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June 21, 2013



Occupy Wall Street: Changing the Topic

Posted: 11/01/11 10:26 AM ET

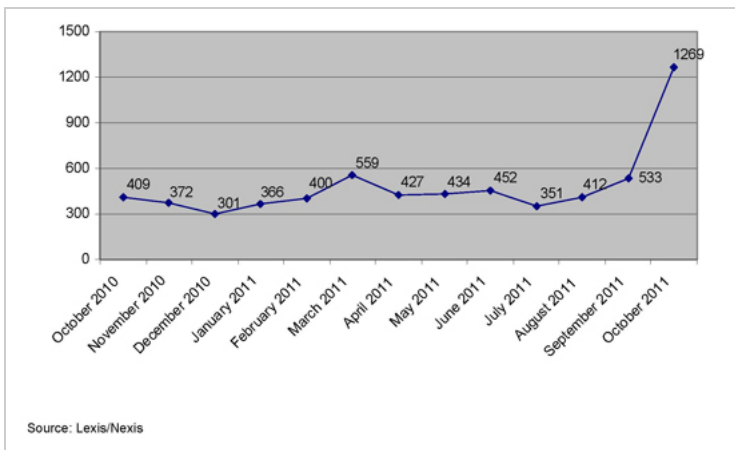
The Occupy Wall Street (OWS) movement has changed our national conversation. At kitchen tables, in coffee shops, in offices and factories, and in newsrooms, Americans are now talking about economic inequality, corporate greed, and how America's super-rich have damaged our economy and our democracy.

The wide gulf between the richest one percent and the rest of Americans hasn't changed over the past year, but in the past month OWS has made it the dominant topic of discussion across the nation. Even the GOP presidential candidates, while first criticizing the occupiers as a radical fringe, have had to do an about-face when they saw that the protesters had, in fact, captured the national mood.

One can see how Occupy Wall Street has transformed the country's agenda by examining how America's newspapers have covered the movement's concerns and issues.

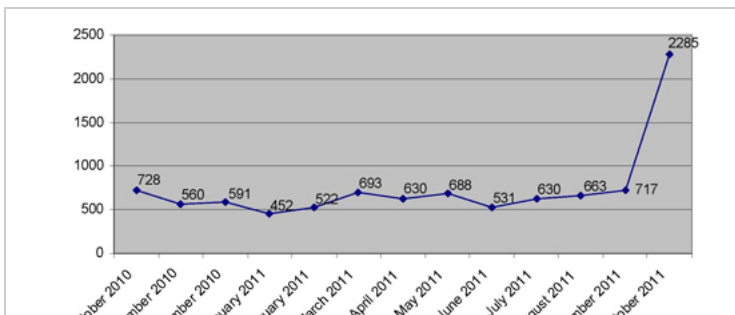
For example, a search of Lexis/Nexis's database reveals that in October 2010, U.S. newspapers published 409 stories with the word "inequality". As the graphs reveal, each month through September 2011 the number of stories varied little. But in October 2011, the frequency skyrocketed to 1,269 stories.

Number of articles with the word 'inequality' in U.S. newspapers - October 2010 through October 2011



Likewise with the word "greed." Between October 2010 and September 2011, the number of "greed" stories fluctuated between 452 and 728. But within weeks after Occupy Wall Street gained a foothold in New York and cities around the country, the papers were filled with stories about greed. Last month, newspapers ran 2285 stories with the word "greed."

Number of articles with the word 'greed' in U.S. newspapers - October 2010 through October 2011



The focus on greed tends to target corporate American and the super-rich, where wealth and power are concentrated. Here, too, the media has changed its reporting in response to the escalating protests that began in New York. For most of the past year, stories about the "richest one percent" -- the target of Occupy Wall Street's anger and the flip side of the 99% that the protesters claim to represent -- were few and far between. In fact, as the graph shows, between October 2010 and September 2011, that phrase appeared in the nation's newspapers between 11 and 32 times each month. In October 2011, by contrast, they published 174 stories that mentioned the "richest one percent."

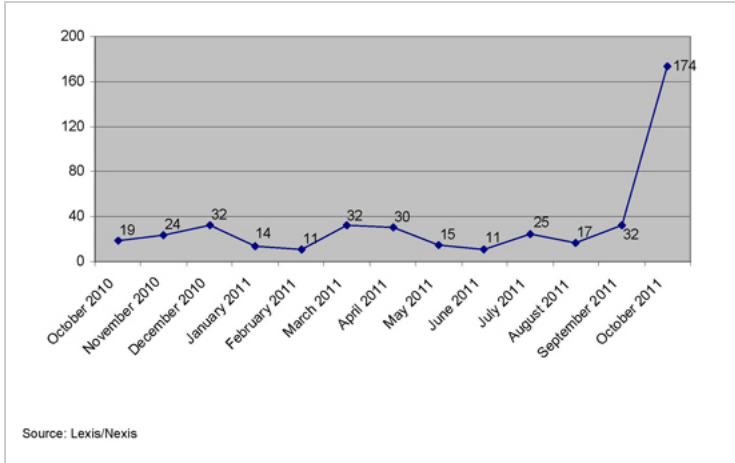
Number of articles with the phrase 'richest



'one percent' in U.S. newspapers - October 2010 through October 2011

Of course, not every story with the words "inequality," "greed" and "richest one percent" was about the issues that Occupy Wall Street is raising. But the pattern is clear. The protest movement that burst onto the scene has shaken up our daily discourse and our political system. The protest over these issues has reached such a crescendo that even Republican Congressman Eric Cantor, the House majority leader, scheduled a speech at the University of Pennsylvania's business school last week to address the topic of inequality. (He cancelled the speech when he learned that he couldn't restrict who could attend the talk and that Occupy Philadelphia would be protesting outside the event).

Whether Occupy Wall Street and its supporters can translate growing public awareness and concern about inequality and greed into issues in the 2012 presidential and Congressional election remains to be seen. But, at least now, it's possible.



Peter Dreier teaches politics at Occidental College. His next book, *The 100 Greatest Americans of the 20th Century: A Social Justice Hall of Fame*, will be published by Nation Books next year.

Been to Occupy Wall Street?

If you've been to an Occupy Wall Street event anywhere in the country, we'd like to hear from you. Send OfftheBus your photos, links to videos or first-hand accounts of what you've seen for possible inclusion in The Huffington Post's coverage.

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steinpiaz

SUPER USER · 235 Fans · I couldn't even spell conservative and now I R one

1 5

OWS has become a collective renewal of our vows of civic rights and responsibilities. A renewal of our belief in Democracy and the American dream. OWS goals are easy to identify and easy to understand. We want a government of the people, for the people and by the people. A land of liberty and justice for all. A land where all men (and all women) are created equal and have equal... [Read More](#)

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[In reply to: steinpiaz](#)

saldobs

12 Fans

1

well said, keep saying it.

now we Unite and pass on our collective demands.

We cannot talk about personal beliefs, but we can demand that we want our government back.
NO MORE MONEY FORM SPECIAL INTEREST, A CORPORATION IS NOT A PERSON...
add and pass on, we are stronger than the 1%, but they own the media another obstacle for us to get over in spreading our word as we rise to power. THEY WILL LISTEN.

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Drew Sargent

4

SUPER USER · 387 Fans · Born-again human here

Good observation Peter. For me, this fact is the single most valuable element to the OWS movement thus far. I'm inspired by these folks.

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femmyror

3 3

334 Fans · .

I was YEARNING--dying!--for something like this to happen in order to counteract the Tea Party--dominated discourse in media. That the movement has grown the way it has makes me absolutely jubilant.

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[In reply to: femmyror](#)

chrispychilla28

1 2

180 Fans

And really some of the ORIGINAL Tea Party ideas overlap with the occupy movement. This is really a movment for anyone in the 99%. Making political parties obsolete unless they listen to the voice of the people.

I have been to several occupy movments, and there have been conservatives and liberals working together for a common goal.

Money out of politics and justice for those that crashed our economy.

occupytogether.org

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[In reply to: chrispychilla28](#)

ssassy78

644 Fans · Laughter is the best medicine.

I agree. This is NOT a movement about left and right; and it is important that we keep it that way!

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zelda777

1 2

436 Fans · transcend the B. S.

If one thing has been accomplished by OWS, it has been to bring to light the REAL reasons for the economic meltdown that have affected so many, in place of the deluded and fanatical GOTP mantra of "low government", etc., hearkening back to the days when the colonies were fighting against THE KINGDOM OF ENGLAND, HELLO!!

The economy is more broke (in more ways than one!) than most people can...

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[In reply to: zelda777](#)

stevehamlin

60 Fans

An anthem? How about Terra Nova's "Equal Rights"?

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8K45oiyc29M>

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zitlight73

564 Fans

2

There is a huge danger of more and more of our media being bought up by the same people. They pretty much control the conventional news cycles. There were many anti-war protests during the Bush administration but they were never covered. but now with smartphones laptops etc it is getting harder to ignore protests like OWS.

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mynamesyow

1,487 Fans · Scientist, Gonzo, Champion of the Poor

2

If OWS only manages to do this (ramp up the conversation across America from the Newsstands to the dinner Table) AS WELL as Help Push \$\$\$ out of Politics it will have achieved more than any of us could imagine,

Respect for OWS

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Akshay Singh

212 Fans · The Devil's Orchard

2

An important point in case of OWS is that it has shown unity ,empathy and humanity , atleast we can take inspiration from the do er's who are fighting against a plutocratic establishment and also the cold, detached, emotionless, apathetic core that people seem to have developed in this age.

OWS forces us to think and more importantly to feel .

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Transverseangle

369 Fans · To stay healthy, everything in mderation

2

The media is a forum to provide news and propaganda, when people have had enough, the media cannot control the lion within us all.

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Mike Itsbatmansilly

103 Fans

1

alas you are missing the point, as many in the media are. we arent trying to influence the 2012 elections. we are trying to dismantle the entire process. it is unfixable, and all the 'voting' for a 'candidate' from either party won't do a lick of good. they all lie, pander, and accept corporate money, carving a

comfortable niche for themselves. we plan to create a new system, of elections, of politics, of social caring and global togetherness. not elect a friendly candidate who will pander to us. we dont want political concessions. we want a new system entirely. and we will get one!

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[ozmas mirror](#)

1

SUPER USER · 124 Fans · Sadly, accidental rudeness occurs alarmingly often

I think this nails what I have been so hopeful about since the protests started. "We the People" were being drowned out by 'l the corporation." They were talking about the Kardashians, and Charile Sheen, and Gary Condit, and if they were going to talk politics, it was the manufactured 'debt crisis' and not the 'people are hurting out here' crisis.

I am very interested to see if the MSM adapts or fades into irrelevancy as people realise that they can find better sources of information, ones that aren't being paid to promote a wroldview that has little to do with the people who are watching/listening/reading.

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