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To what extent did Karl Marx's political thought influence the Occupy Wall Street Movement in the 21st Century?

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Introduction

To what extent did Karl Marx's political thought influence the Occupy Wall Street movement in the 21st century? The research into the influence of Karl Marx's political thought on the Occupy Wall Street movement in the 21st century holds significant implications for policymakers and governance, more specifically, in addressing issues of economic inequality and social justice. Understanding the depth of Marx's influence on the Occupy Wall Street movement can help to inform policy through income inequality and wealth redistribution, social justice, and economic policies, financial regulation and accountability, political activism, and civil liberties, economic and social movements, and public discourse. A variated understanding of how Marxist thought influenced the movement can inform policies that work to address income inequality and wealth redistribution. Having this knowledge can help policymakers develop more effective measures to ensure an equal distribution of resources and opportunities. Policymakers can also draw insight from the movement's alignment with Marxist ideas to shape social justice policies, which include reforms of labor rights, access to education, affordable healthcare, and social safety nets.

Understanding how Marx's thought influences the need for increased financial regulations and corporate accountability can guide policy decisions that are related to financial reform, corporate governance, and regulatory frameworks. Policymakers can also consider the impact of the Occupy Wall Street movement on political activism and civil liberties, which includes the right to protest and free speech. Having this information can help to inform policies related to the protection of civil rights and the handling of mass protests. Finally, the research can work towards helping policymakers predict the emergence and development of future economic and social movements by recognizing the lasting appeal of Marxist thought in addressing contemporary societal challenges. This study on the influence of Karl Marx's political thought on

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the Occupy Wall Street movement in the 21st century offers valuable insight for policymakers in

the realms of economic, social, and political governance. Overall, knowing the extent of Marxist

influence within the movement can help policymakers craft more informed and effective policies

aimed at addressing economic inequality and social justice, which can contribute to a more

equitable and just society.

Occupy Wall Street

The Occupy Wall Street (OWS) movement was a socio-political movement that emerged in the

United States in 2011. The movement gained importance as a response to economic inequality,

corporate influence in politics, and perceived injustices within the financial system. "3,000

supporters flooded the space and spilled out onto the adjacent sidewalks: Union hardhats,

community activists, and civil libertarians, activated by word of mouth, by text or by tweet. Their

handmade signs testified to their motivations and aspirations". The movement originated in

New York City's Zuccotti Park on September 17,2011, when a group of activists and organizers

gathered to protest the perceived greed and corruption of major financial institutions. The central

theme of OWS was the critique of economic inequality. Protesters argue that a small percentage

of the population, the 1%, held a disproportionality large share of wealth and political power.

OWS participants expressed concern about the undue influence of large corporations on politics

and policymaking. The movement aimed to draw attention to the perceived close ties between

Wall Street and the U.S. government. Calls for wealth redistribution and a fairer distribution of

economic resources were common. Protesters advocated for politics that would address income

disparity and provide more opportunities for the middle and lower classes. OWS Targeted major

¹ Michael A. Gould-Wartofsky. 2014. The Occupiers: The Making of the 99 Percent Movement. Oxford: Oxford

University Press.

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financial institutions, especially Wall Street banks, as symbols of the economic system they opposed. The movement criticized the role of these institutions in the 2009 financial crisis and subsequent bailouts. OWS was not only concerned with economic issues, but also addressed broader social justice concerns. Activists focused on issues such as affordable housing, healthcare, and education.

The movement was known for its strategy of occupying public spaces, particularly Zuccotti Park in lower Manhattan. Participants established an encampment to sustain their protest and engage in discussions. OWS has a decentralized organizational structure, with decisions made through a consensus-based process in general assemblies. This structure allowed for inclusivity but also posed challenges in terms of articulating specific demands. Occupy wall street has a significant impact on public discourse. It brought issues of economic inequality to the forefront and influenced political conversations during the 2012 U.S. presidential campaign.

Despite its visibility, OWS did not result in significant policy changes or systemic reforms. The movement faced criticism for lacking clear demands and a cohesive agenda. While the physical occupations dissipated, the themes and concerns raised by OWS persisted in subsequent activism. The movement left a lasting legacy in terms of influencing discussions about economic justice and social inequality. In summary, Occupy Wall Street was a protest movement that captured global attention by highlighting economic inequality, corporate influence, and broader social justice issues.

Karl Marx's Political Thought

Karl Marx, a 19th century Germany Philosopher, economist, and political theorist, is known for his influential ideas on social, economic, and political structures. His political thought laid the groundwork for various movements and revolutions throughout history, including the Occupy

Wall Street movement. Marx's primary focus was on critiquing capitalism. He argued that capitalism inherently led to economic inequality, exploitation of the working class by the owning class and alienation of workers from the products of their labor. Marx's concept of historical materialism posited that societies evolve through class struggle, "Marx's writings of the relationship, in capitalist society, between the political state, on the one hand, and the economically dominate class, on the other" he believed that the capitalist system would naturally create tensions between the proletariat and bourgeoisie, ultimately leading to a revolutionary transformation of society. Marx discussed the alienation of workers within a capitalist system. He argued that workers become estranged from the products of their labor, the process of labor itself, and even from their own human potential. This alienation contributes to social discontent. Marx's ideas also extended to the global stage with his analysis of imperialism and its role in sustaining capitalism. He argued that powerful nations exploit weaker ones for resources and markets, perpetuating economic inequality on a global scale.

The Occupy Wall Street movement, which emerged in 2011, echoed Marx's concerns about economic inequality and corporate influence. Protesters focused on the disproportionate power held by financial institutions and corporations, highlighting the 1% versus the 99% divided. Occupy Wall Street criticized the growing wealth disparity, corporate greed, and the perceived undue influence of financial elites on political decisions. These align with Marx's prediction about the concentration of wealth in the hands of a few. While Occupy Wall Street did not explicitly identify as a Marxist movement, it reflected a broader anti-capitalist sentiment consistent with Marx's critique. Participants sought economic justice, fairness, and a reevaluation

² Wolff, Jonathan, and David Leopold. "Karl Marx." Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, December 21, 2020. https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/marx/#StatCapiSoci.

of the existing socio-economic structure. Marx's ideas have had a lasting impact on political thought, inspiring various movements that challenge economic systems and power structures. Occupy Wall Street, in drawing attention to economic disparities, brought Marx's critique back into the public discourse. Overall, Karl Marx's political thought, with its emphasis on class struggle, critique of capitalism, and predictions of economic inequality, contributes to the ideological understanding of movements like Occupy Wall Street.

Literature Review

Scholars and researchers have explored various areas of this topic, providing insight into the extent of Marxist influence and the broader sociopolitical context in which the movement emerged. An overview of Karl Marx, written by the Sandford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, provides great insight into who Karl Marx was and what he stood for within his ideologies and theories. It outlines his entire life from his early years all the way through to his legacies, which will provide an in-depth analysis of how his theories and ideologies could relate to the Occupy Wall Street movement through further research. A book called "The Occupiers: The Making of the 99 Percent Movement" by Michael A. Gould-Warsofsky is a perfect example. It dives into the Occupy Wall Street movement by conducting interviews with activists. It offers valuable insight into the movements of political thought, ideology, and its relationship with Marxist principles, providing an overall understanding of how Marx's ideas influenced participants.

Another great example is the article by Nick J. Sciullo "Reassessing Corporate Personhood in the Wake of Occupy Wall Street", This article examines the dynamic evolution of corporate personhood jurisprudence in the United States Supreme Court, concurrently providing a Marxist analysis of this legal framework. This analysis is intertwined with an exploration of how Occupy movements have challenged corporate dominance within the U.S. legal and policy

outlook. The articles dive into the influence of Marxist criticism on legal discourse and emphasize the significance of applying a Marxist framework in contemporary legal critiques. Furthermore, it highlights the contributions of various authors and their works that have shaped the ongoing resistance against corporate personhood and made known the interplay between the Occupy movements and the world of law and capitalism. A source by Jackie DiSalvo "Occupy Wall Street: Creating a Strategy for a Spontaneous Movement" is one of the rarest sources. This source is a first-hand account, with the writing being primarily from her involvement in Occupy Wall Street. She goes into her Marxist views, the strengths of Occupy Wall Street, her experiences, and what it was portrayed as through different points of view, sources of Occupy Wall Street's contradictions, as well as Occupy Wall Street's weakness and its demise. It is mainly a first-hand account of the Occupy Wall Street movement with slight mentions of Marxism but provides great insight into what it was like to be a part of the movement and different aspects of it.

Finally, there was also a wide division between the public over the Occupy Wall Street Movement that is covered within the Pew Research Center. It gives statistics for the support and opposition for the movement on the scale of strongly and somewhat as well as including a section for neither support or oppose and don't know whether they support nor oppose it. It shows that there is an overall 39% support of the movement, with strong support being 16% and somewhat support being 23%. Similarly, it shows that there was an overall 35% opposition towards the movement with Strongly oppose being at 16% and somewhat oppose being at 19%.

³ "Public Divided over Occupy Wall Street Movement." Pew Research Center - U.S. Politics & Policy, October 24, 2011. https://www.pewresearch.org/politics/2011/10/24/public-divided-over-occupy-wall-street-movement/.

⁴ Ibid.

With 6% being neither and 20% being don't know.⁵ It goes into how it compared to the tea party and how supportive those were who tracked the Occupy Wall Street movement. These works offer a wide range of information and perspectives on the influence of Karl Marx's political thought on the Occupy Wall Street movement in the 21st century. These studies provide valuable insight into the movement's correlation with Marxist ideas and the ideas of the Occupy Wall Street Movement and Karl Marx himself.

Hypothesis

Karl Marx's political thought has a notable and visible influence on the ideological foundation, discussions, and strategies of the Occupy Wall Street movement in the 21st century. The movement's core principles and demands, reflecting Marxist concepts of class struggle and economic inequality, were shaped by Marx's ideas to a substantial extent. This demonstrates the enduring relevance of Marxist thought in shaping contemporary movements aimed at addressing economic inequalities. Examining the influence of Marx's ideas on Occupy Wall Street helps the understanding of how ideological foundations impact the goals and strategies of social movements. If the movement's core principles align with Marxist concepts, it implies a deliberate choice to frame issues in terms of class dynamics and economic disparities, potentially impacting the movement's objectives and the way it addresses societal issues. The hypothesis suggests that Marxist concepts influenced not just theoretical discussions but also practical strategies for social change. If this influence is substantial, it raises questions about the movements potential effectiveness in addressing economic inequalities and class struggles.

⁵ Ibid.

Assessing the impact of Marxist thought on the movement can provide insight into the practicality and implications of applying such ideologies in contemporary activism. If Marx's ideas are prominently reflected in the Occupy Wall Street movement, it focuses on the ongoing relevance of discussions surrounding economic inequality. The movement contributes to a broader dialogue on economic disparities, bringing attention to issues that are deeply rooted in historical theories of social and economic structures. Analyzing the connection between Marx's political thought and the Occupy Wall Street movement sheds light on the interplay between ideology and activism.

Understanding how theoretical frameworks influence the practical aspects of a movement provides valuable insights into the dynamics of contemporary social and political engagement. If the Occupy Wall Street movement is significantly influenced by Marx's ideas, it highlights the enduring legacy of Marxist thought in shaping not only academic discourse but also real-world movements. In conclusion, looking at the implications of Marx's influence on the Occupy Wall Street movement goes beyond acknowledging historical connections. It works to understand the movement's potential impact, its role in ongoing societal dialogues, and the broader implications for contemporary activism and efforts to address economic inequalities.

Variable Definition and operationalization

The independent, dependent, and control variables within this research topic will be used to assess the extent of Karl Marx's influence on the Occupy Wall Street movement and to identify any factors that may affect the relationship between Marxist thought and the movement's ideological position. The independent variable of this research proposal is the influence of Karl Marx's political thought. The operationalization of this independent variable will work to uncover the extent to which the key principles and ideas from Karl Marx's political thought such

as class struggle, economic inequality, and anti-capitalist sentiments, were all embraced within the ideology and goals of the Occupy Wall Street movement. To measure these influences, content analysis of movement manifestos, slogans, speeches, and other primary sources will be employed.

The dependent variable of this research proposal is the Occupy Wall Street movement's ideological alignment with Marx's political thought. The operationalization of this dependent variable will work to show the degree to which the Occupy Wall Street movement's ideological foundations, principles, and strategies line up with Karl Marx's political thought. This will be assessed through a structured coding system that categorizes and qualifies specific instances of ideological unity with Marx's concepts.

The control variables of this research topic are the socioeconomic context, external influence, demographic characteristics, and media coverage. The Socioeconomic context is based on the broader socioeconomic and political context of the 21st century, which includes economic crisis, income inequality, and public sentiment. External influences are the factors that are not Karl Marx's political thought that may have influenced the Occupy Wall Street movement, such as other ideological traditions, social movements, or political events. Demographic characteristics are characteristics of the movement's participants, which include age, education, and political affiliation, which could affect the movement's alignment with Marxist thought. Finally, media coverage could change the ideological position of the Occupy Wall Street movement through the extent and nature of the media covered as well as public perceptions of the movement.

Research design to test the hypothesis.

To test the hypothesis that Karl Marx's political thought significantly influenced the Occupy Wall Street movement in the 21st century, the research design will work through a mixed methods research design that combines both quantitative and qualitative approaches to be employed. The quantitative phase will focus on content analysis, such as data collection, coding system, and quantitative analysis itself. To begin with data collection, gathering comprehensive data of primary sources related to the Occupy Wall Street movement, which includes manifestos, speeches, protest signs, and official statements, as well as compiling documents and writings of Karl Marx and his theories. An example of a primary source would be Jackie DiSalvo's own involvement in OWS, "My Marxist views are very different, and conclude that the potential of OWS to spur a large, militant, national class conscious, multi-issue mass movement, unprecedented in our time, was squandered partly due to anarchist influence". When it comes to coding systems, there will be a development of a structured coding system to identify and categorize instances where Marx's ideas are mentioned or implied in the Occupy Wall Street movement discourse.

The quantitative analysis will analyze the coded data using statistical methods.

Calculating the quantitative measures of influence about the percentage of documents that mention Marx's ideas, the frequency of specific Marxist concepts, and material patterns in their use. The qualitative phase will focus more on an in-depth analysis of content analysis expansion, thematic coding, and a comparative analysis. The content analysis expansion will focus on the

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⁶ Disalvo, Jackie. 2015. "Occupy Wall Street: Creating a Strategy for a Spontaneous Movement." *Science & Society* 79 (2) (04): 264-287. doi:https://doi.org/10.1521/siso.2015.79.2.264. https://www.proquest.com/scholarly-journals/occupy-wall-street-creating-strategy-spontaneous/docview/1662048331/se-2.

selection of a sub-sample of documents with the highest frequency of Marx-related references from the quantitative analysis to provide a more detailed, efficient, and targeted analysis within the broader context of content analysis. The thematic coding is conducted through a qualitative analysis to identify and categorize the specific themes and concepts derived from Karl Marx's political thought. This will include concepts that are related to class struggle, economic inequality, anti-capitalism, and other relevant ideas. The comparative analysis will compare the thematic content obtained from the Occupy Wall Street movement's discourse with Marx's original writings to assess the depth of influence and alignment. This is shown in "Reassessing Corporate Personhood" in a comparison between occupy movements and Marx political thought with how "Marxist criticism of corporate personhood juris prejudice that culminates in a discussion of the Occupy Movement's logic of resistance to corporate domination in the United States Law and Policy." ⁷ To enhance the qualitative analysis, there will also be interviews conducted with individuals who were a part of the Occupy Wall Street movement.

The results of the quantitative and qualitative phases will be triangulated to provide a comprehensive understanding of the extent and nature of Karl Marx's influence on the Occupy Wall Street movement. Some of the limitations to this research design may be the challenges that come from proving a direct link between Marx's ideas and the Occupy Wall Street movement discourse and actions. Some other limitations may be external factors, ideologies, and historical events that could have also influenced the movement which will be considered and controlled. Employing this research design will allow a deeper understanding of how Marx's political thought influenced the Occupy Wall Street movement and how Marx's ideas were manifested in

⁷ Sciullo, Nick J. 2013. "Reassessing Corporate Personhood in the Wake of Occupy Wall Street." *Widener Law Journal* 22 (3): 611–85.

https://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&AuthType=sso&db=edsgao&AN=edsgcl.404538159&site=eds-live.

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the principles and demands of the movement. All in all, the combination of quantitative and qualitative methods allows for a more comprehensive analysis of the research question and hypothesis.

Barrier/ problem and solutions

There will be several different barriers and problems that will be encountered while conducting this research on the influence of Karl Marx's political thought on the Occupy Wall Street movement. Some of the potential barriers and problems that are crucial to be aware of while conducting this research are data availability and quality, inability to establish a direct link, selection bias, subjective interpretations, changing discourse, interview access, and ethical considerations. When it comes to data availability and quality, there is an obvious barrier, limited access to high-quality primary sources, such as internal communications and private documents of Occupy Wall Street activists, which may delay a comprehensive analysis. Establishing a direct link between Marx's ideas and the Occupy Wall Street movement discourse and actions is challenging as well, and other ideological influences and historical factors may complicate attribution.

Another big challenge is selection bias. The individuals and documents may not fully represent the entire Occupy Wall Street movement. The interpretation of references to Marx's ideas in Occupy Wall Street documents can be subjective and can potentially lead to different conclusions "About four-in-ten Americans say they support the Occupy Wall Street movements (39%) while nearly as many (35%) say they oppose the movement launched last month in New

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York's financial district". However, the coding system will help towards controlling the subjectivity that may affect the conclusion. Another challenge is the changing discourse within the Occupy Wall Street discourse due to its evolving which makes it challenging to capture the entire scope of influence accurately. Gaining access to participants for interviews may be difficult, since they may have dispersed or become less active since the movement's peak.

Finally, ethical considerations are the most important when research involves interviews since there are concerns surrounding privacy and informed consent. Continued, to combat the challenges presented above, there will be a wide variety of solutions employed. To begin with data availability and quality, the solution to this problem is to collaborate with organizations and individuals who were involved in the movement to be able to access relevant documents as well as use documents that are available to the public. To combat the challenges that arise from the inability to establish a direct link, the employment of a mixed-methods approach to triangulate evidence, combining quantitative and qualitative data, as well as consider employing control variables to account for external influences. When it comes to selection bias, The use of random sampling techniques when selecting documents for analysis and conducting interviews with various participants to mitigate that selection bias will work as a solution. The solution to the problem of subjective interpretation would be to use a structured coding system and involve multiple researchers to enhance the reliability of the analysis, as well as provide a comprehensive guideline in the coding to minimize subjectivity.

^{8 &}quot;Public Divided over Occupy Wall Street Movement." Pew Research Center - U.S. Politics & Policy, October 24, 2011. https://www.pewresearch.org/politics/2011/10/24/public-divided-over-occupy-wall-street-movement/.

Conducting a longitudinal analysis will help to combat the issue of changing discourse due to its ability to trace changes in the movement discourse and the evolution of its alignment with Marxist ideas will be the way to override this challenge. The solution to Interview access would be to reach out to former participants through social networks or online forums will work to provide a solution to this problem while ensuring confidentially an ethical consideration in interviews. To combat the biggest challenge of ethical consideration, this research will adhere to ethical guidelines, obtain informed consent, and protect the anonymity of participants when conducting interviews or accessing personal documents. To conclude, anticipating and dressing these barriers and problems in this research proposal will enhance the quality and reliability of the findings which will ultimately lead to a more comprehensive and information-filled analysis of the extent of Karl Marx's influence on the Occupy Wall Street movement in the 21st century.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this research works to shed light on the profound impact of Karl Marx's political thought on the Occupy Wall Street (OWS) movement that unfolded in the 21st century. By employing a multidisciplinary approach, encompassing political theory, social activism analysis, and historical context, the study aims to measure the depth and significance of Marx's influence on a modern sociopolitical movement driven by concerns of economic inequality and social justice. Through an exploration of primary sources, protest literature, and the discourse of the movement, the research provides a nuanced understanding of how Marx's ideas, originating in the 19th century, resonate within a contemporary activist context, contributing to a broader comprehension of the dynamic relationship between historical ideas and present- day activism. The research design, employing a mixed methods approach, aims to test the hypothesis that Marx's political thought significantly influenced OWS movements. By utilizing quantitative

content analysis and qualitative thematic coding, the study seeks to uncover the extent of alignment between Marx's ideas and the movements ideology. Control variables, such as socioeconomic context, external influences, demographic characteristics, and media coverage, will be considered to provide a comprehensive analysis. Despite potential challenges, such as data availability, establishing a direct link, and ethical considerations, the research proposes solutions, including collaboration with relevant organizations, a mixed-methods approach, random sampling, structured coding system, and adherence to ethical guidelines. These solutions aim to enhance the reliability and validity of the research findings. In essence, this research contributes to a deeper understanding of the intricate relationship between Karl Marx's political thought and the Occupy Wall Street movement, offering valuable insight for policymakers dealing with issues of economic inequality and social justice in the contemporary sociopolitical landscape. By examining the enduring influence of Marx's ideas on modern activism, the study provides a foundation for informed policy decisions that address the challenges of our time, ultimately contributing to the pursuit of a more equitable and just society.

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Variable Definition & Operationalization

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Hypothesis

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Abstract

The research will investigate the intriguing influences of Karl Marx's political thought and the Occupy Wall Street movement that came to be in the 21st Century. The study looks to measure the depth and significance of Marx's influence on a modern sociopolitical movement driven by economic inequality and social justice concerns By taking a multidisciplinary approach that combines political theory, social activism analysis, and historical context, this investigation shows the extent to which Marx's ideas informed the ideological foundation and strategies of the Occupy Wall Street movement. By looking through primary sources, protest literature, and the discourse of the movement, this research provides a variated understanding of how Marxist political thought, which originated in the 19th century, is seen within a 21st-century movement, thus contributing to a broader comprehension of the dynamic relationship between historical ideas and contemporary activism. The findings of this study work to create a deeper understanding of the relevance of Marxist thought in the pursuit of economic and social justice, as well as showing its continued influence on the modern sociopolitical landscape.

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Solutions

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