Design Selection and Justification

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The Occupy movement started in September 2011. Wall Street and Zuccotti Park would become headquarters to the protest which would include over 100 cities in the United States, and spread to 25 countries (Gibson, 2013). The movement would gain momentum and notoriety without the presence of an individual leader or formal structure. Gibson (2013) interjected Occupy was viewed by skeptics as unorganized, leaderless, and without a specific vision. The Occupy movement achieved success despite the absence of a delegated leader or a formal structure. Van Stekelenburg (2012) reported “If people in 1,5901 cities gather under the term ‘Occupy’ all shouting: ‘We are the 99%’ you can indeed speak of a successful movement. And that all without formal leadership, without old-fashioned top-down organization, and without communication infrastructure” (p. 224). The inquiry which initiated the research; How can a movement function without organized leadership?

**Background**

Erde (2014) maintained the Occupy Wall Street movement was an experiment in non-structured, leaderless organization modeled after the Spanish Indignados. Organizational stability was identified as a weakness of the Occupy movements. Gamson and Sifry (2013) declared the decentralized decision-making structure of the organization impeded planning and implementation of directives. Presenting the findings of the achievements and subsequent demise of the social movements will assist future studies on the topic by establishing patterns and methods obtained from analyzing previous social movements. The Occupy phenomenon has had far reaching significances. Huat (2017) concluded, Occupy Taiwan Legislature and Occupy Hong Kong Central, were direct descendants of Occupy Wall Street.

**Problem Statement**

Social movements have a long and storied history, from college student sit-ins demanding civil rights, to citizens protesting the Vietnam War; civilians have exercised the right to freedom of speech. Zald (2005) equated mass insurrections, strikes, mutinies, riots, and takeovers, with social movements. The Occupy Wall Street social movement gained notoriety in 2011 with the help of a healthy social media presence and remained in the news for two months (Piven, 2014). The diverse participants of 300 cities were united against inequality, using make-shift encampments as meeting grounds (Piven, 2014). Aldas (2013) conferred the agenda for Occupy Wall Street was to transform society accepted norms of class, segregation, discrimination, prejudice, and power relations. Compared to the results of the Civil Rights movement, or the Women’s Liberation movement, the Occupy movement was inefficient. The power of movements is in the ability of the participants to upset the daily routines in the areas occupied (Piven, 2014), yet the Occupy Wall Street success gained momentum from a strong social media presence and organized structure (Gamson & Sifry, 2013) without noted leadership. The problem statement is: How did the Occupy Wall Street movement succeed without formal leadership?

**Purpose Statement**

The purpose of the research study is to analyze and evaluate leadership models of social movements for similarities or patterns with the success or failure of the movements. The results of the study can be formulated into leadership models which can be adapted to nonprofit organizations for implementation. If positive results are observed in nonprofit organizations which implement the positive patterns, the leadership model would be adapted to the for-profit sector for study. The results may provide a resource for future participants of movements who seek an understanding of leadership.

**Research**

The central, qualitative research question for the content analysis study:

R1. How can the research study analyze and evaluate leadership models of social movements for similarities or patterns with the success or failure of the movement?

Sub-questions

R2. How did the Occupy movement formulate organized activities without designated leadership?

R3. How did the Occupy movement implement and engage in organized activities?

**Method Selection**

The research method for this study will be a qualitative content analysis. The study will contain sourced material obtained from peer reviewed articles focused on the Occupy Wall Street movement, and semi-structured interviews of the Occupy movement to gain additional information and details.

**Justification**

Qualitative research is an appropriate method to conduct the proposed research. Tracy (2010) offered eight standards by which qualitative research is considered high quality and of equal value as quantitative methods. The criteria submitted by Tracy (2010) included: worthy topic, rich rigor, sincerity, credibility, resonance, significant contribution, ethics, and meaningful coherence. The qualitative best practices offered by Tracy (2010) add legitimacy and substantiate the scientific validity of the method. The qualitative approach selected for the project is a content analysis study. In contrast, quantitative studies are used to compare variables.

**Design Selection**

**Positionality**

On October 6, 2011, I gathered on the corner of Las Vegas Boulevard and Tropicana with other participants to engage in a peaceful rally for socio-economic issues. The march proceeded up Las Vegas Boulevard to the chants of “Banks got bailed out, we got sold out” accompanied by a police escort. The demonstrators waved signs which read, “We are the 99%”. That day I was a participant in the Occupy Las Vegas movement. The next day a smaller demonstration took place at the Fremont Street experience with a similar approach. I experienced a social movement that was inclusive, organic, and reproducible. I was a participant in the Occupy movement.

**Content Analysis**

The peer reviewed, text data will be collected, analyzed, and sorted to establish categories. The coding of the source material is consistent with research practices. Hsieh and Shannon (2005) implied the popular technique is a flexible method for extrapolating meanings and concepts from text for classification purposes. The collected data will be coded inductively. Moretti et al. (2011) maintained inductive content analysis develop naturally as the reader comprehends the written text which allows for direct input of the observed literature without researcher preconceived restraints. The coded data will enable the exploratory nature of the study to be interpreted through the participatory perspective of the researcher. The categories will be examined and compared to distinguish frequencies.

**Participant Interviews**

Individual and group semi-structured interviews will be conducted with open-ended questions which will be recorded and transcribed for accuracy. Closed-ended questions would not produce in-depth responses which accurately convey the experiences of the participants. Günes (2016) stated open-ended questions required the responded to offer detailed answers and employ critical thinking. All interviews and observations will be conducting using the highest ethical practices, and legally approved by all participants.

**Justification**

The selection of the qualitative content analysis as the primary data collection method is supported by the established results of prior research studies. Hsieh and Shannon (2005) traced the history of content analysis back to the 18th century in Scandinavia. Content analysis has been utilized in the health care profession more recently. Elo and Kyngas (2008) reported the method was used for examining hymns, newspaper, and magazine articles in the 19th century. The information assisted the researcher in formulating concepts and descriptions of phenomenon.

Reporting the findings of the Occupy Wall Street social movement phenomenon as it relates to the leadership model will require the flexibility of a qualitative approach. The research method and design align with the purpose of the study which is to analyze and evaluate the leadership model of the Occupy Wall Street social movement.

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