

Countercultural Reflections: The Beat Generation and Occupy Wall Street in Comparative Perspective.

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1. Introduction

On September 18, 2011, one day after the so-called “Day of Rage”, *The New York Times* reports that a group of protesters gathered around the New York Stock Exchange and occupied Wall Street (Moynihan, “Protesters” par. 1). According to the newspaper, the protesters had been planning “September 17” for months and were aiming to occupy Wall Street “as an expression of anger over a financial system that they say favors the rich and powerful at the expense of ordinary citizens” (Moynihan, “Protesters” par. 1). Inspired by the events on the Tahrir Square in Egypt earlier that year, the protesters, mostly young people, called for people from all over the country to come to New York, bring their tents, and camp out until measures are taken to change the financial system in favor of the 99% of the American population that is not extremely rich (Moynihan, “Protesters” pars. 1-11). Parallels were quickly drawn between Occupy Wall Street and the Tea Party, a movement that emerged in 2009 and consisted of conservatives who demanded more liberty and less federal governmental influence (Scherer 7-10). Tea Party members also found each other and united through social media. Their activism resulted in a shift in the political conversation in the United States, mostly within the Republican Party. The party found itself divided between conservative Tea Party members such as Vice President nominee for the 2008 presidential elections, Sarah Palin, and more moderate Republicans like former Secretary of State Colin Powell. Occupy Wall Street was seen as a reaction to the Tea Party from the left “with a similar toolkit and its own visual iconography- fewer tricorn hats, more tattoos” (Scherer 7). Public reaction to Occupy Wall Street was mixed: some writers, including political activist Michael Moore and *The New York Times* journalist Colin Moynihan, argued that the Occupy movement represented a

sentiment widely present among Americans. According to Moore, “this action struck a raw nerve, sending a shock wave through the United States, because what these kids were doing was what tens of millions of people wished they could do” (Moore 12). Others criticized the alleged opportunism of the privileged protesters. They argued that the protesters were only able to protest twenty-four hours a day because they were protected by the social security system. Therefore, critics believed the protesters were using a system that they opposed, such as working or studying. In a comment reacting to the first article in *The New York Times* concerning the Occupation of Wall Street, someone under the name of “Lyle Vos, Democratic Candidate for President 2012” wrote for example: “If I lived off my parents or got a check every month from the government, perhaps I, too, would be out there with these childish protesters. However, I have to make a living and save and invest my money” (Lyle).

This critique with regards to the privileged position of the protestors is similar to the critique another countercultural group received in the 1950s and 1960s. The Beat Generation was widely viewed as a group of powerless privileged people. One of the most striking paradoxes within the Beat Generation is that the members were both strongly opposing the new consumer culture that emerged after World War II and using it to their advantage. Beat icons such as William Burroughs called for freely accessible items that would be disentangled from capitalism, such as bodies and ideas. They considered capitalism to be a force that diverged Americans from self-conscious, critical individuals towards “passive excessiveness” (Johnston 106). In addition, as American Literature professor Allan Johnston argues, this passive excessiveness in combination with the increasingly present centralized oligopolies of the 1950s “fostered a vision of ostensibly ‘happy’

consumerist conformity, with definitive socio-sexual roles (male as provider, female as consumer), specific stereotypes of the ‘typical’ family, and an aversion to social criticism or difference” (106). This pattern of cultural conformity was exactly what the Beat Generation most despised in Post-World War II America. Therefore, they remained in the margins of society and adopted a lifestyle of “tune in, turn on, drop out” (Johnston 103). However, the members of the Beat Generation were able to behave counterculturally *because of* the prevailing social and cultural situation. The welfare state made it possible for the Beats to live and work as writers without much primary responsibilities. To illustrate the point, Jack Kerouac was accepted to Columbia University on a football scholarship. This has been mocked by many critics, not least because one of the primary characteristics that supposedly defined the Beat Generation was that they were un- or to some scholars even anti-academic (Cook 41; Theado 749).

In academic literature, the comparison between the Occupy Movement and the Beat Generation appears not to be very apparent, since there is hardly any prior research that combines the two countercultural movements. Political sociologist Sidney Tarrow does compare Occupy Wall Street with various other movements in “Why Occupy Wall Street is Not the Tea Party of the Left.” Firstly, he argues that Occupy is not comparable to the civil rights movement because the latter was truly a movement with a momentum in 1960s America whereas Occupy Wall Street is merely an emotional outcry (Tarrow 1). Secondly, he introduces sociologist Charles Tilly’s categorization of social movements in order to support the statement that Occupy Wall Street is not the Tea Party of the left, which I will discuss in more detail when discussing social theories. Tilly distinguishes three categories of movements based on “the policies they demand, the constituencies

they claim to represent, and the identities they are trying to construct" (Tarrow 2).

According to this model, Occupy Wall Street is a "we are here" movement that focuses primarily on being recognized. In contrast, both the civil rights movement and the Tea Party, aim not only to change the current system, they have an alternative vision of what society should be like and how to achieve this (Tarrow 2). Lastly, Tarrow claims that the best comparison of a social movement with Occupy Wall Street is the new women's movement of the 1970s. Similar to Occupy, the women's movement was primarily eager to achieve recognition and can therefore also be considered a "we are here" movement. The members of this movement wanted society to accept the idea of a gendered reality but they had no intentions of completely overthrowing the existing system (Tarrow 2). Likewise, Occupy Wall Street is opposing certain negative excesses of capitalism rather than capitalism all together. However, a substantial amount of authors do believe that Occupy Wall Street can be considered the Tea Party of the left. In *What is Occupy? Inside the Global Movement* (2011), a work by the editors of *Time Magazine* that captures the first two months of the movements existence, the authors draw various parallels between the two movements. On the one hand, the political affiliation between the Tea Party and the Republicans and Occupy Wall Street and the Democratic Party, and on the other hand, between the values the two movements promote. Scherer for example, draws these parallels quite extensively, speaking of the Tea Party as the old protesters and Occupy Wall Street as the new protesters. "Instead of liberty, the new protesters demanded opportunity and equality. Instead of federal debt, they spoke of personal debt. Instead of blaming the government, they blamed the rich" (Scherer 7,10).

Another comparison between social movements that is put forward at times, is between the Beat Generation and the “Lost Generation” of the 1920s. Both “Generations” originated in the literary world: In *The Sun Also Rises* (1926), Ernest Hemingway popularizes the term that would eventually be defined by social scholars as the generation of people who grew up during the First World War and were born between 1883 and 1900. Bruce Cook, for instance, claims that the Beat Generation was more successful as a literary movement turned social movement than the Lost Generation, since it had a greater ability to reach into society and influence people (92). Yet, regardless of the second part of the name that they share, it is fair to note that the Lost Generation comes closer to representing an actual generation than the Beat Generation, which can at best claim to represent the margins of American society and to inspire later generations (Cook 92).

However, a comparison between Occupy Wall Street and the Beat Generation seems rewarding as it does contain several striking similarities. As stated before, both groups were criticized for opposing certain elements of the economy, politics and society while using features of these systems to protest them. Furthermore, Occupy as well as the Beat Generation were using methods of nonviolent action, although Occupy Wall Street’s manifestations were more active than the Beats’ protests. However, most of all, the two groups were frustrated with almost the same issues and have similar ideological ideas. The Beats were embittered by 1950s America that promoted conformity and left little room for creativity and individual opinions. They envisioned a revolution that would result in more personal intellectual and physical freedoms. Occupy Wall Street is a reaction to the political and economic crises the United States faced in the early 2010s. The protesters blame the prevailing societal system for these crises and want to

adapt society in a way that promotes everyone's individual interests instead of merely the richest one percent, as the Occupiers believe. Yet, the two movements are more than fifty years apart and therefore their historical context has to be kept in mind when making comparisons. Whereas Occupy Wall Street was reacting to a political and economical crisis they were still living in, the Beats were part of a post-crisis society that was financially prosperous. Therefore public sentiment was rather different. However, perhaps there are some continuities involved as well and is Occupy Wall Street a distant consequence of the Beat Generation.

In order to better understand the Occupy Movement as a social movement, I will research the similarities and the differences between the Beat Generation and the Occupy Movement. It is my hypothesis that both countercultural movements can be explained as class conflicts and that the protests of Occupy Wall Street are virtually a continuation of the philosophy of the Beat Generation in a new context. In order to substantiate this argument, I will firstly explore the foundations of both social movements on the basis of both primary sources such as literature and interviews in the case of the Beat Generation and blog posts and magazine articles with regards to Occupy Wall Street. Subsequently, I will provide an image of how the Beat Generation as well as Occupy Wall Street expressed their ideas and how the public reacted. In order to do so, I will employ contemporary critical analyses of both movements in the form of scholarly essays and books. In addition, I will analyze the two movements by means of sociological theories, including social scientists Charles Tilly's and Sidney Tarrow's theories to classify social movements and collective action. Moreover, on the basis of social philosopher Klaus Eder's social theories concerning politics of class, it can be argued that both movements originated from non-hierarchical class dissatisfaction.

Lastly, Gene Sharp's theories formulated in the three-piece book series *The Politics of Nonviolent Action* (1973), will serve as a framework for comparing and analyzing the Beat Generation and Occupy Wall Street on the basis of their position as nonviolent action groups. This text will add a more detailed analysis of the manifestations of the two groups and their subsequent effects.

2. Identifying the Beat Generation and Occupy Wall Street

Given that both the Beat Generation and Occupy Wall Street are movements that are difficult to pin down to a single philosophy or group identity due to various reasons discussed below, I will firstly further define these groups and identify their ideas and origins.

2.1 Beat Generation

The Beat Generation originated around Jack Kerouac and Allan Ginsberg, who met at Columbia University in the early 1950s. Both men felt alienated from the academia and the American Post-World War II society they were living in.

According to an article in *Life Magazine* dating from 1959, Post-World War II society could be defined as a dichotomy between the “Squares” and the Beats, the term Squares referring to the Average Joe’s and Plain Jane’s of the 1950s (“Squaresville U.S.A”). The Beats opposed their lifestyles and everything they represented. Although the Squares were not a homogeneous group of Americans and the concept primarily emerged as a reaction to the Beats, the term serves as a useful tool to represent the image of the average American according to the prevailing norms and values after World War II. Cultural historian Robert Bennett defines the Squares as culturally dominant, white, materialistic, middle-class

people, who live in suburban areas. They have a very strong work ethic, suffer from “cultural xenophobia”, and have a general feeling of “militaristic patriotism” (Bennett 3). Not wanting to be part of Square society, Kerouac and Ginsberg kept aloof from the academic and political world and aspired to become writers. However, they faced an academic literary world that was dominated by traditional canonical works and conservative theories such as the New Criticism. This theory focused on texts as autonomous documents that could be best understood by means of close reading. Kerouac and Ginsberg were eager to write spontaneous poetry and literature that would, in Kerouac’s words, “communicate the very spark of life” (Harris 221). In doing this, they feared complicated literary constructions and even being translated, since this would be “some opinion about that spark” instead of the genuine spark (Harris 221). Opposing the lethargic conformity of the Squares, the Beats wrote about taboo topics that were part of private lives but clashed with existing norms and values in the public realm, such as homosexuality, sexuality in general, narcotics and mental illness (Bennett 1; Harris 218). Ginsberg believed that the lack of freedom to discuss such issues, was due to the ever increasing police function of the federal government that left little space for the development of individuals. He argued that “[j]ust as the government had to monitor Soviet expansion abroad, so individuals had to police their sexual, social, moral and domestic lives for signs of breakdown” (Harris 219). This also went against the other important denominator of literary culture of the time, known as “the Family” or *Partisan Review* crowd. Although they did not necessarily agree with the ideas and techniques of the New Critics, the two groups maintained each other’s position by cooperating and supporting each other. Literary power was

largely controlled by the Family, which consisted of a group of New York intellectuals who served as oligarchs of the literary world (Cook 10-11).

The literary education Kerouac and Ginsberg did not receive at Columbia University came to them in the form of William Burroughs. He was a few years older than the two students, and provided them with books that dealt with more contemporary issues and topics of the private realm. For the most part, these books lacked the academic restrictions of the New Criticism, such as a strict separation of high and low culture.

Burroughs can be considered the philosophical mastermind of the Beat Generation. Out of the three writers, he was most concerned with alternative socio-economical and political visions.

[Most Beats] had little confidence in transforming [society],’ and so ‘never really articulated what [they] wanted. [...] Consequently, Beat culture by its very nature lacked the theoretical and social underpinnings to develop the clarified economic or political oppositional stances that appeared in the 1960s counterculture. (Johnston 104)

However, Burroughs did believe that societal change was possible. He formulated his ideas on economy, society and politics in books such as *Naked Lunch* (1959) and *The Algebra of Need* (1971) (Harris 219; Johnston 108).

In the introduction of *Naked Lunch*, Burroughs sets forth his “algebra of need”, which is largely based on the belief that capitalism can be characterized by addiction of many kinds “[m]any junk pyramids feeding peoples of the world and all built on basic principles of monopoly” (Johnston 108). Burroughs’ monopoly

theory consists of three principles: “1) Never give anything away for nothing. 2) Never give more than you have to give (always catch the buyer hungry and always make him wait); 3) Always take everything back if you possibly can” (Johnston 108). His despise of capitalism and consumer society clearly echoes Frankfurt School ideas about mass culture and modernity. Theodore Adorno and Max Horkheimer formulated this as follows:

The liberating power of reason first felt in the Enlightenment elevation of reason and science over restrictive religious dogma has turned on itself as reason, in dialectical ascendance, has itself become dogmatic and oppressive via its validation of technical efficiency over all qualities.

(Johnston 106)

This statement reflects the disappointment by the Frankfurt School in the free-market economy, which held promises of reason and progress but instead turned out to be an unforgiving system that promoted profit maximization over all qualities, diminishing personal creativity and individual interests. The fact that Burroughs' followed these ideas can be explained from his “east-coast-centered, need-focused, secular vision of economic realities” (Johnston 104). To illustrate that other Beats, especially Ginsberg, followed his philosophical lead, a fragment of “Howl” portrays Burroughs’ ideas of a consumer society based on addiction. Ginsberg formulated this as “the narcotic tobacco haze of Capitalism”, clearly despising capitalism (Ginsberg 13). Burroughs and Ginsberg emphatically believed in a revolution. This revolution would at least remove the power from the establishment; what would happen after that was less clear-cut. In *Naked Lunch*

(1959), Burroughs directly calls for this revolution: "Paregoric Babies of the World United. We have nothing to lose but Our Pushers. And THEY are NOT NECESSARY" (Burroughs xlviii). This quote is a direct reference to the Communist Manifesto and although Burroughs did not see himself as a socialist, much less a communist, he did sympathize with communism's anti-capitalistic ideas. Ginsberg is less explicit about the revolution in his writing; yet, he sometimes stated that he was literally waiting for the revolution to come. After the Beats moved to San Francisco, Ginsberg believed it was time to personally set change in motion and catalyze the revolution. In 1955 he makes an attempt to do this by reciting "Howl" among others in the Six Gallery (Johnston 62-66).

Thus, Burroughs ideas and beliefs have made a large impact on the Beat Generation and have made him a central figure within the movement. Yet, he does not necessarily identify with the Beat Generation. In an interview with writer Daniel Odier for *The Job*, Burroughs said:

I don't associate myself with it [the Beat Generation] at all, and never have, either with their objectives or their literary style. I have some close personal friends among the Beat movement: Jack Kerouac and Allan Ginsberg and Gregory Corso are all close personal friends of many years standing, but were not doing at all the same thing either in writing or in outlook. (Cook 165)

Nevertheless, Kerouac, Ginsberg and Burroughs are generally considered the nucleus of the Beat Generation (Johnston 107). There were several other people, primarily writers that identified themselves or were identified by others with the

Beat Generation. One of the most influential people was Kenneth Rexroth. His vision can be defined as “west-coast-centered, Buddhic-anarchic” and focused more on individual than societal change. Therefore he contrasted Burroughs’ ideas to a certain extent. He, like several Beats such as Kerouac among others, did not believe it was possible to transform society, and opted to turn away from society and rather personally develop himself in areas outside of the public life. Kerouac’s eagerness to escape from society instead of changing it is most visible in *On the Road* (1957). In this novel, his characters are looking for “it”. It is referring to a “point of ecstasy”, a “complete step across chronological time into timeless shadows” (Johnston 118). These concepts echo the mystical, dazing powers that lay at the basis of Rexroth’s philosophies. No matter if the two writers were discussing drugs or eastern religions within this Gnostic context, the most important element is that of mentally escaping reality. This becomes especially apparent in the character of Dean Moriarty in *On the Road* (1957). “Dean Moriarty seems to represent a possibility of dropping out through what he [Kerouac] describes as a ‘life of non-interference with the wishes of other, including politicians and the rich ... you cut along and make it your way’” (Johnston 119). Hence, Rexroth and his ideas were very influential in shaping the outlook of the Beat Generation. Yet, he is usually not considered part of the Beat Generation but rather as an inspiration to the movement or even as the father of the Beat Generation.

Other writers who were considered Beats in the United States were Lawrence Ferlinghetti and Neal Cassady, among others. In addition, there were several female Beat authors such as Edie Parker and Joyce Johnson. However, at least partly due to 1950s role patterns and the sexism attached to these cultural

constraints, their influence was mostly confined to the background which resulted in less publications and no substantial role in the public domain. In recent years, there is increased attention for women within the Beat Generation, which is visible in the topics Beat scholars write about (Myrsiades v-vii). The aim is to deconstruct the binary opposition and reposition women from the private into the public domain. The Beat Generation also found a following in other parts of the world, especially in Western Europe in the form of German writers Wolf Wondratscheck, Rolf Dieter Brinkmann, and Jörg Fauser, Dutch poet Simon Vinkenoog and British artist Ray Gosling (Theado 750; Cook 156). In addition, apart from a literary connection, there were also many people outside of the United States who felt connected to the Beat Generation as a social movement. Their ideals were attractive for many people outside the United States who wanted to live the Beats' version of the American Dream as well. In the Netherlands, a group called "the Provo's" emerged in the 1960s. The Provo's were inspired by the ideas of the Beat Generation but in their actions, far more political than the Beats themselves. The German equivalent of this group was the Sozialistischer Deutscher Studentenbund (Cook 155-157).

The Beats' kind of American Dream was not one of Cold War materialism but one much older and more defining for American identity; Self-Reliance. This American (literary) motive dates back to Walt Whitman and Henry Thoreau in particular, and was centered around the power of the individual versus the mass. To emphasize this, cultural historian Stuart Ewen also hints at this dual American Dream that is useful to understand the Beat Generation as a counterculture when he argues that "manipulation" of "social insecurity" is "steering individuals away from traditional American values of thrift and self-sufficiency

toward passive excessiveness" (Johnston 106). In this quote, the manipulation of social insecurity can be seen as the welfare state in which the Squares all lived relatively wealthy lives and the traditional values of American thrift and self-sufficiency represent the ideal of the self-made man. Whereas some considered the welfare state to be a state in which a lot of people were actually living the American Dream, others, like the Beats, saw this as the decline of the American Dream. According to them, the American Dream was not about being financially wealthy; it was about being self-reliant, about creating something from scratch by working hard and being creative. By already *having* everything and being content with it, there was no room for dreams and creativity. Thus, whereas Post-World War II consumerism represents the materialistic side of the American Dream in which class mobility was possible and a wealthy lifestyle within reach for "everyone", the counterculture of the Beat Generation symbolizes the Thoreauvian component of the American Dream. From this perspective, the American Dream is based upon concepts of Self-Reliance, liberty and individuality. In a way, the Beat Generation can therefore be seen as *another* representation of the American Dream instead of a counterculture of the real American identity. These two sides of the American Dream can also be found in Kerouac's *On the Road* (1957), which suggests that Kerouac was truly struggling with Self-Reliance, liberty and individuality. Throughout the book, protagonist Sal Paradise changes from producer to consumer. First he is working as a day laborer on the fields among Mexicans and then he travels to Mexico where the value of his dollars make him a millionaire. Finally he ends up at the whorehouse, where he is suddenly at the other end of the equation and represents a wealthy American man living the American Dream not among but above Mexicans (Johnston 119). At this moment,

it is arguable that Sal Paradise was capable of achieving *both* American Dreams at the same time: looking for his individual goals and freedom in Mexico and being able to purchase everything his heart desired. However, this reality was unsustainable, severely blurred and eventually torn apart by the affluent drug use. Yet, perhaps the free availability of drugs in Mexico can also be seen as part of Sal Paradise's individual liberties and his escape from reality.

The origins of the term Beat Generation are mysteriously unknown. According to Beat writer John Clellon Holmes, Kerouac coined the "beat" component of the movement. The word "beat" referring to "Beat, in the sense of beaten, frustrated, played out, has been around for many, many years" (Cook 6). The term was part of fashionable jazz musician vocabulary in the 1940s from which Kerouac borrowed it. According to him, the term accurately represented the result of the frustrations the Beats felt with the conformity of society, a feeling of powerlessness, since they did not believe they could change anything substantially through the prevailing system. In Kerouac's words,

[it was] like we were a generation of furtives. You know, with an inner knowledge there's no use of flaunting of that level of the 'public,' a kind of beatness -I mean being right down to it, to ourselves, because we all *really* know where we are- and a weariness with all the forms, all the conventions in the world....It's something like that. So I guess you might say we're a *beat* generation. (Cook 6)

The "generation" component in the concept of the Beat Generation helped result in the fact that the writer's texts were not merely seen as literary contributions but

also as sociological documents that captured the prevalent socio-cultural sentiment. This worked to the advantage of the Beats to the extent that they wanted to challenge existing social values. Moreover, by being called a generation instead of merely being a group of writers, they increased their impact. However, the downside to this was that their books were heavily criticized or ignored by the literary world since they were not only judged by their content but also by what they represented: a countercultural message of protest against everything the Squares had built up since the Great Depression and after World War II (Harris 221). This lack of recognition and respect towards Beat literature by the establishment was mutual: in public performances the Beats seemed to actively “not care” about the Squares. “It was as though they had put aside every notion of revolting against the establishment and had decided merely to thumb their noses at it” (Cook 7).

2.2 Occupy Wall Street

The Occupy movement or #Occupy as it is often referred to because of its social network roots, is a movement that can be defined by its “strategy of occupation as a means of highlighting popular dissatisfaction; of presenting an illustration of disruptive potential of the dissatisfied; and of prefiguring modes of social organisation preferable to those being opposed (Bailey 138). This strategy can be found within several movements in different countries that each have their own focuses and nuances. However, what all movements have in common is that they were founded as a result of social discontent. In the United Kingdom, there is the “Uncut” movement that, unlike the American version of Occupy, offers substantial alternative solutions to solve the prevalent crises. Uncut, focuses among others,

on firmer corporate tax enforcements, however, their demands are unrealistically formulated, to the extent that it merits the Uncut movement to avoid the possibility of co-optation (Bailey 139). In Spain there is a similar group under the name of “Indignados” that held its first demonstration on 15th May 2011, well before the first expressions of Occupy Wall Street. The Greek equivalent of Occupy is called the “General Strikes”. This movement is known for its demonstrations on the Syntagma Square (Bailey 138). Moreover, in other countries such as the Netherlands, protest movements share their name with the American equivalent. Occupy Amsterdam, Occupy Utrecht and other Occupy movements in the Netherlands, were primarily inspired by the American Occupy movement. However, besides the more international topics of promoting open Internet access and opposing corporate culture and other negative excesses of capitalism, they tend to focus on more European related topics as well, such as the Euro and the European Union (“Principles”; Giesen pars. 1-5).

This essay will solely focus on the American branch of Occupy that is unofficially coined Occupy Wall Street. It is also known as #OWS, #Occupy and “the 99% movement” (Bailey 138; Schneider 13). Since the movement consists mostly of grassroots initiatives, there are several sub-movements and organizations affiliated with Occupy Wall Street such as the New York City General Assembly (NYCGA), a medium that aims to organize and visualize the ideals of Occupy Wall Street, and hacktivist movement Anonymous. Because of this great variety of grassroots initiatives, it is difficult to define the “real” Occupy Wall Street, however, this in itself is one of the movement’s defining characteristics, since it highly values absolute democracy and freedom and therefore appreciates all kinds of grassroots initiatives. In order to obtain a more

coherent image of Occupy Wall Street, it is useful to explore what the ideas and aims of some of the initiators are and to analyze the documents in which the movement's ideas and aims are expressed. Therefore, I will firstly employ an interview with Kalle Lasn, who can be seen as one of the founders of Occupy Wall Street. Although the power of the movement lies in the representation of the voices of everyone who wants to be affiliated with Occupy, Lasn can arguably provide more information on the general aims of Occupy as a movement than a random protester can. However, these individual views are in their turn telling for the variety of voices. Second, I will discuss a document called "Principles of Solidarity." This document was drawn on one of the first General Assemblies and is considered the document that best expresses the foundations of Occupy Wall Street. Lastly, I will present some other important voices in the form of philosophers Noam Chomsky and Slavoj Žižek, who both support the movement and provide a more solid framework of ideas by adding their well-respected thoughts.

One of the founders of the movement and designer of the initial action on September 17 is Canadian Kalle Lasn. He is the editor and publisher of *Adbusters*, a critical global leftist oriented magazine that centers around culture and society. In an interview with Forbes' Kenneth Rapoza, Lasn explains that Occupy really is a leaderless movement although the people behind the magazine were actively involved in shaping the first demonstration: the occupation of Wall Street. Inspired by the events of the Arab Spring, the magazine decided that the United States was ripe for "this type of rage" (Lasn). When Rapoza asks Lasn if he sincerely believes Occupy will change anything and if it is not just another countercultural movement

of which many have come into being since the 1950s, Lasn responds that this movement is different:

First, it is a global moment. We are all living in dire times. We are all facing major tipping points around the world. We are faced with a political crisis in the U.S. and concern that the U.S., with no help from Washington, is now in irreversible decline. The economy is surely in decline. So people see this, young people see this, and they wonder what their future holds for them given those circumstances. The future doesn't compute. (Lasn)

Furthermore, they discuss possible allies in the battle against the political and economical establishment. According to Lasn, the movement does not have any allies. Although he appreciates the support of former Democratic Vice President Al Gore, he believes that it is political suicide to align himself with existing powers, since Occupy Wall Street is against the way the current system works. To participate in a system the protesters do not believe in, undermines their ideological values and, according to Lasn, this is where the Tea Party movement made a crucial mistake, cooperating with Republicans. In response to the question if Lasn sees a future where Occupy Wall Street and the Tea Party compromise on their ideologies and join forces in order to overthrow the current system, he responds that it is "too soon for that" (Lasn). However, since they both need to change the current system first, in order to achieve their ultimate aims, they might be able to combine their forces (Lasn). I believe the scenario that Lasn describes is not very realistic. First, Lasn expressed his disappointment in the way the Tea Party came about, cooperating with the existing system. This attitude does not

attest to much respect towards the Tea Party, which will make mutual cooperation difficult. Furthermore, Lasn is quite an extreme Occupier. He opposes cooperation because he is against the entire existing power structure, whereas many others solely want to change certain elements of the political and economical system in order to discard what they consider negative excesses of the current capitalistic system. Thirdly, in case of successful cooperation that results in the overhaul of the current political system, a battle for the power vacuum will come about that will most likely be a fierce fight between the extreme right and left since their aims are completely contradictory. Although this would dramatically change American society, I do not believe this is a favorable situation for either of the protest groups.

The “Principles of Solidarity” document, which was drawn by means of a democratic process during the daily general assemblies, sums up “points of unity” that will help transform American society and societies everywhere. These points include but are not limited to: “Engaging in direct and transparent participatory democracy”, “Empowering one another against all forms of oppression”, and “Making technologies, knowledge, and culture open to all to freely access, create, modify, and distribute” (“Principles”).

Moreover, there are several philosophers who affiliate with Occupy Wall Street. Although they perform no official role within the movement, the philosophers definitely provide the protesters with more credibility and they help to bring the ideas of the Occupiers across. Noam Chomsky believes that “the Occupy protests could mark a significant moment in American history” because “today, if you’re a worker in manufacturing, with unemployment practically at Depression levels, you know that those jobs may be gone forever” (Editors of *Time Magazine* 62). Chomsky even wrote a book on the movement titled *Occupy* (2012) on the

protesters' struggle. Slavoj Žižek also supports the Occupiers, and told the protesters at Occupy Wall Street "they tell you we are dreamers. The true dreamers are those who think things can go on indefinitely the way they are. We are not dreamers. We are the awakening from a dream that is turning into a nightmare" (Editors of *Time Magazine* 62).

As discussed earlier, Occupy Wall Street has no leaders. However there is an existing structure that can be best defined as an "organized anarchy" (Gandel 34). Within this semi-organization, there are certain groups that are responsible for specific tasks. Largely speaking there are four groups: the mobilizing group is concerned with preparing and carefully planning a march or protest, the communication group is responsible for spreading Occupy Wall Street's ideas in the media by for example twittering the latest developments, the legal group makes sure protesters are not exposed to the risk of being jailed, and the cultural group provides protesters with a visualization of their ideas (Gandel 35-39).

Like Chomsky and Moore, a great many Americans and people world wide, seemed to believe that Occupy Wall Street would bring change. At the end of 2011, *Time Magazine* even devoted an edition to "the protester" as person of the year. The cover article discusses how for the first time since Fukuyama's "end of history", peaceful protesters acted as successful forces of opposition. Moreover, *Time Magazine* analyzes the global relations between protesters in the Arab world and the European and American movements. The article concludes by making an estimate on the impact and status of Occupy Wall Street:

The wisest Occupiers understand that these are very early days. But as long as government in Washington — like government in Europe —

remains paralyzed, I don't see the Occupiers and Indignados giving up or losing traction or protest ceasing to be the defining political mode. After all, the Tea Party protests subsided only after Tea Partyers achieved real power in 2010 by becoming the tail wagging the Republican Party dog.

When radical populist movements achieve big-time momentum and attention, they don't tend to stand down until they get some satisfaction.

(Andersen)

Since the article was published in December 2011, a lot has changed and the media attention has shifted away from protesters and Occupiers. Well over a year after the occupation of Wall Street, Occupy Wall Street faces various dilemmas of which the outcomes will surely influence the future of the Occupy movement. Perhaps the most daunting question is that of grammatical tense: Is it more lawful to talk about the movement in the past or present tense? An article in *The Nation* discusses this question on the basis of interviews with two members of Occupy Wall Street who both collected documents concerning the movement that can possibly be studied for their historical value in the future. On the one hand, Amy Roberts donated her collection to New York University's Tamiment Library in order to guarantee access to the material for future historians who will be able to find a coherent catalogued collection. On the other hand, there is Jeremy Bold. He is eager to preserve his collection by "anarchiving" it (Schneider 13). Rather than donating his collection to formal institutions such as Universities, he is determined to divide the collection under the people who were responsible for creating it. Together, they could start an online database that makes it possible for future historians to retrieve the documents. In Bold's vision, "The history is left to be

preserved by the people still living it" (Schneider 13). This vision assumes that the Occupy movement is still present today, albeit less visible since after the encampments were removed from Zuccotti Park, the media lost interest in the protesters (Schneider 14). However, one thing seems certain: the form of the movement has changed after the first three months and whether or not people believe that Occupy Wall Street should be talked about in the present tense, depends on how they see the movement. Can Occupy still be considered the same movement since they stopped doing what they are known for, namely occupying Wall Street? Or is it enough to know that a nucleus of those people is still fighting for the same ideals?

Other defining questions are more concerned with the organizational structure of Occupy Wall Street, questions that several other movements have faced before. What these movements have chosen to do and in what that resulted is significant for the future direction of Occupy Wall Street. First, the movement has to decide between facing the risk of marginalization or co-optation. With regards to the first scenario, the movement could cooperate with present capitalist forces and bend existing policies towards the interest of the 99% they claim to represent. According to the more revisionist socialists, this would be the best option since they could use a system that is already present and benefit from the power of people such as Al Gore, who are more influential than the anarchistic promoters of Occupy Wall Street. More orthodox socialists such as Lasn argue that this is political suicide. Cooperating with the establishment will alienate people from the movement and ultimately not result in real societal change (Bailey 139). Another dilemma is that of a centralized versus a decentralized organization. This dilemma can be traced back to a fundamental split between Marxists and

anarchists. Marxist thinkers believe that authority and a centralizing institution is necessary to successfully revolutionize a state. Yet, anarchists argue that centralization is by definition capitalist and true democracy can only occur through direct democracy and grassroots initiatives. It appears that Occupy Wall Street already chose sides in this difficult dilemma, and opted for the decentralized model since there are no genuine leaders who control the movement. However, this might change if mobilization problems occur and the bureaucratic movement proves to be cumbersome (Bailey 139-140). The last dilemma for Occupy Wall Street is choosing between direct action and opinion-shaping delayed-action. This dilemma can be illustrated by a comparison with the first and the second wave of feminism. First wave feminists at the beginning of the twentieth century were eager to convince society that direct suffrage was necessary. This action-orientated strategy was contrasted by second wave feminists in the 1960s and 1970s. They promoted studying, understanding and identifying binary oppositions before acting against them. For Occupy Wall Street, this means that they have to decide if their aim is, as so often heard, to change the conversation in order to change society or to change society by acting against it (Bailey 141). According to Tilly's theory that categorized both the new women's movement and Occupy Wall Street as a "we are here" movement, Occupy can best be characterized by the latter type of protesting (Tarrow 2). Tilly believes that the movement's primary aim is to be recognized. Consequently, they would be most successful in achieving this aim by employing opinion-shaping delayed-action. However, I would argue that this differs among Occupiers since one groups of protesters in fact primarily wants to be recognized as the other 99%, others opt for a completely new way of organizing society by overthrowing the current political and economical power

structure. The latter group would be more likely to use direct action. When considering the actual manifestations of the protesters, which I will discuss later, it becomes clear that there is in fact a mixture of the two types of action. This is not very surprising since on the one hand, not all Occupiers have the same ideals they prioritize on and on the other hand, the movement mostly consists of grassroots initiatives, which are expressions of individual beliefs.

Thus, both movements' promoters oppose the establishment that is embodied by the Squares in the 1950s and by the "1%" in the 2010s. Their ideologies show similarities as well. Within the Beat Generation, there are roughly two lines of thought that can be traced back to Burroughs and Rexroth respectively. Both philosophies were inspired by the Frankfurt School but whereas Burroughs' point of view also heavily borrows from Marxism, Rexroth's vision is primarily influenced by Eastern religions and cultures characterized by Gnosticism. Occupy Wall Street is a more diverse movement with a great many supporters that have an equal amount of different ideas and beliefs. However, what they share is an eagerness to change certain elements or all of society, in favor of the 99% of the people they claim to represent. These ideas can also be traced back to Marxism and similar to the Beat Generation, some members of the movement believed a cultural revolution needed to take place. Yet, Occupy also draws from anarchistic ideas and philosophers that echo its ideas, such as Chomsky and Žižek. With regards to the American Dream, the Beat Generation promotes Self-Reliance and the Thoreauvian image of the American Dream. Although Occupy Wall Street is less explicit about this, it can be concluded that they promote American values associated with the American Dream such as grassroots initiatives and individualism. However, the movement also aims at a fairer society

in which everyone can join. Therefore, it appears that Occupy is after a new type of American Dream, ironically influenced by Marxism. The most important differences between both movements are the fact that they are more than fifty years apart and react to a different state of society and that they have different origins. Whereas the Beat Generation originated in literature and poetry, Occupy Wall Street was born on social media sites. This difference also explains why the Occupiers' ideas are more diverse than the Beats'. Occupy Wall Street is truly a grassroots organization, whereas the Beat Generation only received a fairly broad support after approximately 1957, resulting in a fragmentation of Beat ideals.

3. Expressions of Countercultural Ideas

In order to further analyze if the Beat Generation and Occupy Wall Street can be explained as class conflicts and if Occupy Wall Street is a continuation of the ideals of the Beat Generation in a new context, a closer look needs to be given to the various ways the two movements have expressed themselves. This will be done on the basis of books written by the various Beats, newsmagazines and papers such as *The New York Times*, official Occupy Wall Street websites, and other sources.

3.1 Expressions of the Beat Generation

Around 1953, Ginsberg, Burroughs and Kerouac all headed southwest towards the city of San Francisco. It was around the area of North Beach that they came together and formed a community of writers and poets with several San Franciscans such as Kenneth Rexroth and Lawrence Ferlinghetti among others. Here, they celebrated literature, liberty and displayed their creative energy,

sparking a so-called literary renaissance. An important element in this new literary movement was Ferlinghetti's bookstore "City Lights" that served as a place for philosophizing, discussion and creative output (Cook 56). According to Cook, the real public expression of the Beats only started in San Francisco, with Ginsberg's poetry reading that was later published as *Howl and Other Poems* (1955). For Ginsberg, the time had come to start a cultural revolution in 1955. Some of the Beats had been waiting for a long time to start this revolution and San Francisco's creative atmosphere made Ginsberg more and more impatient to finally realize this goal. He decided to organize a poetry reading at the Six Gallery on 7 October 1955. Ginsberg's experimental poem "Howl" made a lasting impression not least because it needed a criminal lawyer to get published due to its notoriety (Cook 62-66). According to Kerouac, "the San Francisco Renaissance happened one night in 1955 [...] we all went out and got drunk" (Cook 63). In this quote he is not referring to Ginsberg's poetry reading but rather to a random night that he does not remember precisely anymore. Perhaps this was due to the fact that Kerouac was unbelievably drunk again during the night at the Six Gallery, and therefore chose his own decisive moment. However, another important event in Beat history did include Kerouac: In 1957 his novel *On the Road* was first published. This happened right after an exciting special issue by the *Evergreen Review* that dedicated an entire issue to the San Francisco Renaissance (Cook 66-67). This put the Beat Generation on the map, and from 1957 onwards, even "Square magazines" such as *The New York Times*, *Time Magazine* and *Life Magazine* were writing about the figures associated with the San Francisco Renaissance. Following this attention in the more established papers, a domino effect resulted in the sale of movie rights of *On the Road* (1957) and a television series that were

based on Kerouac's novel (Cook 72-73). Arguably, this narrowed the gap between the Beats and the Squares, which made more people identify with the movement. This was a paradoxical side effect of their success that they probably did not anticipate for. The fact that more and more Squares became increasingly Beat did not necessarily mean that American society transformed into a more Beat inspired society. It basically resulted in a more established position for the Beats and their literature. At the height of the movement, it could almost be considered a mass movement because of all the people that identified with them, making the movement in itself less countercultural and therefore perhaps less Beat. Obviously, not everyone that started to call oneself Beat was as bohemian and apolitical as the original core of the Beat Generation. This caused diffusion of and rupture within the Beat Generation. Consequently, the Beat Generation finalized the process of turning from a purely literary movement into a social movement, eventually becoming a mass cultural symbol of counterculture within mainstream society.

3.1.1 Legacy of the Beat Generation

The Beat Generation was viewed as the first popular and influential literary movement since the Lost Generation. Even more so than writers of the 1920s, had the Beats influenced both young Americans, who were aroused by their ideas and way of life and Square Americans who used the extravagant and radical Beats to project themselves and their lives on (Cook 92). The Beats represented everything the Squares were not, this way Square America was able to better define itself and its values that generally contradicted those of the Beat Generation.

At the beginning of the 1960s the media attention turned away from the literary movement (Cook 83). Perhaps it was because of turbulent events elsewhere, such as the Vietnam War and the events in the Bay of Pigs, or perhaps it was simply that the Beat Generation was no longer seen as the opposite of the Squares and therefore lost its social function. Yet, their ideas remained and their legacy can be found in multiple ways. According to Ginsberg, the Beat Generation permanently influenced American society. In an interview in 1971, he explains that the legacy can be found in drugs and the popularity of modern music styles such as jazz and rock music. In addition, Beat ideas can be found in different changing world views that focus on true American philosophies such as Self-Reliance on the one hand, and an appreciation for other cultures, especially Eastern cultures, on the other. Ginsberg also likes to believe that the fact that humans are still, to a certain extent, uncontrolled individuals that can freely express themselves, is partly due to the influence of the Beat generation (Cook 104). Moreover, the Beats have changed the standards within the literary world. Although their work was shun from universities when it came out, it was gradually accepted and celebrated as a new kind of literature and poetry that changed the very definition of a poet. Poets used to be defined by their ability to write as precisely and complicated as possible, inserting various layers of meaning and ideas behind their text. However, other types of poets have also been accepted by the academia since the Beat Generation, and are studied with the same respect as the more established writers (Cook 118-119).

The Beat Generation also brought forth another arguably more influential social movement that was inspired by the Beats, the hippies. In an interview with Cook, Gregory Corso explains that they “are acting out what the Beats wrote”

(Cook 146). Therefore, in a way, the hippies were the successors to the revolution the Beats started. When Cook asks Corso whether or not a Beat Generation revolution has in fact taken place, he answers “maybe a *kind* of revolution, but a revolution without one drop of blood spilled, mostly a revolution in poetry” (Cook 146). Other movements that have been said to be influenced by the Beat Generation and William Burroughs in particular are the Punks of the 1970s and to some extent Generation X. Johnston illustrates this by emphasizing their presence in the cultural field in films such as *Drugstore Cowboy*, released in 1989 (110).

In addition, I believe that the hipsters of the 2010s and especially Occupy Wall Street are also part of the legacy of the Beat Generation. Occupy Wall Street echoes the anti-establishment blues of the Beat Generation through emphasizing grassroots initiatives and direct democracy. This appears to be the 2010s translation of 1960s Beat values such as individuality, liberty and personal freedom. Parallels can be drawn between Rexroth’s and Kerouac’s ideas of a gnostic escape from reality that is founded upon an apolitical vision in which there is no trust in societal changes through a centralized system. Instead of trying to escape the system, Occupy Wall Street is searching for a new system but explicitly outside of the establishment. They too do not believe that the prevailing political system can provide them with their demands. Therefore, Occupy Wall Street’s anarchic organization can be seen as an apolitical solution for political issues. A more elaborate analysis of the parallels between Occupy Wall Street and the Beat Generation will follow in the conclusion.

3.2 Expressions of Occupy Wall Street

Occupy Wall Street originated on the Internet on websites such as *OccupyWallSt.org*, that called for the first demonstration in the form of an occupation of Wall Street on September 17, 2011. However, well before that, the organization held a General Assembly during which it wanted to “Oppose Cutbacks And Austerity Of Any Kind” and make concrete plans for the first protest (OccupyWallSt, “August 2nd”). They called for direct action through the website and with flyers that stated “It's time for the people to meet and take the bull by the horns!” (OccupyWallSt, “August 2nd”) This collocation is a reference to the bronze “Charging Bull” statue, located at Bowling Green Park in New York where the first General Assembly was held. The Charging Bull became the symbol of the Occupy Wall Street Movement.

After the successful first General Assembly, more General Assemblies followed and finally on September 17 the first demonstration became a reality. One of the tools that the movement uses to empower itself is that of the “human mic.” Instead of megaphones, speakers use the people’s voices to add volume to their messages. The people that are closest to the speaker repeat after him or her so the people further away can hear the speeches as well. Whereas the protesters initially planned to occupy the area around the New York Stock Exchange, they were forced to move to Zuccotti Park, where they set up their encampments in order to permanently occupy the area until November 15, 2011, when the camp was removed (Moynihan, “185 Arrested”). On September 19, the Occupiers renamed Zuccotti Park Liberty Plaza and *OccupyWallSt.org* exclaimed that “Food and Democracy are free”, calling for donations that would aid the protesters (OccupyWallSt, “Monday”).

One of the first major demonstrations after that happened on September 21 in Boston. The protesters there were angry and frustrated with the Bank of America because the company is exempted from paying tax, it reduced borrowing opportunities for small and start-up companies with 56% compared to 2007 and supposedly discredited the African American and Latino communities through foreclosures and predatory lending practices (*Take Back Boston*). Consequently, a small group of approximately fifty Occupiers “deposited the trash from a vacant Bank of America foreclosure on the doorstep of Bank of America Massachusetts President Robert Gallery at 95 Beacon St” (*Take Back Boston*). In addition, they offered the bank a “9 day ‘notice to quit’ warning them to stop their harmful practices, or there will be a much larger demonstration on 9/30” (*Take Back Boston*). On September 30, a group of 3,000 protesters gathered and entered the largest bank of the United States. This resulted in 24 arrests, and the general support of Occupy movements everywhere in America.

Another important and drastic expression of the Occupy movement took place in Oakland, California. On the General Assembly of October 26, a proposition was passed with 1484 of the 1607 people supporting it. The proposition proposed a general strike during which workers and students would leave their daily duties and gather for protest in downtown Oakland. If companies refused to cooperate with this strike, Occupy Oakland would “march on them” (OccupyWallSt, “Occupy Oakland”). This call was quite successful in the sense that the movement generated a lot of support. A great many businesses did not open and others that did, put up signs saying that they supported the movement but were unable to close. Even mayor Jean Quan supported Occupy Oakland. However, she did demand that the movement remained civil towards shops that

did choose to open their doors. Moreover, she mobilized a small police force in case of irregularities. Apart from some minor incidents including the vandalization of windows and the spray painting of banks and other corporate businesses, there were no irregularities. Nobody was arrested and public response was quite positive (*OccupyWallSt*, “*Occupy Oakland*”). Among the comments made on the post on *OccupyWallSt.org*, is buphiloman’s. He or she shows support by claiming that: “I will be joining you in a sympathy general here in Niagara Square in Buffalo NY, all day Wednesday. Solidarity!” (Buphiloman) However, other comments lead to a fierce discussion on Capitalism vs. Communism. Yet, there were no negative comments directed explicitly against the intended general strike (*OccupyWallSt*, “*Occupy Oakland*”).

On September 17 2012, one year after the Day of Rage, demonstrators had gathered again at the same place. This time their demonstration consisted of chanting happy birthday songs and the formation of a “People’s Wall”, a formation of people that encircled the New York Stock Exchange building. The purpose was to show the world and especially the 1% that Occupy Wall Street was still alive, and that people still supported their cause. Although the group of demonstrators was a party of approximately 1,000 people, they did not even remotely shut down the financial heart of the United States. Instead, 185 people were arrested and others simply left after a few hours. However, there were some positive notes: Oren Goldberg, who participated in the demonstrations, explains that “It’s exciting to see any group of people attempting any sort of change” (Moynihan, “185 Arrested”). Also, he believes that the Occupiers are genuinely working towards “a greater good than profiteering” (Moynihan, “185 Arrested”).

After this not very successful re-launch, the Occupy Wall Street movement is lying low, but websites such as *OccupyWallSt.org* are still supporting demonstrations, actions and initiatives directed against the current economical and political system. The latest post on *OccupyWallSt.org* is concerned with the demonstrations in Istanbul, Turkey and other protests around the world. Occupy Wall Street supporters are eager to show their support, because of the shared aims of the protesters in Turkey and the Occupiers, in this case, “the criminalization of protests, human rights violation and media control, the ties between the weakening of labour rights and real estate speculation” (*OccupyWallSt*, “Saturday, Zuccotti”). They planned an assembly on June 22 with the idea of a “symbolic solidarity action” that also “aims to create a common space of resistance” (*OccupyWallSt*, “Saturday, Zuccotti”).

Concluding, the expressions of the two social movements are very different in nature. The members of the Beat Generation expressed themselves almost purely through cultural manifestations such as the poetry readings at Ferlinghetti’s bookstore and the writing of books like *On the Road* (1957) and *Naked Lunch* (1959) but also purposely acted disrespectful towards representatives of the establishment in public displays and refused to vote. In contrast, Occupy does use many cultural symbols such as the Guy Fawkes masks, but they are best known for their strategy of occupying an area by camping there 24/7. Also, they have organized various marches and other protests such as the general strike in Oakland, California. The Beat Generation in their original form ceased to exist after society became increasingly accustomed to the Beat ideas and more people identified with the movement. This led to the hippie movement that was in certain ways more successful as a countercultural movement than the Beat Generation.

However, the Beats can account for some definite changes in society: as they have changed the literary world and provided society with alternative views. It is arguable whether or not it is appropriate to speak of the legacy of Occupy Wall Street, since some protesters believe Occupy still exists today. These people claim that after the encampments were removed, the media simply did not cover their story anymore, however, not much else has changed. People that do believe the social movement has come to an end, claim that if anything, Occupy Wall Street directed attention to some societal problems and changed the conversation in politics.

4. Theories of Social Movements

In order to further analyze and contextualize the Beat Generation and Occupy Wall Street, I chose three social theories. The first theory by Tilly and Tarrow is the broadest. It serves to categorize both movements in order to compare the characteristics. Secondly, Eder offers a theory that connects class with collective action by redefining the concept of class. This provides a framework for explaining the origins of the movements. Although Eder departs from a neo-Marxist perspective, his theory is valuable to study the influence of culture on social movements as well. Furthermore, the theories can be used to learn if the protests of the Beat Generation and/or Occupy Wall Street can be understood as class conflicts. The last theory is formulated by Sharp and will contextualize the two groups with regards to their struggles as nonviolent oppositional groups. This will provide a more detailed analysis of their expressions and their effects on society, politics and economics.

4.1 Tilly & Tarrow

In *Contentious Politics* (2007), political sociologists Charles Tilly and Sidney Tarrow discuss various types of contentious politics and how these relate to social movements.

Contentious politics involves interactions in which actors make claims bearing on someone else's interests, leading to coordinated efforts on behalf of shared interests or programs, in which governments are involved as targets, initiators of claims, or third parties. Contentious politics thus brings together three familiar features of social life: contention, collective action, and politics. (Tilly and Tarrow 4)

Tilly and Tarrow define a social movement as “a sustained campaign of claim making, using repeated performances that advertise the claim, based on organizations, networks, traditions, and solidarities that sustain these activities” (111). Consequently, all social movements can be considered examples of contentious politics, but not all forms of contentious politics involve social movements. These movements have to involve repeated and sustained claims based on shared beliefs. Moreover, they distinguish between two types of what is understood by social movements in general: social movement bases and social movement campaigns. The former can be defined as a movement based on social interconnections between different groups and organizations, with similar beliefs and cultural backgrounds. The latter focuses more on the active side of protesting and on entire nations instead of a cluster of groups within a nation (Tilly and Tarrow 114). These social movements can be characterized by:

a sustained challenge to power holders in the name of a population living under the jurisdiction of those power holders by means of concerted public display of worthiness, unity, and commitment, using such means as public meetings, demonstrations, petitions, and press releases. (Tilly and Tarrow 114)

Tilly and Tarrow note that social movement bases cannot be successful by itself. In order to achieve its aims, social movement bases have to serve as a foundation for a social movement campaign. Furthermore, the two authors differentiate between two types of expressions of contentious politics. Firstly, they discuss contentious performances. This type of collective action can be typified by its familiarity. Protesters use techniques that have proved to be effective in order to reach a certain political claim in the past, such as demonstrations and boycotts. The second type of contentious political expression can be defined as an arrangement of various contentious performances consisting of techniques that are available and known to a certain political group. Usually, these tactics or performances have been used before, yet it is the combination of the various performances that is new and hopefully effective. The array of performances that are used differs from region to region. In the United States for example, it is more common to publish a press statement or offer the other party a petition, than to employ suicide bombing or hostage taking to achieve political goals. These combinations of different performances are called contentious repertoires (Tilly and Tarrow 11).

4.1.1 Beat Generation

Applying this framework to the Beat Generation can extrapolate whether or not the politics of the movement can be considered contentious and if the literary movement can in fact be considered a social movement as well, according to Tilly and Tarrow. With regards to the Beats' politics, they can certainly be examined as contentious. The movements' contention lies in the denunciation of the Square way of life that they opposed by both establishing a literary renaissance atmosphere in San Francisco and by turning away from society. These actions can be seen as collective action although they generally did not involve direct action, as defined by Bailey as the opposite of opinion-shaping delayed-action with regards to protests (141). Due to a lack of trust in the establishment, the Beats attempted to play out their revolution at the margins of society with indirect action in the form of literature and other forms of culture instead of direct protests. The last of the "familiar features of social life" within the definition of contentious politics is politics. This concept is quite paradoxical with regards to the Beat Generation. On the one hand, one of the most important unifying ideas among the Beats was that they opposed the political system and were thus very concerned with politics. On the other hand, they chose not to be involved in politics and for example agreed on not to vote. Therefore, they even lacked the indirect political influence that all American adults were able to exercise. However, their apolitical attitudes can also be explained as an explicit political position. By opposing the political system entirely, they sent out a extremely powerful political message of disapproval and even conscious ignorance.

In order to assess if the Beat Generation was a social movement, I will use Tilly and Tarrow's framework of four characteristics that groups feature, that can be regarded as social movements.

- An enduring engagement in pushing political aims.
- Members use contentious repertoires rather than performances.
- A continuing portrayal of the commitment of the political actors to a certain political claim.
- Members cooperate with social movement bases that offer the social movement a solid foundation. (8)

Starting with the first characteristic, the Beat Generation is often considered a radical leftist movement because of its (partial) rejection of capitalism and the large contrast with conservatives. However, as a movement it is more accurately to argue that the Beats were apolitical. Yet, the various individual participants often did hold specific political views. As discussed, Burroughs' and Ginsberg's ideas can be seen in a Marxist perspective, emphasizing free lunch and ideas and believing in a revolution (Burroughs xlviii; Cook 62-66). Kerouac was a conservative Catholic, although not a very strict one. His most politically charged acts were not to vote and not to be involved in politics. This, to him, portrayed his individualism against the nation-wide conformity. Ginsberg believed that this was due to Kerouac's fear of a big federal government or a police state, which he believed the welfare state to be. However, according to Cook, his political ideas derived "partly from old French Catholic conservatism, vague anti-Semitic feelings, and sentimental memories of the rabid anti-New Dealism of his father" (85).

Kerouac himself once argued that if he was politically active, he would vote for Eisenhower. Yet, Norman Mailer claims that

when Kerouac says: 'I like Eisenhower. I think he's a great man. I think he's our greatest president since Abraham Lincoln.' Well, you know that's not a serious political remark at all. I don't think he even believed it. It's a surrealistic remark. He's mixing two ideas that have absolutely no relation to each other -one of them is greatness and the other is Eisenhower. (Cook 96-97)

In an interview with Cook in the mid-1960s, Kerouac is determined to define his own ideological views before Cook does. "I want to make this very clear [...] we didn't have a whole lot of heavy abstract thoughts. We were just a bunch of guys who were trying to get laid" (Cook 89). Yet, in the mid-1960s, Kerouac was tired of promoting Beat values and living a countercultural life. He was suffering from alcoholism and was emotionally unstable (Cook 90). Therefore, I believe Kerouac was merely trying to avoid deep questions about his ideas and his actions of the past rather than seriously diminishing the Beats' ideological background.

In retrospect, in 1971, Ginsberg summarizes the philosophy of the Beat generation as follows:

Well, there was the return to nature and the revolt against the machine, and I think this was very important, for you can see all this in the reduplication of the cycle

today. The fact that the basic human proportion has not been lost owes something, I think, to these beginnings. Because we can still talk to one another in these human ways, you see -you and me together- means that art is still possible. [...] It's all been in the gnostic tradition, the underground mystical tradition of the West. Not that we originated it, just carried it on a little here in America. Yes, here, *here* it's a problem. Because it's only by getting out from under the American flag and marching to a different drummer in the Thoreauvian sense that one can find one's own self here. And you have to do it, too. It's either that or take that mass-produced self they keep trying to shove down your throat with their cigarette advertisements and so on" (Cook 104).

The actual pushing of these political aims did occur but was more passive than aggressive. Of course there is some literature that can be characterized by its aggressive use of language, however this was the exception rather than the rule. For example, in Ginsberg's *Howl and Other Poems* (1955), the violent language can easily be read as a glorification of violence. Cook describes this as "an antiprayer for force and power to wreak vengeance on society" (95). All in all, the Beats political ideas are scrambled, unclear and primarily apolitical.

The second characteristic, that members of social movements use contentious repertoires rather than contentious performances is relevant to the Beat Generation. Their repertoire included literature, poetry readings, discussions and other indirect action usually featured in Ferlinghetti's San Franciscan book store "City Lights". In addition, their general attitude towards the establishment that was for example expressed in interviews and other public displays showed their

ignorance and was also a form of indirect action against the establishment. In fact, everything the Beats did, their entire lifestyle can be seen as a form of protest. By living in the margins of society, they tried to establish an alternative society that directly confronted the Square lifestyle.

Thirdly, the Beats showed a continual commitment to their political claim. As mentioned before, the way they lived their lives formed a protest in itself. To illustrate this, the Beats experimented with drugs and free sexual relationships. By living these lifestyles they were experimenting with the borders of the private and the public realm.

The last characteristic is slightly harder to apply to the Beat Generation. The Beats themselves did not necessarily base themselves on social movement bases as defined by Tilly and Tarrow. Although they were inspired by the philosophies of the Frankfurt School and Kenneth Rexroth among others, these thinkers did not necessarily form a social movement base. In fact, the Beat Generation is perhaps better characterized as a social movement base than as a social movement campaign because of their strong emphasis on culture and the fact that the group was originally a literary movement. Moreover, when considering the other three characteristics of a social movement used by Tilly and Tarrow, it appears that they can always only be applied to the Beats to a certain extent. Whereas the definition of a social movement is partly based on politics of action, the Beat Generation's actions were overwhelmingly passive. Thus, the Beat Generation is not a social movement according to Tilly and Tarrow's definition of the term. It is merely a social movement base with the potential to become a social movement campaign, or in other words, a social movement. However, it can be argued that the Beat

Generation formed a social movement base for the hippies, as according to Corso the hippies “are acting out what the Beats wrote” (Cook 146).

4.1.2 Occupy Wall Street

The expressions of Occupy Wall Street can be considered examples of contentious politics. The contention of the movement can be found in the condemnation of an economic and political system in crisis that allegedly promotes the interests of the richest 1% of the nation. In order to fight this, initiators called for collective action on social media sites, which resulted in numerous collective initiatives. The third component of contentious politics is politics. The government is the primary target in Occupy’s politics of contention. Even though the movement initially targeted corporate businesses in their attempted occupation of Wall Street, they actually oppose the regulations and politics that make it possible for large companies to behave the way they do, allegedly disadvantaging 99% of the American people.

Furthermore, in assessing Occupy Wall Street according to Tilly and Tarrow’s definition consisting of four characteristics, Occupy is unquestionably a social movement. Firstly, Occupy Wall Street does have an enduring engagement in pushing political aims. This can be concluded from the fact that a large group of protesters in numerous cities in the United States set up camps in order to enforce changes in the political and economical system. Their idea was to keep occupying these areas until changes had been realized. In order to do this, a great many people terminated their jobs to be able to demonstrate 24/7. This shows the dedication and enduring engagement of the Occupiers.

Subsequently, in their protests, they incorporated a contentious repertoire. The Occupiers combined techniques of occupation, marches, the establishment of a “new political system” based on direct democracy and demonstration in order to achieve their political claims.

Thirdly, the continuing portrayal of the commitment of the political actors is visible in the fact that they adopted numerous symbols associated with the movement such as the Guy Fawkes masks and the Charging Bull. These symbols are everywhere and are also widely used in grassroots initiatives and by other movements that want to associate with Occupy Wall Street in order to show their connection. Another forum through which the commitment of the Occupiers is constantly portrayed is social networks sites such as Facebook and Twitter. The Occupy Wall Street Facebook page has 515,148 likes and people are actively using the website for sharing their political visions and discussion (“Occupy Wall St.”).

In a different way than for the Beat Generation, the last characteristic is less obvious for Occupy Wall Street. The movement is not clearly demarcated because of its openness and therefore it is difficult to know whether or not the cultural foundation comes from social movement bases outside or within the movement. As mentioned before, there are several groups with specific tasks in the anarchic organization and one of them is the cultural group. They are partly responsible for this last characteristic. However, there are also numerous cultural grassroots initiatives that serve as a cultural foundation for the movement. Therefore Occupy Wall Street does have a social movement base, although partly within the movement, that functions as a understructure for the social movement campaign. The difference between Occupy and the Beats with regards to this aspect, is that

Occupy's actions consisted of direct action as defined by Bailey, and the Beat Generation's action can be found primarily in the creation of different forms of culture that actually form a social movement base.

4.1.3 Assessing the Theory

I believe Tilly and Tarrow's framework of definitions concerning social movement is very valuable for it extrapolates the differences among groups that are generally categorized as social movements. However, their book is rather general, discussing all types of contentious politics. This is useful in order to perceive a larger picture of contentious politics, yet, in relation to two specific social movements, the definitions are perhaps too general. Especially the last characteristic of the definition of a social movement was troublesome. Although it clearly shows a difference between the Beat Generation and Occupy Wall Street, it focuses on a demarcation that is too strict. At least in the case of the two social movements discussed in this paper, the boundaries are blurred; both movements emphasize the importance of culture as their foundation, although for the Beats it serves as an expression of their beliefs as well. Therefore, it is not something that can be separated from the rest of the movement but rather something intrinsic. The Beat Generation, for example, is not a social movement according to this definition. Yet, I do think that the Beat Generation has influenced American society in a way that a social movement can. Unfortunately, Tilly and Tarrow did not include the assessment of the level of influence on society in their definition. Although this is a characteristic that is difficult to measure and also one that could be influenced by other factors than social movements, I think it is relevant for the assessment of the Beat Generation as the movement did achieve some of its

aims. Following another definition by Tilly, the Beat Generation was a “We are here” movement that primarily wanted to be recognized (Tarrow 2). They were eventually recognized as a counterculture in American society and later even became mainstream to a certain extent. Therefore, I think the Beat Generation should be regarded as a social movement, which I will continue to do throughout this paper.

Moreover, because of the broad array of contentious politics the book covers, it serves as an excellent starting point but needs additional theories to put the definitions into context. Klaus Eder’s *The New Politics of Class* (1993) will therefore add a more thorough analysis of the groups of protesters, looking at them from a neo-Marxist perspective. In addition, Gene Sharp’s *The Politics of Nonviolent Action* (1973) will offer a specific theory with regards to nonviolent action since both groups can be considered nonviolent in their expressions.

4.2 Klaus Eder

In *The New Politics of Class: Social Movements and Cultural Dynamics in Advanced Societies* (1993), sociologist Klaus Eder sets out a relatively new theory on classes and collective action. Traditionally, classes are defined according to a Marxist model of hierarchy where the focus lies on the gap between the elite and the proletariat. This traditional definition of class has been reviewed and newly formulated by various scholars such as sociologist Pierre Bourdieu among others. He argued that traditional Marxism failed to recognize important other classifiers of society like the arts, the media and science besides economy. All these influences together result in the groups of people that can be studied as specific social groups (Burawoy 1). Eder’s ideas fit into this neo-Marxist tradition; his

nonhierarchical definition of class is therefore founded upon ideas of Bourdieu and his colleagues. He formulates this new definition of class as follows:

a structure that translates inequality and power into different life-chances for categories of individuals. It is therefore a structural determination of life-chances, a structure which distributes chances to act, and the de-limits action spaces, which are often highly resistant to the attempts of social actors to change them. (Eder 12)

This model leaves more room for other connecting factors between members of the same class than the traditional model that was solely founded upon people's economic position. In addition, it provides insights in the interdependencies between classes. In this way, class should be seen as a network rather than as a hierarchy. This new idea of class is necessary to understand Eder's thoughts on collective action as a result of class conflicts. Eder set forth his ideas in 1993. This is important since social conflicts in the 1980s and early 1990s were generally studied as the product of ethnic or nationality tensions between groups. Since this method was highly effective in understanding social conflicts, it appeared that the concept of class as an identifier for social groups had become obsolete. Some scholars even went as far as believing that class as a social phenomenon had disappeared. Nevertheless, Eder proved this belief to be incorrect by claiming that class has not disappeared, the connection between class and collective action, founded on cultural expressions had simply changed. Traditionally, scholars believed that more social interaction would lead to more collective cultural expression. Since most social interaction happens within classes, whether defined

by conventional Marxists or neo-Marxists, a logical result would be cultural expressions defined by specific classes. Since this is not something that was present in society, scholars concluded that class was not as important in defining social groups as for example ethnicity or sexuality (Eder 1-15). Eder claims that since the arrival of modernity, cultural and class systems have developed autonomously from each other. The lack of correlation has resulted in a different position for class as a societal characteristic. It is now merely one of the factors that can have an influence on the presence or form of collective action (Eder 1-15).

In order to more accurately study society with Eder's claims in mind, he proposes to study social movements from a macro-sociological view and use a constructivist approach. The macro-sociological view will make it possible to focus on larger structures rather than the more speculative individualist methodology generally employed. The constructivist approach is important because social movements nowadays are constructed within the public sphere and this makes them less homogeneous and more hybrid. Within this constructivist approach, Eder argues that attention has to be paid to two factors. Firstly the cultural factor that determines social reality and secondly, the "determinants of collective social action" (Eder 7). Cultural reductionism is important since cultural expressions highly influence society, however, it is too simplistic since factors of interaction, motivation and situation also influence society. Eder summarizes this theory in a model that portrays the three levels of variables that mediate between class and action: *class*, defined as non-hierarchal, *cultural texture*, shared norms, values and identities, and *collective action*, the way an action is structured and motivated (7). Therefore, his ultimate thesis is:

the discourse on modernity is the field in which social actors define an aggregation of social actors as collective actors, and give them an existence as a social class. Moving from class to movement or from movement to class, is one way of bringing classes back into social theory.

(Eder 15)

The relevance of Eder's model for this essay is that this theory portrays a new definition of class that can serve as a tool to analyze both the Beat Generation and Occupy Wall Street. The respective social movements attached, are both not necessarily a separate class in the classical definition of the term. However, because of the cultural texture that influenced their actions that was partly based on anti-capitalist economic values, it is perhaps possible to categorize these movements as classes. What will follow is an analysis of the Beat Generation in relation to Eder's political class model. Subsequently, Occupy Wall Street will be analyzed on the same grounds in order to put the two movements in a comparable perspective.

4.2.1 Beat Generation

The Beat Generation mostly characterized itself as a class by detaching itself from the Squares. This is clearly a horizontal classification since the Beats explicitly chose not to be part of Square society. They attempted to live as free as they could, ignoring authority and really living counterculturally, next to society. In this, the demarcation between the two classes becomes visible. Although this is a somewhat artificial boundary, it does give rise to a "structural determination of life-

chances” and “chances to act” (Eder 12). However, since Square values simply dictated society, the Beats had no choice but to be part of that society. Here, Eder’s idea of the interconnectedness of classes becomes visible. The Beats were to a certain extent even dependent on the Squares. For example: they received money from the government, “free food” from their families and profited from the educational system. Yet, the Beats believed that they could escape from society or opt out and create their own society. This is illustrated in *Naked Lunch* (1959) where Burroughs suggests there is a possibility to escape from the addiction that he believes capitalism is founded upon. “Cure is always: *Let's go! Jump!*” (222) In the light of Eder’s interconnectedness, Burroughs will never be able to escape from society without moving away from it, because living in the United States means being influenced by mainstream American society. This went vice versa since the Beat Generation influenced American society as well, by representing a counterculture.

Another representation of the Beat Generation and class can be found in Kerouac’s *On the Road* (1957). In this novel, Sal intermingles with what Kerouac likes to call “Fellaheens” which means something along the lines of peasants or agricultural laborers. Sal meets these Fellaheens while working alongside of them on a cotton farm and studies them in a rather anthropological way. This, and the fact that he argues that the job is not his kind of job, suggests that he does not feel connected to them in the sense that he belongs to the Fellaheen class (Kerouac 97). However, he does respect them and is happy to live as a Fellaheen for a while: “I was a man of the earth, precisely as I had dreamed I would be” (Kerouac 97). Later, when Dean and Sal go to Mexico, they have similar attitudes towards the people they meet. On the one hand, they admire them for their freedom and

their openness, but on the other hand, and perhaps this is their Square consciousness speaking, they are described in rather negative stereotypes as for example “those dozens of Mexican cats” (Kerouac 259).

Moreover, the Beats can to a certain extent also be characterized as a separate class according to a more vertical perspective based on intellectual abilities as well as their financial status. Firstly, they believed that their style of writing as well as their modern beliefs about, for example, homosexuality were superior to those of their contemporaries. Their main argument for this was that others were stuck in subjugated conformity. Secondly, the Beats felt superior for not giving in to the addictions of capitalism as defined by Burroughs. They were not pursuing financially rewarding careers but rather wanted to celebrate their creativity. Yet, if they were not addicted to capitalism, they were addicted to a great many other temptations that were part of capitalism. All of the Beats used drugs, smoked cigarettes and drank a lot of alcohol. Kerouac even died of the consequences of his alcohol addiction (Cook 23-38).

Thus, in accordance with Eder’s definition of class, the Beat Generation’s protest against Square society can be seen as a class conflict. Whereas the Beats identified with certain groups that could be encapsulated as a class different from their own, they refused to accept the authority of the Squares. On the one hand, this can be explained by the fact that they wanted to live in a parallel society and form a counterculture. This aligns with Eder’s idea of a nonhierarchical class system. However, on the other hand, the Beats feel morally superior to the Squares and therefore they also represent a more classic vertical class system. Yet, whereas traditional class systems were based on economic interests, the Beat Generation’s system is founded on moral grounds.

4.2.2 Occupy Wall Street

The boundaries that demarcate the social class of Occupy Wall Street can primarily be found in their economic perspectives. The social movement claims to represent the poorest 99% of American society and consequently the 99% of the people with the least power. This sounds similar to the traditional definition of class as a contrast between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie; however, the 99% that was supposedly represented by Occupy was more diverse than the proletariat because the group consisted of people from all ages with various professions and of both sexes. However, what they had in common was a frustration with the establishment and how the people in power have governed the country, directing it to the state that it was in in the early 2010s and still is: crisis. Occupy's life chances, chances to act and the action space in which they were able to take action were thus fundamentally different than those of the 1%, the establishment they opposed (Eder 12).

Since Occupy Wall Street is sometimes viewed as a reaction to the Tea Party from the left, it is worth comparing the two movements on the basis of Eder's definition of class. In the interview with Lasn, the interviewer asks him if he believes that cooperation with the Tea Party could be an option, since both parties want to change the existing power structure. At first glance, they both had that initial aim in common but were simply from different ends of the political spectrum. When looking at this cooperation as a class conflict between the establishment and the Tea Party and Occupy, it becomes clear that the Tea Party and Occupy members are not in the same social class. Prominent members of the Tea Party such as Sarah Palin were often prominent members of the GOP as well. Therefore, this party already had people in power that could influence the existing

system according to the Tea Party's ideals. In contrast, Occupy did not want to cooperate with any politicians or representatives of the establishment of any kind because the movement feared those people would not accurately represent them and scramble their ideals. Therefore, an attempt to demarcate the boundaries of a class that consists of both Occupy Wall Street and the Tea Party would fail. With regards to Eder's theory of explaining social conflicts as class conflicts, there could never be a successful struggle against the establishment because there is no structural determinator of life chances and chances to act that the Tea Party and Occupy Wall Street have in common that substantially differs from the chances of the establishment.

4.2.3 Assessing the Theory

With this relatively new definition of class, and Eder's accompanying method of studying social conflicts from a class conflict perspective, he offers an interesting angle in studying social movements. With regards to Occupy and the Beat Generation, his definition of class offered a clearer demarcation of the two groups and also showed how these classes related to other contemporary classes. In addition, when comparing the two groups, they related to the establishment class in a similar way. Namely, they did not want to cooperate with the establishment, nor did they respect their authority. This supports the first part of my hypothesis that protests by both Occupy and the Beat Generation can be explained as class conflicts. In relation to Tilly and Tarrow's definition of social movements, it appears that Eder is not as strict in differentiating between social movement bases and social movement campaigns. Although he does not offer a clear definition of a social movement and primarily focuses on the social conflicts rather than the

social movements, Eder includes all movements that can be structurally demarcated as classes opposing a different class. Therefore, the two theories combined provide a nuanced, comparative perspective on both movements and their relation to the establishment. However, Eder's theory is perhaps even broader than Tilly and Tarrow's although it has a more limited perspective. In order to achieve a more detailed comparison between the two groups, I will assess them on the basis of Gene Sharp's ideas about politics of nonviolence.

4.3 Gene Sharp

In *The Politics of Nonviolent Action* series, Sharp sets out an elaborate account of nonviolent action, including its relation to power and struggle, its various methods and its dynamics that determine the level of effectiveness of its use (v). He starts by explaining how nonviolent action differs from violent action and how traditionally, scholars have not often made a clear-cut distinction between violent and nonviolent action, leading to the appliance of theories of war and violence to situations that merely involved nonviolent action. This is not necessarily negative; according to Sharp and others “nonviolent action has its similarities with military war” (67). He argues that both actions “involve the matching of forces and the waging of ‘battles,’ requires wise strategy and tactics, and demands of its ‘soldiers’ courage, discipline, and sacrifice” (Sharp 67). However, politics of violence and nonviolent action are very different in nature. Whereas nonviolent action aims at directly influencing people’s behavior by making people do or not do something, violent action can only influence people’s behavior by punishing them if they do or do not do something. Yet, “the most skillful use of violence may produce, precisely because it is skillful, comparatively little violence” (Sharp xx). According to Sharp,

the reason that most theories of conflict are build around violent action is that this type of action simply occurs more often. He explains this by arguing that people posses a “built-in bias” towards violence (Sharp 73). Although I am not certain if I agree with this statement because I believe that people will also always try to avoid to get injured or killed, Sharp is rather convinced of this idea. He argues that although cultural diversity among people has made it difficult to draw generalizing conclusions,

when people in our society are confronted with situations in which violence obviously suffers from grave disadvantages and where significant evidence shows that nonviolent alternatives exist, a large number of people will still say that they *believe* violence to be necessary. (Sharp 73)

Yet, Sharp also argues that the concepts of violent and nonviolent action evoke a certain hierarchy or judgment in most people’s minds where nonviolent action would be morally “better” than the use of violence to solve political issues. However, the concepts should emphatically not be seen in this context. Furthermore, not all peaceful solutions to a political problem are examples of nonviolent action. Milder forms of solving an impasse such as compromise or conciliation can be used within the contentious repertoire; however, they are not politics of nonviolent action in itself (Sharp 65). Sharp consequently defines nonviolent action as: “a technique used to control, combat and destroy the opponent’s power by nonviolent means of wielding power” (4). Another common error is to see nonviolent action as passive. “Nonviolent action is a technique by

which people who reject passivity and submission, and who see struggle as essential, can wage their conflict without violence" (Sharp 64).

The effects of nonviolent action can be twofold. On the one hand, the actions can exercise social power: "the capacity to control the behavior of others, directly or indirectly, through action by groups of people, which action impinges on other groups of people" (Sharp 7). On the other hand, politics of nonviolence can have a certain political power:

[it] is that kind of social power which is wielded for political objectives, especially by governmental institutions or by people in opposition to or in support of such institutions. Political power thus refers to the total authority, influence, pressure and coercion which may be applied to achieve or prevent the implementation of the wishes of the power-holder. (Sharp 7-8)

Therefore, social power can form a component of political power but not the other way around. The methods employed can be divided in three separate categories: acts of omission, acts of commission and a combination of both. Acts of omission can be characterized by the refusal to act as expected and acts of commission are examples of behavior that clash with what people are normally expected to do (Sharp 68).

Acts of nonviolent action are usually directed against a certain organ of power that is based on one of the two natures of power: the people are dependent on the good will of the government or the government is dependent on the good will of the people. Only in the last case can politics of nonviolent action possibly have effect (Sharp 9). The government can then react to these politics in three

ways. Firstly, conversion can occur. In this case the government accepts the demands of the protesters and positively enforces these. Secondly, accommodation may take place. This is the process where the demands of the protesters are granted by the government but without the government agreeing with these points. Lastly, nonviolent coercion may occur. Due to nonviolent action, the power of the government diminishes to the extent where it no longer controls the nation (Sharp 69). This last scenario assumes the pluralistic-dependency theory that entails that a ruler needs contributions from the people in order to successfully govern. In other words: the interconnectedness of the government and the people is at least partly based on soft power (Sharp 9-15).

According to Sharp, the influence and effectiveness of nonviolent action consequently depends on a lot of variables. At the beginning of the text he states that nonviolent actions are needed but they are seldomly effective (Sharp vi). Moreover, “whatever the contest, there is a good chance that one is better off confronting a skillful and effective resource to nonviolent action than a savage ineffectual resort to violence” (Sharp xxi).

4.3.1 Beat Generation

Firstly, both in case of the Beat Generation and Occupy Wall Street, the nature of the power of the government they are protesting against is that of reliance on the people. The government is democratically elected and depends on the acceptance of the people for its power. Therefore, politics of nonviolent action have the potential to be successful in the United States. The Beat Generation’s expressions of frustration can be considered examples of nonviolent action on the basis of Sharp’s definition because to a certain extent, the movement enforces power by

controlling and destroying the power of the establishment. However, I believe that contradicting Sharp's rejection of the bias that nonviolent action is not by definition passive, the expressions of the Beat Generation are more passive than many other examples of nonviolent action.

Sharp dedicates one part of the three book series to an elaborate range of examples of nonviolent action. He categorizes these examples in five groups: "methods of nonviolent protests and persuasion", "methods of social noncooperation", methods of economic noncooperation", "methods of political noncooperation", and "methods of nonviolent intervention" (Sharp xiii-xv). Most of the Beats' expressions fall under the headers of social noncooperation and political noncooperation. However, their economic objectives are linked to the social and political actions they undertook. The types of action Sharp names that the Beats participate in are:

- 1) The creation and publication of poetry and prose that served as a means to convey countercultural messages that opposed the establishment (Sharp 127).
- 2) The use of rude gestures. They openly disrespected authority and often acted rude in public displays by for example not taking an interviewer seriously (Sharp 145).
- 3) The display of performances. The performances at Ferlinghetti's bookstore were examples of creative protests. One of the best-known examples is the recital of Ginsberg's *Howl*, which sparked a literary and minor cultural revolution (Sharp 149).
- 4) A selective social boycott. Linked to the rude behavior the Beats portray towards members of the establishment, they also ostracized these people to a

certain extent and attempted to live outside of society because they did not accept the prevailing norms (Sharp 184-186).

- 5) Social disobedience. The Beats did not conform to what was socially expected of them. (Sharp 198).
- 6) Withholding or withdrawal of allegiance. Their apoliticalness shows their ignorance and disrespect towards the authorities (Sharp 120).
- 7) Boycott of elections. The members of the Beat Generation were apolitical, did not have any faith in the prevailing system and therefore decided not to vote (Sharp 291).
- 8) Civil disobedience. They occasionally broke the law. The Beats were fervent drug users and at times stole food or other primary goods because they did not have money and believed these items should be free of charge anyways (Sharp 315).

The methods the Beats used were a combination of omission and commission. On the one hand, they refused to obey the authorities but on the other hand, they portrayed unusual behavior by for example openly expressing their (homo-) sexuality. In relation to theories by Tilly and Tarrow, it follows that the Beats indeed used a contentious repertoire. The result of the Beat Generation's nonviolent actions can be considered an exercise of social rather than political power. Kerouac, Ginsberg, Burroughs and others inspired people by offering them an example of a countercultural lifestyle. Hereby, they indirectly impinged and to a certain extent controlled parts of society. Their actions had little political influence though. They anticipated the political changes that took place in the 1960s around the Civil Rights Movement and helped "establish the grounds for an implicit

“critique of the organized system” that, as Paul Goodman wrote as early as 1960, “everybody in some sense agrees with” (Cook 120). However, at best it can be said that the Beat Generation had laid the foundation for these political changes. They themselves did not change the political system. Therefore the reaction of the government to the protests is not relevant for the Beat Generation.

4.3.2 Occupy Wall Street

The expressions of protest by Occupy Wall Street fall under the definition of nonviolent action as well. Their actions directly aimed at controlling, combating and destroying the power of the 1% (Sharp 4). More so than the Beat Generation, Occupy Wall Street was aiming at political recognition and influence by distorting business in the financial heart of the country. Therefore, their politics were essentially more active than those of the Beats.

Examples of the expressions of nonviolent action by Occupy are:

- 1) Declarations by organizations and institutions. During one of the first general assemblies, the movement democratically formulated a “Principles of Solidarity” statement. In this document they have written down the focal points of the group (Sharp 121-122).
- 2) Leaflets, posters, banners and displayed communication. The cultural group within Occupy Wall Street is responsible for the expression of the movement in images. They have created numerous banners, leaflets and other material that can be recognized by the symbolism of Occupy. Reoccurring symbols are the charging bull with the ballerina and the Guy Fawkes masks (Sharp 126-127).
- 3) Newspapers. The movement established their own newspaper titled *The Occupied Wall Street Journal* that informed people about the events

surrounding the movement (*The Occupied Wall Street Journal* ; Sharp 128-129).

- 4) Picketing. An example of picketing happened in Oakland, California, when Occupy Oakland demanded a general strike throughout and occupied the harbor (Sharp 132-133).
- 5) Symbolic sounds. The protesters used a “human mic” to transfer their messages (Sharp 144).
- 6) Vigils. This form of protest is one of the primary characteristics of Occupy Wall Street. The movement’s encampments around Zuccotti Park was occupied from 17 September until 15 November 2011 (Sharp 147-148).
- 7) Marches. An example of this type of action took place when Occupiers stormed the Bank of America (Sharp 152).
- 8) Teach-ins. Within the camps, various people set up teach-ins to discuss and teach diverse topics related to politics (Sharp 169).
- 9) Social disobedience. The Occupiers behaved countercultural in various ways, starting with the way they lived in the camps, distorting everyday life (Sharp 198).
- 10) “Flight” of workers. Although Sharp explains this method in a way that considers workers to be poor lower class agricultural workers, Occupy made people leave their daily jobs in order for them to demonstrate 24/7 (Sharp 201).
- 11) Policy of austerity. The Occupiers gave up a lot of their luxuries while they were camping at Zuccotti Park (Sharp 225).

- 12) Withholding or withdrawal of allegiance. Occupy Wall Street was explicitly protesting against the system and is not prepared to listen to the authorities, nor cooperate with them (Sharp 286-288).
- 13) Literature and speeches advocating resistance. The promoters of Occupy regularly held speeches and invited well-known supporters such as Chomsky and Žižek to inspire the Occupiers (Sharp 289).
- 14) Refusal of an assemblage or meeting to disperse. There were large protests following the clearance of the encampments (Sharp 308-310).

The methods Occupy Wall Street used were a combination of omission and commission. On the one hand, they refused to leave Zuccotti Park until the government listened to their demands. But on the other hand, they held several marches and held teach-ins. Therefore, similar to the Beat Generation, Occupy engaged in a contentious repertoire, combining different methods of protesting. The aim of Occupy Wall Street was to create both social and political power. Although they did dominate the political conversation for a certain time while their encampments were still up, Occupy eventually only enforced social power. This was also due to the fact that the movement did not want to cooperate with existing political forces. Eventually, the movement did not reach its full political goals. Therefore the way that the government dealt with the movement's changes is again not very relevant. Initially, the government was worried that Occupy would perhaps reach its goals because their support was very numerous and diverse. However, after their decision to remove the camps, the influence of Occupy Wall Street steadily declined.

4.3.3 Assessing the Theory

With his series *The Politics of Nonviolent Action* (1973), Sharp offers a new way of analyzing political action. I think his texts are extremely comprehensive in the way they discuss every aspect of nonviolent action and even provide accurate accounts and examples of a great amount of methods of nonviolent action. Because of the fact that Sharp is so elaborate, his theories and insights are still relevant today. Although he recognizes that it can also be useful to study nonviolent action on the basis of traditional theories on violence, since the dynamics are quite similar, his account makes a clear distinction between politics of violent and nonviolent action, resulting in a better understanding of the demarcation between the two. Moreover, it provides a more precise understanding of the dynamics of nonviolent action.

In combination with Tilly and Tarrow's theories of social movements and Eder's neo-Marxist perspectives, Sharp offers an additional perspective on social movements based on their actions. In addition, it gives more depth to Tilly and Tarrow's concept of contentious repertoire, because of the precise analysis of nonviolent action. Sharps's theories also add to Eder's focus on the conflict between classes by analyzing the preconditions that are necessary for the possibility of a successful protest based on nonviolent action.

5. Conclusion

Concluding, the comparative analysis of the Beat Generation and Occupy Wall Street has displayed a great many parallels as well as differences between the two movements, both in nature and in their expressions.

Firstly, when comparing the nature of these groups, both movements can be considered examples of contentious politics according to the definition of Tilly and Tarrow. However, their other definition on social movements cannot be applied to both movements. Although both the Beat Generation and Occupy Wall Street show an enduring engagement in pushing political aims, use contentious repertoires instead of contentious performances, and portray a continual commitment to political claims, the last element of Tilly and Tarrow's definition is more complex to apply. According to this element, social movements need a foundation in the form of a social movement base. Therefore, Tilly and Tarrow's definition of a social movement is really what they call a social movement campaign.

Although philosophers such as Adorno and Horkheimer inspired the Beat Generation, the Beats' true ideological and cultural base was formed by themselves, and consists of their writing and other cultural manifestations. This becomes apparent when considering that the Beats' methods of protests are rather passive, and that the movement formed a social movement base for the hippies, who were an example of a social movement campaign. Or, as Corso argued in the 1960s: "[the hippies] are acting out what the Beats wrote" (Cook 146). However, I do believe the Beat Generation should be considered a social movement. The other three elements of the definition do apply to them and their social power has been substantial. Although this last characteristic is difficult to measure and the Beats' political power was of little significance, they managed to make a lasting impression on society that inspired other social movements after them. Moreover, according to another theory that categorizes social movements by Tilly, the Beat Generation can be considered a "we are here" movement.

Therefore, their primary aim was to be recognized in order to achieve social or political power. At the height of their popularity, the Beats were certainly recognized by American society, even to the extent that their counterculture was a part of culture. Also, I think Tilly and Tarrow's categorization of social movement bases and social movement campaigns is too strict. The demarcation lines between the two types are far less clear-cut when applied to actual social movements. The social movement base is, at least in the case of the two movements discussed in this paper, not a separate entity but rather an intrinsic part of a social movement campaign.

Occupy Wall Street can be considered a social movement campaign or simply a social movement, according to Tilly and Tarrow's definition, although its social movement base can not be found in a separate entity either. Occupy was a grassroots organization and consequently, its cultural and ideological foundations were a product of the input of a diverse array of people. Occupies' cultural group was primarily responsible for this issue and outsiders such as Chomsky and Moore that felt connected to the movement, offered additional bases. Although Occupy Wall Street was also defined as a "we are here" movement, there is a difference in nature between the two movements. This difference can be found in the effectiveness of the two movements as discussed by Sharp. Whereas the Beat Generation mostly enforced social power, Occupy also enjoyed a certain level of political power. In the beginnings of the movement, Occupy dominated the political conversation. Yet, after the encampments were removed from Zuccotti Park, the influence of the movement seems to have ceased to exist.

Furthermore, when analyzing the two movements on the basis of Eder's neo-Marxist theories, the nature of the two movements shows striking similarities.

Eder defines class as “a structure that translates inequality and power into different life-chances for categories of individuals” (12). Since both movements find their origins in opposing the establishment, they indeed have, or at least believe they have, structurally different power positions as opposed to the Squares or the 1%. Furthermore, both groups can be demarcated from the establishment by the fact that they function as countercultures. However, there are differences between Occupy and the Beat Generation with regards to their relation to other classes, which are linked to the profile of the promoters of the two groups. The Beat Generation showed more interconnectedness with the establishment than Occupy Wall Street. Whereas the Beats relied on the government and other Squares for certain primary goods, the members of Occupy refused to cooperate with anyone they considered to be part of the 1%. Moreover, the Beat Generation also engaged in relations with classes other than their own or the Square class. The Beats for example showed respect towards Fellaheens but did not identify with them. Accordingly, in the light of Eder’s definitions, they recognized that there were multiple classes but the conflict in question only took place between two classes: the Beats and the Squares. In contrast, Occupy Wall Street did not seem to acknowledge multiple classes. When comparing the Tea Party and Occupy Wall Street as opposition to the same establishment, but from different ends of the political spectrum, it becomes clear that the two movements do not share the same structural life-chances or experience a similar position of inequality. The difference between a multiple class system and a dual class system can be explained by the fact that the Beats consisted of a small, rather homogeneous group of people, whereas Occupy claimed to represent 99% of the population,

opposing the other 1%. Because of the diversity within the Occupy movement, the denominators that demarcated their social class were rather general.

Consequently, my first hypothesis, that both the protests by the Beat Generation and Occupy can be explained as class conflicts, is correct. By looking at the two movements from this perspective, especially in combination with Tilly and Tarrow's definitions, the very nature and origins of the movements are extrapolated. This makes them comparable and provides a deeper understanding of the two movements that is needed in order to assess whether or not my second hypothesis is correct.

Likewise, another perspective that is intrinsic in both movements is that of the American Dream. Although the Beat Generation is more explicit about its image of the American Dream -Thoreauvian Self-Reliance-, elements that refer to the American Dream can also be found within the Occupy movement. The movements' emphasis on individualism and grassroots initiatives are typical characteristics of the American Dream. However, in combination with the aim of a fairer society, this American Dream appears to be a new Marxist-influenced version. So, in this respect, Occupy offers a *counter* image of the American Dream that is influenced by Marxism, while the Beat Generation provides a *different* but conventional image of the American Dream. This is notable because it indirectly emphasizes the attitudes towards the Squares and the 1% by the Beats and Occupy respectively. The people that identified with the Beat Generation were eager to live in a different society that could only come into existence by means of a revolution. Therefore, the Beats opted to live in the margins of society. They passively protested the establishment by ignoring them. The dismissal of their authority by their apolitical and unacademic attitudes could be explained as a

classic example of Self-Reliance. In contrast, Occupy Wall Street was often directly attacking the establishment by for example aiming to occupy the financial heart of the nation or call for a general strike in Oakland, California. This attitude of countering the existing powers by actively attacking them, versus the passive attitude of the Beat generation, once again emphasizes the difference in nature that is extrapolated by Tilly and Tarrow's definition of social movements that defines Occupy Wall Street as a social movement and the Beat Generation as a social movement base.

In analyzing the expressions of the Beat Generation and Occupy Wall Street, the most apparent similarities are that both movements used methods of nonviolent action in a contentious repertoire rather than a contentious performance, as defined by Tilly and Tarrow. In addition both movements used a combination of methods of omission and commission. However, while the Beat Generation's methods of protest can be characterized by passiveness and are typically examples of social and political noncooperation, the Occupiers employed more active methods that are examples of social and political noncooperation, as well as economical noncooperation. Public reaction to the protests by both movements was mixed. In both cases the protesters were criticized because of their supposedly hypocritical behavior. Adversaries in both situations claimed that the protesters were using a system that they opposed in their advantage. Nevertheless, both movements had a large share of supporters that shared their countercultural ideas. Although the composition of the contentious repertoires of the two movements differs, all methods share that they are explicitly void of any intention to cooperate with the establishment. The Beats did not believe they could change the Post-World War II America and consequently attempted to change

their structural life chances outside society. On the one hand, Burroughs and Ginsberg among others believed a cultural revolution needed to take place in order to change society and on the other hand, Beats inspired by the ideas of Rexroth chose to escape from society by for example studying ancient Eastern traditions. Nevertheless, all Beats used drugs to envision a different society and to escape their own. With regards to Occupy Wall Street, there was a lot of diversity among the protesters concerning the final aim of the movement. All Occupiers wanted a fairer society. From Eder's perspective, they wanted to change their position as a class in relation to the 1% class, ultimately decreasing the structural inequality of life chances between the two classes. However, whereas some more traditional socialists such as Lasn want to change the entire existing political, social and economic system, other more revisionist members of Occupy prefer that important changes are made to these systems in order to eliminate the elements that they consider negative excesses of capitalism.

Finally, it follows that my second hypothesis is largely correct as well. Although the two social movements are over fifty years apart and many social movements have left their marks since, I believe Occupy Wall Street is a continuation of the Beats' philosophy in a new context. Both movements promote freedom and oppose the shortsightedness of the authorities, however in different contexts. While the Beats fought for individual freedoms and opposed conformity, Occupy Wall Street was protesting against the authorities because they believed the authorities were irresponsible and only promoted the interests of the richest and most powerful 1% of the American people, resulting in a political and economic crisis. Occupy promoted freedom in the sense of equality. The protesters demanded a fairer society in which the structural life chances of

everyone would be the same. They wanted to achieve this through grassroots initiatives and direct democracy. However, they also promoted open Internet access, celebrating freedom of speech and personal creativity. Therefore, the origins of the two movements is similar, they insisted on a fairer and more open society based on the input of individuals. Yet, the two movements do differ in nature, as became apparent through the definitions by Tilly and Tarrow among others. This can to a certain extent be explained by the fact that society has become increasingly “Beat”, and due to globalization and the Digital Revolution, people are more familiar with countercultural perspectives. Also, it explains why the Beat Generation only received substantial support after the publication of *On the Road* (1957), ultimately leading to the collapse of the Beat Generation, and Occupy Wall Street found support throughout society, since people from various backgrounds, ages, sexes and regions identified immediately with the movement. Yet, not the entire 99% of the people Occupy claimed to represent supported the movement. When this support decreased, the influence of Occupy decreased with it. Today, only a small amount of people still consider themselves to be Occupiers. Although they still have the same ideals, they now mostly portray themselves as a social movement base. For example, they offer support for the protests in Turkey, against President Erdoan.

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