish, Esquimalt, and Songhees territories. To recognize this, the PAOV invited Coast Salish representatives to the October 15 protests, as described by one of the women I spoke to: “some of the first people to speak were Indigenous people, local Indigenous people from Coast Salish nations, and that was really heartening to see.” Another participant in the organizing General Assemblies described one of the disputes that was part of the splitting of the group:

The very first night, we had a 9/11 truther attend, where any moment, discussing anything other than government conspiracies was a wasted moment. He frequently

interrupted, he frequently belittled or berated people for being distracted. He was very upset when we discussed Aboriginal issues. As you might know, the Victoria Occupy is actually named the People's Assembly of Victoria to draw — to try to be more neutral given that Victoria is on unceded Coast Salish and Esquimalt territories.

Edmonton also included Indigenous voices in that first day, with the first speaker at the event being an elder from Treaty Six offering a prayer to open the rally. The elder related the struggle of the 99% to the struggle of Indigenous people, noting before he began his prayer that he would not ask people to bow their heads and close their eyes because historically, when those things were asked of Indigenous people, things were taken from them, and calling on people to lift up their heads in unity. Following the march, a group of powwow dancers performed at the Occupy Edmonton site, and a tipi was erected as part of the camp. Despite the early battles in the group, Indigenous solidarity remained a core theme of the Occupy Edmonton protests, and many participants went on to support the Idle No More movement which swept across Canada beginning in late 2012.

However, solidarity, anticolonialism, and antiracism continued to be complex issues for Occupy groups, even for those groups that made a significant effort in the early stages to include these ideals in the direction of their groups. One interviewee, a young woman of colour, explained that she saw the problem as being about whether people saw addressing issues of racism and colonialism as part of “doing Occupy”:

I think there was lots of enthusiasm in the beginning to address it head on and really openly have conversations about like, what's colonialism, how are we carrying out colonialism, or what's racism and how we're doing that, right, but that didn't last very long. And so what ended up – like, those are such big issues. And people who are doing

Occupy aren't necessarily doing Occupy to be considering those big issues and trying to change them or fix them or whatever. But they're also activists who are – not everyone's an activist – but there are also lots of activists who are trying to be aware of these things, right. And I don't think that they – I definitely don't think that they've been appropriately addressed. I think they will be, and think we're getting to that point where now that we are having group discussions instead of just, like, trying to focus short term, like now we're focusing on long-term discussions, I think those things are going to start cropping up again and there are going to be those conversations about them. Um, I don't think they'll ever be appropriately addressed because those are such big things but I think we can move in that direction.

Occupy as it functioned in the North American context largely neglected to address the settler colonialism in which the movement was formed, setting it at odds with Indigenous people's own activist occupations, which “do not question simply the divisions of wealth and power in the northern bloc; they question the very existence of settler colonial nation states” (Barker, 2012, p. 329). While Indigenous peoples' experiences of marginalization have shaped their collective identity in ways that have often led to contentious action in resistance against a capitalist, colonialist state (Repin, 2012), the frame dispute (Benford, 1993) between Indigenous participants and their anticolonialist allies and those who were either uninterested in or opposed to the inclusion of an anticolonialist frame led to many Indigenous people either criticizing the movement from within or refusing to participate.

### **Class, Poverty, and Homelessness**

Despite some polling at Occupy Wall Street in New York that showed an unemployment rate of 15% among the protesters at Zuccotti Park (Schoen, 2011, October 18), the Occupy movement

was often perceived as predominantly made up of students, the unemployed, homeless people, and perhaps a contingent of spoiled trust fund kids. In one survey, 76% of respondents reported having a minimum of a bachelor's degree (Milkman, Luce, & Lewis, 2013). In *A Precariat Charter*, Standing claims that Occupy was part of the emergence of the precariat as a vanguard to a new class struggle, stating that it was "not just about occupying space but also about forging an occupational identity" (Standing, 2014, p. 140). This emergent vanguard precariat class is comprised largely of educated younger workers who are in precarious employment such as contract work or are underemployed, and Standing believes that this educated portion of the precariat, as compared to the group he refers to as the lumpen-precariat, formed the driving force behind Occupy (p. 133). Chomsky also framed the struggle as being largely about a response to precariousness, stating, "So the world is now indeed splitting into a plutonomy and a precariat – in the imagery of the Occupy movement, the 1% and the 99%. Not literal numbers, but the right picture" (2012).

Although this categorization of overall participants in the movement reflects my observations of the majority of those who identified as Occupiers, particularly among those who took on organizational roles or emerged as unofficial leaders, the population of those who camped became increasingly dominated by street involved and/or homeless persons as well as those who at times became homeless during the movement, such as one man who was living in an illegal basement suite and was evicted from his home because the property owner feared police involvement because of his participation in the protests. Because he did not have the financial resources to move to another home, he began to live at the camp full time.

His experience belies one of the major misperceptions of people who made the camps a home (rather than those who visited camps during the day or camped only as a protest action

while maintaining a home elsewhere). While some homeless campers may have joined the camps primarily for safety and security and the availability of food and shelter without engaging with Occupy as a movement, others were fully involved in the movement (Smith, Castaneda, & Heyman, 2012). One woman, an activist who is homeless by choice, described this misperception of the homeless population at Occupy:

What I didn't understand at first is a lot of people in the using community in Centennial Square were actually there in solidarity, to support. Like, they were there with intention. I don't think that's something a lot of people acknowledged. Whether they were turning tricks at night or disassembling stolen merchandise, in their hearts they were there for a good cause.

However, many Occupiers had an uncomfortable relationship with some of the homeless population within the camps, particularly those who had addictions or mental health problems. Many people felt that "those people" were damaging the movement's public image, with some Occupiers attempting to dismiss the homeless as hangers-on for security and not "real" Occupiers. One activist expressed her frustration with this divide: "These are the people that are most affected by the issues that you're talking about, and once we separate ourselves from them, WE separate ourselves from THEM. We're not the Occupy movement anymore." Still, many participants struggled with a collective identity that included a homeless population that made them feel uncomfortable.

Some challenging incidents only served to widen that divide. Occupy Edmonton had some incidents of violence and abuse that required removing people from the camp, with one incident that required a police response. Camps also struggled to care for people with serious health concerns, both physical and mental, as well as people with addictions using hard drugs in

camp. In Edmonton, as the weather turned colder, a homeless man who had taken over one of the tents nearly died of hypothermia compounded by other health issues. In Vancouver, a woman died in her tent from a drug overdose; while she was not homeless or a regular drug user at the time, she had a history of addictions and was known to use drugs when partying with friends. Although her family expressed discomfort with the depiction of her situation, her death was seen by those within the movement as representing the struggle with homelessness and addiction they were seeing too often within the camps, and her death was marked through memorials and tributes in other camps.

Organizers often felt unprepared to cope with the challenges of living alongside and supporting people with complex needs.

None of those kids had any idea what they were going to see when they set up a camp in the middle of the city. They really weren't predicting — they thought they could run a tight little student-only thing, musicians and colourful healthy people in the middle of, like, transient territory. This is the dealer territory, I don't know, this is not where organic people can sit for very long. It's too loud, it's too violent a landscape, this is not going to happen in the city. It's not the beach. There's no moon and stars. It's not a healthy environment. But I knew that. I've seen it.

Camps became impromptu sites of social work, often performed by participants who were not formally trained in crisis or support work. While some of the people I spoke to had formal training in fields such as social work or mental health support, others were self-taught community advocates. One woman, who identified as a "cleaning lady," explained that she had developed skills over many years of living on Vancouver's East Side in communities with high rates of poverty. While she did not have post-secondary education, she learned how to self-

advocate as a single parent of a child with a disability, and she used those skills to help others in her neighbourhood. She described how helping people in need at Occupy was a continuation of this background: “I’m a quiet activist. I always have been. I’m not a picketer, I’m not good at that sort of thing, but this quiet activism where I’m just in the trenches and things come my way, that’s how I do it.” Her involvement with Occupy in this supportive role fit with her personal identity and her belief that this quiet advocacy work was an important mode of activism. However, she did not personally identify as an Occupier, feeling a stronger sense of shared identity with the homeless participants than with the activists who were the central organizers of the group.

Another participant who camped with his young child described feeling significant discomfort with some of the homeless participants at the camp, particularly those with addictions. One camper made him even more uncomfortable: an ex-girlfriend who had later ended up addicted to methamphetamines showed up at the camp. He described feeling torn, wanting to help but also recognizing what was happening and being aware that the woman was likely trading sex for drugs while she was living at the camp: “Meanwhile in the other corner, there’s this other bit of activity and life going on that you know, I don’t condone at all, or can’t get behind, so again, challenging. And trying to help. With my son, I kept that hidden and stuff.” However, he came to recognize that the needs of the homeless population in the camp were as significant an issue for the movement to embrace as his own: “when the city kicked them out — like those seven tents or whatever that were left, I mean, that was, for those people, that was their issue. Like, fractional reserve banking system, they’re not — they’re worried about a place to sleep and mental health, or addiction problems, counselling. So that was very real and just as legitimate as anybody else’s concerns.” He found solidarity with the homeless population, as did

others within the movement. One woman described how she felt about people being played against each other and the push to blame homeless people for social problems:

Because it's all part of the 1% economy, it provides a lot of complex issues, a lot of divisive issues, and the bait is to somehow get struggling working people thinking that that poor person sleeping on the street that's maybe getting a bit of social assistance is the cause of their problem. When really it's the greed of the higher ups and the misuse of their tax money that is causing them grief. So I think somehow we've gotten into this position that's very backwards and wrong that we're blaming someone with nothing, who has no power to harm us, for our ills. And that's something that I think is all too common.

Despite participants' sometimes discomfort with unemployment and particularly homelessness within Occupy, homeless participants may have played a significant function in the continuation of the camps into the late fall and early winter of 2011 because they had a greater degree of biographical availability than their employed counterparts in the movement (Bunnage, 2014), allowing them to keep up the sustained camp presence, supporting the continued strength of the movement. Many people I spoke with struggled with the idea of balancing camping with other priorities, such as getting to their jobs in the morning, caring for their children, or attending classes. Despite being more likely to call themselves Occupiers, they were less likely to do the actual work of occupation. One woman noted that being able to occupy around the clock was similar to going on strike and walking a picket line:

I don't think anybody else really can afford to take a position 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. Yeah, it's hard to feed your family on strike pay, and it's really hard to be present in an occupation in Victoria when you've got the rent coming up at the end of the month or you've got a job that's demanding your full attention as well as family, or all those

kinds of things that divide your energy. But if you're already comfortable on the street and that's where your energy is already, then it's comfort zone — it makes it a little bit easier for you to occupy 24 hours a day.

The politics of park encampments themselves have been called into question (Schein, 2012). For homeless populations, the shrinking of public space and the increasing number of laws constraining its use mean that political occupations such as Occupy may represent an infringement on the spaces that represent the closest thing to home and safety for marginalized populations. Victoria's lengthy history of conflict around the Right to Sleep movement and that movement's central figure, David Arthur Johnston, added complexity to the question of occupation and the right to use public space to camp. One woman expressed her sense that being able to camp for political reasons represented a site of privilege and how that affected her choice not to camp:

I felt like, in a way, camping when I have a home, when so many people can't even camp without a home? I don't know, I felt funny about the whole, like, this encampment being allowed, but homeless people who camp are constantly chased around the city and not allowed to sleep.

Johnston himself joined in the camp in Centennial Square, despite being under a court order not to pitch a tent in the square for a one-year period. He was arrested and sentenced to 60 days in jail, at which time he went on a hunger strike. Johnston's repeated arrests for camping in Victoria (Johnston, 2011), which continued following the Occupy evictions, were part of a larger struggle on Canada's West Coast for the right to sleep outdoors safely, one which included the Supreme Court of BC striking down Victoria's bylaw restricting camping in 2008 (Hamill, 2010). Johnston and his supporters in the Victoria Right to Sleep movement saw the Occupy

movement as being a part of the larger struggle for what one participant described to me as the fight for people to simply exist, framing Johnston's struggle as larger than just the right to safety and shelter but rather as a symbolic stand against capitalism and a demand for the right to exist outside of the system. For some within the activist community on the West Coast, this was one more political occupation in a long history of political occupations, which Johnston's supporter said he had predicted: "I knew it was going to come, and I knew I was going to see David. I don't know, I just...it was almost like his prophecy. I know that's crazy, I don't like to say prophecy and David in the same sentence. But you know, it just seems like yes, this is an opportunity to put our differences aside and come back together and do something creative." However, she viewed Occupy less as a unique movement she identified with and more as another event in a long series of park occupations.

In contrast to the homeless population of the camps, some participants noted the role that privilege played in people's engagement with Occupy. One strong class-related division was related to education. A man I met on the day the court order to vacate was served at Occupy Victoria expressed his anger and frustration that the students and other university people were not present to support the campers who were soon to be evicted from the square, gesturing around him at the other homeless campers. The largely class-based divide between those who camped full time and those who did not became increasingly broad as the weeks went on following the establishment of the camps, and the sense of alienation between the two groups broadened. Along with that divide, there was also a sense that the two groups had broadly different goals and ways of speaking to those goals. An interviewee described how she came to recognize that her education was a site of privilege: "I think it was an interesting realization for me to see how using academic language and stuff is really inaccessible. So sometimes when I

was addressing people or wanting to speak to a point, it was really humbling to realize that maybe I was being classist and elitist in the language I was using.” What was especially striking for her was that the inaccessible language she was using was the very language that her academic training had taught her to use to describe inequality; talking about anticolonialism, systemic oppression, hegemony, or social location was becoming in itself an elitist act.

The conflict around how to accommodate homelessness within Occupy reflects similar struggles with hegemony seen in other movements (Maney, Woehrle, & Coy, 2005). Occupy’s framing of the movement as representing a unified 99% of the population left activists struggling to address economic inequalities within the movement while maintaining the adversarial frame that saw the 1% as the true economic enemy. Although Occupy often claimed inclusion of the voices of people in poverty, in reality, it at times failed to adequately operationalize intersectional practices that would enact that inclusion (Luft & Ward, 2009). Additionally, Occupy’s diagnostic framing that saw the problems of economic injustice as being primarily the fault of wealth concentration among the 1%, corporate control, and a failed banking system did not adequately accommodate the concerns of the section of the 99% most directly impacted by poverty, who were more concerned with safety and housing than with global financial structures, creating a failure of frame resonance among people most affected by poverty. Ernst describes this type of failure: “Privileged class and race identities not only shape the resonance of particular diagnostic frames with members in different political environments but also the perceived feasibility of such frames in working toward movement goals” (2009, p. 197).

### **Tactical and Political Disputes**

While overall, Occupy was identified most strongly with non-violent civil disobedience, disagreements were not unusual over appropriate tactics and relationships with authority, a

divide which often came down to whether and how much conflict an individual or group of individuals had experienced with police and the state. Those with histories in more radical activist movements who had experienced significant opposition and marginalization of their views were more likely to oppose relationships with authorities, along with those who had histories of criminalization. One divide was over whether and how much to cooperate with police. Some groups chose not to do any police liaison work, but in Edmonton, a liaison team was established to communicate with police. The group struggled with the balance between communication and cooperation, with liaisons coming to realize that they were now identified by police as leaders despite the official leaderlessness of the group. One woman expressed that despite feeling that the relationship she had with police during the encampment was professional and constructive, after hearing how a police officer spoke about Occupy participants, she was afraid that he would not protect or help her in the same way as another citizen:

I'm hoping that he'll think a little bit carefully, if an Occupier or anyone associated does need police service. Because that really shook my confidence just as an individual, like, what if he saw me in the camp, right? Are they going to yell at me, is all that going to happen?

Not everyone was happy with the choice to cooperate with police or political leaders at all, feeling that Occupy was a revolutionary movement that should not have anything to do with state authorities. A key organizer from the PAOV expressed her frustration with the position that the majority of PAOV members took on police cooperation:

At the very start of the movement, there was all this talk about, oh, let's, let's dialogue with police, let's dialogue with politicians, let's dialogue with everybody and let everybody know what we're doing, all of the time, let's be really nice about it and let's,

like, give and take and this and that. I was like, don't you understand, this is the revolution! We're fighting the state! Not playing ball with the state.

Occupy Edmonton battled over whether to include any politicians in the speakers list for the October 15 march. While they originally agreed that no political leaders would speak, on the day of the event, Member of Parliament Nathan Cullen, who was seeking the leadership of the federal New Democratic Party at the time, took a turn at the mic. During the following weeks, politicians of various parties would visit the camp and ended up speaking to participants. In other camps, similar visits occurred, with some campers feeling frustrated that leaders did not choose to visit:

We're all about peace, we want to work with our authorities. The mayor didn't come and visit us. Many politicians who were running visited us at camp regularly to keep their own eyes on the situation and to offer support or to say "I think you should do this differently," but at least they cared to show up. The mayor didn't even care to show up. He just cared to legislate. The mayor of Nanaimo will not take legal action. He said it's an expensive and regrettable step against his own citizens because his Occupiers have been cooperative. He has no reason to take that step against his citizens. He believes they'll work it out. So I think the people who aren't buying the hysteria are winning the day and showing grace and dignity, and I don't think it's very dignified to court action your own citizens, tell the media that we're dangerous, and refuse to visit us.

In other groups, the debate around cooperation included concerns over the involvement of labour unions and NGOs. In Edmonton, some of the core organizers were also staff with two large international environmental organizations, leading to accusations by some activists that those organizations were coopting the movement and representing special interests rather than

the 99% as a whole, with the accusation made that one could not prioritize the interests of unionized workers, environmental justice, feminism, or other specific causes and still be committed to the 99% as collective whole. Representatives of any organized group were increasingly framed as a kind of internal enemy that would undermine movement solidarity.

In Victoria, the disagreement over cooperating with police and city leadership boiled over when the group planned an action to take place during one of the city's major holiday season celebrations. During the court battle to evict the group, one of the main arguments used by city representatives was that Centennial Square was the core location for the city's Christmas celebrations and that the presence of the camp was affecting city workers' ability to set up the Christmas tree and skating rink, and the presence of the protestors would ruin the holiday celebrations for citizens. In response, two members of the group who were in court during the arguments came up with a plan over dinner following the proceedings: Occupy the Santa Claus Parade. As one of the people who came up with the plan explained,

Part of it was a publicity stunt. Part of it was a ploy to keep our name in the media. And part of it was also, like, a big fuck you. If you're going to celebrate Christmas, and that's why you gotta kick us out, well, we're going to celebrate Christmas with you, but in our way.

She wanted to protest the parade, but the two of them settled on another plan. Wearing Santa hats and signs with positive messages (hung on strings instead of sticks so as not to appear threatening to bystanders), they would join the end of the parade following the final float and distribute candy canes, oranges, and a holiday wish list flyer giving people information on charities in need in the community, with details on what and how to donate. It seemed like a fun and positive action and was quickly adopted by the rest of the PAOV; however, that changed

once the media coverage of the impending action began. Suddenly, the group was being portrayed as attempting to destroy Christmas, with a parade organizer describing it as “disgusting” on the major local news broadcast. The group went almost overnight from unanimous support for the action to nearly falling apart completely:

Internalizing that stuff almost can destroy group dynamics. Because we were getting to the point where there was going to be a splintering of the group on this. Like, you saw it, where it got really contentious, and people were like, well, if you’re doing this, you’re not PAOV. Well, what is PAOV? Like, is this all of a sudden an exclusive membership, or is this all of a sudden, like, a copyrighted thing, or what, right? That’s troubling.

The group survived the event, with the opponents recognizing after the parade that the action was harmless and even served to do some positive relationship building with the Victoria community, but the division over tactics did some lasting harm to internal relationships, with some people leaving PAOV in protest.

This was not the first major division for Victoria’s Occupy movement. During the pre-occupation planning GAs, conflicts between two groups emerged. A group largely made up of people involved with We Are Change Victoria, a libertarian activist group associated with conspiracy theories and the U.S.-based patriot movement, came out to the organizing meetings. As noted earlier, one of the major conflicts was over the inclusion of Indigenous issues and the lack of focus on conspiracies. The We Are Change members, who were referred to as 9/11 Truthers by PAOV members I spoke to, split off to form their own group, frustrated at the focus on nonviolent civil disobedience and what they perceived as a lack of action on the part of the group that became PAOV. That splinter group continued to operate as Occupy Victoria BC and continued to have confrontations with the PAOV group, including disruption of PAOV General

Assemblies and other disputes. One woman described the frustration of PAOV members around disambiguation when it came to representing the PAOV, which participants felt represented the “true” Occupy movement in Victoria:

There was never any, like, “oh, Truthers, don’t use that name.” It was always like, oh god, they’re using the Occupy Victoria name. Let’s try and like, make sure that everybody knows what’s going on and can try and navigate between who really, who is the Occupy movement in that, who’s actually doing the consensus model and trying to perpetuate those values, and who’s just using Occupy Victoria BC to forward their already unified movement thing.

Conflicts around right-wing libertarian participation in Occupy (as compared to libertarian socialism, which was common in Occupy as part of the anarchist faction in the movement) was a point of contention in many groups. In Edmonton, the Ron Paul R(evolution) logo was picked up by some Occupy Edmonton members, and a faction of the group became vocal supporters of Paul and other libertarian figures. While it did not lead to the same splitting of the group as occurred in Victoria, eventually left-leaning participants pushed the libertarian faction out of the Edmonton group.

Collective identity has a strong relationship with movements’ strategic choices (Poletta & Jasper, 2001; Benford & Snow, 2000; Jasper, 1997). Tactical divisions have existed for quite some time within movements such as the global justice movement, where the concept of diversity of tactics is well established and protests have featured designated colour blocs, most (in)famously the Black Bloc anarchists, but also Green, Yellow, and Red Bloc groupings. The colour groups represent an associated escalation of tactics from the playful and theatrical through classic non-violent civil disobedience into disruptive tactics (Graeber, 2009). This diversity

seems to have worked effectively with larger protests, including the Occupy Wall Street group in New York, but created contention in smaller Occupy groups such as Edmonton and Victoria, where disruptive tensions around tactics and collective identity (Smithey, 2009) reached near-destructive levels, reinforced at times by a need for smaller groups to maintain a very tightly coherent collective identity, constrained through a rigid adherence to consensus decision making that left little flexibility for tactical diversity. Additionally, while movements have room for a wide range of collective identities, at times “identity discrepancies grow or become so apparent that they eventually weigh in favour of establishing a separate identity” (Coles, 1999), leading as it did in Victoria to more than one movement group existing in the same city at the same time. While problematic in Victoria, this type of splitting has been effective in other movements such as the *Indignados*, where the formation of a number of smaller assemblies allowed for the movement to address wide-ranging concerns that became networked through the larger city-level general assemblies (Lopez & Ruiz, 2014). This model also functioned to some extent in the working group model seen in larger Occupy camps such as the one at Wall Street.

### **Sexual and Gender Minorities**

Members of the LGBTQ community participated in Occupy in significant numbers, with many of those participants noting that economic inequality disproportionately affects marginalized community members such as LGBTQ youth and homeless people (Luongo, 2011). Working groups representing sexual and gender minorities were a part of many local Occupy groups, and at Occupy Edmonton, one young man organized a series of workshops to help activists better understand the needs and concerns of the LGBTQ community.

In New York, Queering OWS was formed, a working group dedicated to raising awareness of and encouraging LGBTQ participation in the movement as well as creating safer

spaces for sexual and gender minorities at Zuccotti. When I visited the park, their table stood near where I ended up sleeping in a borrowed mummy bag underneath a table of books in the library area, which had come to be known as a safer place to sleep for women and trans people in the park (before the Safer Spaces committee erected a tent dedicated to those groups). It was cold and uncomfortable to sleep on the pavement with my backpack under my head and my field notebook and camera stuffed down by my feet to keep them safe, but the library space felt safer than many other areas of the park for someone with no tent who might be perceived as vulnerable.

However, within the movement, trans people were often represented among the most vulnerable participants, while at the same time, they struggled for inclusion. Shortly after the eviction in Victoria, the Trans Day of Remembrance vigil took place in Centennial Square near where the camp had stood. Members of the Victoria trans community and their allies told me about their concern for D, an elderly, homeless trans person who had been living at the camp. D was experiencing physical and mental illness and needed additional supports, and the community was worried about whether the person would be stranded on the streets without help, especially because in shelters, there was a lot of bullying and abuse over D wearing D's clothing of choice. One of the people I interviewed, a wheelchair user himself, described seeing the individual on the street following the eviction and feeling sad and helpless:

[D] lives over here on the street full time, these same people who were kind of in the camp and had a place and sense of community are now just back out on the street where they were before. And that's not fucking Christmas, right? I was catching a bus yesterday, and there across the street is [D] having a smoke by a garbage can, in a

wheelchair that someone brought out from PAOV. With flat tires. And I just — it just breaks my heart.

In Edmonton, I was at one of the women's discussion gatherings when a person came up to ask if it was okay for them to join in the discussion as a person who identified as genderqueer. The women in the group turned to each other uncertainly and then asked for some time to discuss whether the group was women-only or would include genderqueer participants (those who identify as genderless, gender fluid, third gender, or as having more than one gender). The trans person walked a short distance away and sat down on the grass, waiting for the group to decide. However, after about half an hour of discussion, when the group looked around to invite the waiting individual back into the circle, that person had left, having given up on being included. A marginalized group had turned gender discrimination on another person, who did not return to the camp after that event.

Gamson states that within sex and gender movements, “building and maintaining collective identity boundaries takes place not just vis-a-vis clearly designated antagonists ... but largely on the unstable terrain of contested membership” (1997, p. 192). These boundaries are sometimes contested from within as well as from without; in the case of the Occupy group in Edmonton, the group of women debating trans inclusion included a woman who noted that she herself identified with masculinity, although not explicitly as a man, underlining the difficulty in setting identity boundaries around gender. Sexual and gender minorities experienced similar erasure of their issues within the frame of class consciousness (Okechukwu, 2014) as women did within Occupy. Trans people were additionally marginalized by their exclusion from feminist efforts to address gender issues within the movement, leaving trans community issues out of the

debate despite trans people being among the most vulnerable to the economic and social injustices the movement opposed.

### **Conclusion**

Occupy was a notable movement in the breadth of the participants it attracted. For many of the movement's participants under the age of 40, it was the first time they had seen a social movement that so effectively reached out to a large number of disparate communities and mobilized not only across North America, but also internationally. While it was preceded by the global justice protests of the late 1990s and early 2000s, for many, it was the first movement that spoke clearly and loudly on behalf of their lives. However, while it succeeded in shifting the dialogue around economic justice and brought the concept of the 1% into the cultural conversation, Occupy has not yet seen the same kind of major changes result from the movement as those that resulted from other movements that emerged internationally during the same time period, such as the Greek anti-austerity movement, which resulted in the election of Syriza in 2015, and Iceland's Kitchenware Revolution, with the subsequent changes to the Icelandic constitution and the Icesave referenda. While it is simplistic to attribute Occupy's fading from the cultural discourse to any one single cause, the movement's failure to create ongoing engagement among its former thousands of participants can be understood as partly a failure to create a sustained collective identity that would continue participants' commitment to the movement.

Occupy's working group structure offered some framework to develop a network of solidarities within the movement, but this was never fully developed. In comparison, within the global justice movement, large actions were often representative of the coming together of large numbers of affinity groups who had strong collective identities on their own and saw the larger

actions as acts of solidarity with a broader cause without a need to exist on a sustained basis within a large movement umbrella. The future of our social movements may be found more in this model of strong collective identity groups acting in a network of shifting, issues-based solidarities, as can be seen in other ongoing movements (for example, women's caucuses within trade union movements and their affiliation with other feminist groups). The future of the fight for economic and social justice may lie within our abilities to build these networks, coming together in various subsets of the imagined 99% as solidarity demands.

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