Maple Spring Up Close:
The Role of Self-Interest and Socio-Economic Resources for Youth Protest

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In the spring of 2012, Quebec witnessed one of the most extended and ongoing strike and protest activities around the issue of tuition hikes. Thousands of Cegep and university students went to the streets, banged on pots or boycotted their courses in order to express their views on the government's proposed tuition increase. In this study, we examine a unique sample of all university students of Université de Montréal, UQAM, and McGill who responded to our survey. First, how do students who favour the tuition increase differ from those who are against it in terms of financial circumstances, family situation or social relations? Second, which factors lead students to protest on the streets? This paper represents one of the first empirical analyses of student's views on and actions in the Maple Spring.

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Introduction

Falling levels of youth engagement in the electoral process in Canada and elsewhere has been a subject of both academic and public debate. Past research suggests that electoral forms of political participation such as voting have declined among the younger generations and particularly among disadvantaged youth (Gidengil et al. 2003; Franklin 2004; Dalton 2006). The extent to which these forms of participation have been replaced by non-electoral action repertoires such as volunteering, online activism or political consumerism, remains contested (Milner 2010; Gidengil et al. 2003; O'Neill 2007; Micheletti et al.2004).

In this paper, we are interested in the sources of youth political participation within the context of the so-called "Maple Spring" in Quebec. The *Maple Spring* designates not only the students' strike between February 2012 and September 2012, but also the general public showing their disagreement with the government's action, especially the ensuing controversy over the right of citizens to hold protests in the streets. This period of social contestation represents a social mobilization that has few parallels in Canadian history, certainly in the past forty years. What makes this social mobilization particularly interesting is that is was, at heart, a mobilization among the generation that has been characterized as both apathetic. Hence, the *Maple Spring* constitutes an interesting case-study to understand the factors accounting for the decision of taking part of the protests.

Our analysis relies on the *Online Survey on Student Issues in Quebec* (OSSIQ, 2012), which was conducted with students recruited through university-wide list-serves at three universities in Montreal (n=15,491). The survey allows us to analyse in detail the position of students toward the tuition hike that sparked the protests, as well as the factors that motivated students to participate in various related forms of political action. We are particularly interested in addressing the role that socio-economic factors played in mobilizing young people's political participation. While most political participation is related to higher levels of socio-economic status, in this particular case the demand for continued government support should be of particular interest for those who are less well off.

Literature

Young people and political participation

Political participation is one of the cornerstones of a well-functioning democracy (Barber 1984; Pateman 1979; Verba et al.1995). At the same time, there is substantial empirical evidence demonstrating that voting and other electoral and parliamentary forms of political participation are declining in Western societies, especially among younger generations (Skocpol 2003; Putnam 2000; Blais et al. 2004; Franklin 2004; Blais & Loewen 2011). Some scholarship suggests that non-parliamentary forms of participation such as "life style" politics, political consumerism, and Internet activism are replacing traditional forms (Dalton 2006; Inglehart & Welzel 2005; Stolle and Micheletti 2013; Bakker & de Vreese 2011; De Zúñiga et al. 2009; Kann et al. 2007). Young citizens seem

particularly attracted to these looser and less hierarchical forms of politics, which are often situated outside the parliamentary sphere (Beck 1992; Bennett et al. 2008; Teocharis 2011; Ward & de Vreese 2011). Similarly, the use of websites, email-campaigns, virtual communities, and social networking are considered by some as an important new element in political communication and participation (Howard 2006; Chadwick 2009). However, political surveys typically fail to capture these emerging forms of political involvement on the part of young people for two reasons. Surveys usually do not include many young people and they rarely ask about a wide variety of (especially emerging) political acts. Thus the action repertoires of the youngest generation are consistently under-estimated, and at worst, not captured at all. Our protest survey thus attempts to overcome this weakness in the data collections and focuses on a youth-based mobilization campaign to understand better how and why young people participate in politics.

While research so far has indicated that newer and online action repertoires are adopted mostly in addition to (and not in place of) traditional involvement (Wellman et al. 2001; Best & Krueger 2005; Di Gennaro & Dutton 2006), it remains unclear whether new forms reproduce, shift or minimize inequalities in political voice. One of the newest and perhaps most alarming trends in political participation research show that the decline in various forms of participation is concentrated among disadvantaged socio-economic groups (Gidengil 2010; Muxel 2007; Wright et al. 2011; Sander & Putnam 2009; Soss & Jacobs 2009, Mahéo 2013).While Cegep and university students are overall not really a deprived group of the population, in this paper, we are able to understand how an issue of socio-economic importance has been able to motivate and mobilize some of the more disadvantaged students, who might otherwise be more inactive in politics.

Explaining Protests

Protest activity has risen dramatically in the 20th century and protesting has become an important political tool used to influence policy and public opinion (Lipsky 1970, Norris, Walgrave and Aelst 2005, Van Aelst and Walgrave 2001, Fuchs and Topf 1995, Paulsen 1994). There are different views on protests, however. In earlier accounts, protest was often understood as a strategy utilized by relatively powerless groups in order to increase their bargaining ability (Lipsky 1968). Based on grievance and relative deprivation theory (Gurr 1970) the belief is that people will protest when they feel deprived of resources in comparison to others around them (Grant and Brown 1995, Guimond and Dubé-Simard 1983). Relative deprivation theory considers that, “protests are the expression of deep seated feelings of frustration, anger, and alienation, not just with particular leaders or issues, but also with the political system,” (Norris, Walgrave and Aelst, 2005).

On the other hand, resource mobilization theory looks at peoples’ positions within social networks, and the costs and benefits of participation. People need resources in order to protest, so in general the more resources people have in terms of education, financial and social capital, the more likely they are to protest (Jenkins 1983). Education and income provide the political skills and means to participate (Verba Schlozman and Brady 1995). The “Socio-Economic Standard Model” describes protest as the domain of the young

rather than old, and the well educated rather than less educated (Barnes and Kaase 1979).

Other research supports the view that socio-economic status is an important predictor of protest participation. In Belgium from 1990-1997, the single largest protesting group were salaried workers followed by young people (van Aelst and Walgrave 2001). At the national level, resources appear to matter for protest as well (Dalton, van Sickle and Weldon 2010, Paulsen 1994). According to a study of 78 nations using the *World Values Survey,* higher GDP levels, higher education levels and lower levels of income inequality are all correlated with protest activity (ibid, Dalton and van Sickle 2005). These findings as well as the persistent inequality in political participation and rising gaps between the advantaged and disadvantaged confirms the insights of resource mobilization theory more than relative deprivation.[1] However, having a high SES status does not on its own motivate protest participation, but it does put the individual in an advantaged structural position for participation (reduces risks and acts as a safety net) if other catalyzing factors are present (Ronelle 1994).

While the resource model focuses on how socio-economic resources can make protesting less costly and easier, more general rational choice models of collective action suggest that however low the costs, many people tend to be free-riders as they receive the benefits of protest without participating (Muller and Opp 1986). Yet, clearly some citizens do participate despite the costs. Other factors, such as perceptions of collective interests and the likelihood of group success may help overcome the free-rider problem. One such collective incentive is social in nature, e.g. the collective communities created during the protest that can encourage protest behavior and help sustain it over time (Opp and Kittel 2010). Protesters can also be motivated when they think their participation will lead to social goods (rather than individual ones). Analyses have shown that the students' protests in the UK for example in 2010-11, were often motivated by moral questions of entitlement to affordable education, not just for the student protesters themselves but for future generations. Students acted based on what they considered to be fair and just (Ibrahim, 2011). In fact, these more social variables have been found to be correlated to future protest behavior more than variables of individual self-interest (incentives such as money, social pressure etc) (Finkel and Muller 1998).

In the Maple Spring protests of 2012, there were clearly some individual incentives to participate, as the tuition increase would affect current students. In fact many observers and pundits accused the students of being purely self-interested. If these observations are true, we should find that those for whom higher costs should have the most consequence (i.e. those without the financial resources and support to absorb the increase) should be most likely to protest.

[1] However, protestors are not particularly more critical of the government and democracy than the general electorate (Norris, Walgrave and Aelst, 2005). This also goes against grievance theory. "Demonstrators are not anti state radicals who belong to socially marginal groups or who despise conventional forms of political participation." (Norris, Walgrave and Aelst, 2005).

In contrast, resource models tend to suggest that students with more socio-economic resources are most likely to participate. If students with higher socio-economic resources and less difficulty paying higher tuition fees go to protest, this would suggest that arguments about self-interest need to be tempered with the resources young people have available to fight for what is in their interest. In the spring of 2012, clearly there were costs to protesting as well. Since the protests caused a strong police presence, many arrests, and some police and protest-related violence, participants also had to risk their own safety by participating. This may have reduced participation, although the question remains whether this happened among those who were most self-interested (economically vulnerable students) or those with the most resources to absorb the costs (economically better off students).

Both groups of people, obviously, may also receive collective benefits from the protest experience itself. Students from all different background may be motivated by concerns about access to education for future generations of young people or by the belief that education should be free for all. Protesting itself may also create new networks and new identities that are based on the protest experience (Walgrave et al 2013).

Clearly, there were various costs and benefits that students had to weight against each other when deciding whether or not to contest the tuition increase, and past research suggests several protest motivations are often combined (Dalton and van Sickle 2005). In this paper, we address the various effects of self-interest, resource and collective motivations in explaining the student unrest of 2012. In doing so, we contribute to a broader understanding of the sources of protest activity among the next generation. Before developing our hypotheses in detail, though, we provide some background to the case under consideration here.

The "Maple Spring" in Context

In March 2010, in the budgetary address, Jean Charest's liberal government, in power since 2003, announced its intention to raise tuition fees at university across the province. The details of these fee increases were released one year later. The government's plan was to increase tuition fees from $2168 to $3793 over five years, representing a 75% increase in the cost of higher education. This decision triggered a movement of contestation that was unprecedented, given its scope, duration and intensity.

In anticipation of the tuition fee announcement in March 2012, several student associations preemptively went on an unlimited general strike (i.e. without an end-date), which was followed by many other student associations across the province. From March to June, between 170,000 and 200,000 students were consistently on strike. The strikes were accompanied by massive protests in the streets, "levee des cours" where some protesting students prevented classes from being held, as well as a host of creative forms of protests. While much of the protest action occurred peacefully, a number of violent and highly publicized clashes happened between police and protesters, all the while

negotiations between the students union and the government continued to stumble over the terms of the increase.

In May, a special law was adopted by the Liberal government aimed at forcing the students back to school and restricted the right of citizens to public gatherings. The limits imposed in Bill 78 led to a broader mobilization among the general public, epitomized by the nightly *casserole* marches, where citizens walked in the streets making noise with pots and pans. Over the summer, the conflict continued although less intensely and effectively ended with the general election on September 4 when the Parti Québécois took over power from Charest's Liberals with Pauline Marois at the head of a minority government.

While the PQ minority government did not freeze the tuition increase in the longrun as demanded by the student movement, the tuition issue has become certainly an important policy issue, one that was brought to broader attention by the protests. The student movement stated that tuition will lead to issues of accessibility, claiming that an increase would render education inaccessible to people of all incomes (Penhorwood, 2012). Some argue that the system of loans and bursaries has unrealistic thresholds for middle-income families (Sawchuck 2012). It is important to point out, that historically, francophone students had minimal access to education until the late 1960's (Sawchuck 2012).

Research shows that tuition, parental background and access to education are related to each other. For example, parental income is tightly linked to university participation rates; and young adults from less affluent families are under-represented (Canadian council on learning, 2009). Overall higher tuition has a statistically significant negative relationship with low income student enrollment, regardless of sector (Lasilla 2009, Ross and Mueller 2008). However, evidence is also mixed from other areas.

In analyzing the effect of tuition increases on university composition, many studies look to Ontario, which increased its tuition fees in the 1990s. Scott and Quirke found that Guelph students from low-SES backgrounds went from being slightly under-represented in the late 1990s to being substantially under-represented a decade later, during a time lapse where tuition increased significantly in Ontario (2002). While low income students might not directly drop out from the university education process, these students might be sorted into universities of 'lower value,' while more expensive universities will come to be seen as 'better.' The correlation between more expensive schools and higher prestige schools is very strong (Scott and Quirke 2002). In one study of 190 U.S colleges, reputation ranking was found to be the most important factor predicting college tuition (Tang et al., 2004). However, students in disciplines with high rates of return, such as engineering, are not sensitive to tuition increases.

The evidence from Australia seems also to be mixed: The introduction of Australia's tuition in 1986 and 1996, increased enrollment, however according to one study, it did not encourage more participation by low income and aboriginal people despite grant schemes and loan repayment strategies. Another study (Chapman and Ryan 2003) found that the system did not discourage those with low income from participating (Swail and

Heller 2004). Generally though researchers found an overall effect: according to Johnson and Rahman, a $1,000 increase per year in real university tuition, reduces a young person's chance of attending by 1.33 percentage points (2005). In sum, while studies find mixed results, student associations in Quebec were concerned about the potential consequences of the tuition freeze and its overall effects on enrollment and low-income student enrollment. Particularly first time students (that is first timers in their families) might need financial security for their families to decide to send their children to university. Understanding better who participated in the protest, and who was most concerned about tuition increases gives us therefore an important background to discuss tuition–related policies in more informed ways.

Given the various motivations discussed in the literature, the accusations about young people as being egoistical and self-absorbed, and the worries of the student movement, we hypothesize that socio-economic status will play an important role in protest participation and views about the tuition increase. While SES variables should facilitate protest participation, the question is whether low SES background might have an overpowering effect because the protest is at least in part directly related to socio-economic status. We can understand how self-oriented and self-interested the protest has really been by examining the social composition of the protest. Was the protest able to bring together a broad coalition of students from various economic backgrounds? Or was the protest able to mobilize mostly students from poorer SES backgrounds overcoming the usual SES bias in various forms of political participation? How self-interested were the student protesters?

Data and Methods

In order to examine these questions and hypotheses, we utilized a special data set, which is one the first of its kind to document views and attitudes as well as political engagements of university students in three major institutions at a time of a social conflict in Quebec. Again, the main focus of the project is to understand what motivated student protesters. We were particularly interested in the socio-political profile of those involved in the strikes and protests compared to those who did not get involved. We ask specifically whether issue-position was the main motivating factor, or if personal characteristics of respondents played an equally important role. Given the fact that the protests revolved around access to education, and specifically around the cost of education, we explore the ways in which those most likely to be negatively affected by the fee increases were more likely to participate (i.e. students who were more economically vulnerable).

The data for this project was collected in September 2012 after the Quebec provincial election, at the time when the Liberals were removed from power, which also effectively ended the student strikes. The *Online Survey on Student Issues in Quebec* (OSSIQ) was administered through Lime Survey, an open-source survey application. The survey link was distributed via institutional emails to all regularly registered students at three Montreal universities: Université de Montréal (U de M), Université du Québec à

Montréal, (UQÀM) and McGill University.[2] The population thus represents the 120,000 regularly enrolled students at these three schools in September 2012 (UdeM: 45,076; UQAM: 41 296, McGill: 30,821). Students who are 18 years and older were asked to fill in the survey which took 10-15 minutes to complete. The survey was approved by the Ethics Boards at all three universities, and was voluntary and anonymous.[3] After one reminder message to the original students in October 2012, we received 19,437 responses, of which 15,491 were valid and complete. This corresponds to a response rate of 13%, which is standard in online surveys.

Even though our web survey was sent to all registered students in all three universities, our sample – as for any other surveys – is not a perfect representation of students. One of the primary concerns is that students who were more interested and involved in the student movement disproportionately responded to the survey. When we compare our student sample to a representative survey conducted after the election, our respondents were slightly more likely to have reported that they voted in the election (91%) compared to the post-election study conducted by Bélanger and Nadeau (2013). In their sample, 85% of the students said they went to the voting booth. While there is no true baseline statistic available against which to measure this bias, other indicators suggest that our sample is relatively consistent with the university population more generally. Sixty-five percent of the students surveyed were between 18 and 25 years old, which mirrors the university population as estimated by Canada Statistics[4]. As in universities more generally in Canada, there are more women (66%) in our sample than men[5]. While caution is required in interpreting the overall levels of participation as reported in our survey, this bias should not negatively affect our capacity to examine how characteristics of those who participated differed from those who did not.

We used the following variables. Socio-economic situation of the student's parents is a variable that asks about the parental background of students and whether they have been better off, the same, or worse off than the average Quebec family. The variable is coded from 1 (much worse off) to 5 (much better off). We should note here that missing respondents on that question have been coded to the midpoint (3). The 3 next variables that we expect to have an influence on the participation is having a student debt, living in an apartment (e.g. not with their parents) and having a job. They are dichotomous variables coded 0 or 1. We must also consider the percentage of the payment for studies-related expenses that comes from internal funding, meaning from either their student debt or from their job income. Not only the income of students' families can have an impact

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[2] The survey instrument was originally designed by Dietlind Stolle and student researcher Joël Roy in April 2012 for a survey of actual protesters. Several hundred protesters were surveyed in the streets, but are not included in this analysis. In the spring and summer 2012, the survey was redesigned eventually as an online survey in a larger team, which includes in addition Allison Harell, Pascale Dufour and graduate student researcher Eva Falk Pedersen. We like to thank Michael Robichaud for his research assistance with Lime survey design and Daniel Schwartz for extended technical help in setting up the online survey.
[3] In appreciation for participating in the study, completing the online survey gave students a chance to enter a lottery where they could win a $50 pay-pal cash prize. In order to be eligible for the drawing, we asked for the provision of an e-mail address. Providing it was optional.
[4] Statistics Canada reported in 2010 that 60% of university students were aged between 17 and 24 years.
[5] The 2011 CREPUQ's Fall Report corroborates the gender distribution amongst universities.

on the position on tuition and protest participation, but also the level of education their parents have attained. We utilize a dichotomous variable that measures whether the mother has a university degree or not. We also asked them if they would be able to pay for their studies if the proposed tuition fees' increase was implemented, this is also a 3-categories variable going from 0 (being able to pay), 0,5 (not sure) and 1 (not being able to pay).

Control variables related to protest also needed to be included protest: two dichotomous variables taking into account were the respondents grew up (in a rural region or in Montreal), gender (women are coded 1), age (continuous variable from 18 to 42) and finally, we control for the mother tongue. Whereas Francophones are the reference category, we expect that Anglophones and Allophones would participate to a lesser degree as the tuition increase has been framed as a Quebec and francophone specific issue. The position on the Anti-Increase of Tuition Scale is also included, as we expect it to be a strong driver of protest participation (see footnote 6 and below for more information).

Results

In Table 1, we present an overview of the protest activity in our sample. We focus on public displays of support for the student movement, as well as participation in protest activities. The "carré rouge" - or red square - became synonymous with the student movement and was a highly recognizable symbol during the social unrest. In total, a third of respondents said they wore a red square, and another 17% reported that they displayed a red square or other related slogan where they lived. When it comes to participation in protest, 45% of students say they participated in protest related to the tuition increase, and 29% reporting protesting specifically against Bill 78. Obviously, protesters in the former were often the same people who reported protesting in the latter. In total, 48% of respondents reported participating in some sort of protest activity during the student movement in 2012. The level is higher for students from the two francophone universities: 55% of UQÀM students and 48% of UdeM students participated at least in one protest, while 23% of the McGill students participated.

[Table 1 about here]

The level and nature of protest activity was also varied. On average, protesters reported participating in about seven different protests against the tuition increase, although the model category was 1 (17% of the sample) while a significant portion of the sample was highly active (15% of the sample reporting participating in 20 or more protests). In Table 1, we also report some details about how respondents participated – almost half of all protesters came to protests with posters or banners while 17% reported wearing a mask or bandana while protesting. And as those who experienced the summer of 2012 in Montreal can attest, the nightly 'casserole' protests were a popular outlet for protest activity, with over two-thirds of protesters saying that they participated in these.

A large majority of protesters felt a sense of community during the protests (95%). Yet there was also a remarkably high percentage of protesters who felt threatened by the police (55%) and a small minority who received fines and were detained or arrested (3-4%) while protesting. The act of protesting, then, was not without costs – both of time and energy – but also risk, both real and perceived of confrontation with police forces. Given the effort required of citizens to protest, and the costs associated with such activity, we are interested in who was most likely to protest. As noted, student associations overwhelmingly rejected the tuition fee increase as making higher education unaffordable. We ask in this analysis whether those most economically vulnerable were most likely to oppose the tuition increase, and in turn protest against it.

To assess attitudes toward higher education costs, we created an Anti-Increase Scale. The Anti-Increase Scale runs from 0 to 1, where higher scores indicate opposition to higher cost.[6] On average, students fell on the opposition side of this scale (mean=.55), with some variation across universities, with McGill respondents reporting slightly less opposition (.49) compared to U de M (.55) and UQÀM (.58).

The first column in Table 2 estimates the effect of various socio-economic indicators on Anti-Increase attitudes. Not surprisingly given our sample size, most variables are significant. However, the largest effects come from the respondents' self-assessment about whether they will be able to pay for their studies if the tuition increase occurs. Respondents who felt they would be unable to pay score almost .3 points higher on the 0-1 anti-increase scale.

In addition, students who had debt and who lived in an apartment (versus with their family) were also more likely to oppose the increasing costs to education. In contrast, those with relatively better off families tended to support tuition increases. These are consistent with expectations that those likely to have more trouble paying for education are more likely to oppose higher costs. Surprisingly, we find that those who were paying more of the cost of education from their own funds (compared to family support or bursaries and scholarships) were less likely to oppose the tuition increase.

[Table 2 about here]

What is the effect of these attitudes, as well as a students' economic situation, on actually protesting? In Figure 1, we present the % of protesters and non-protesters that have various economic characteristics. The protester variable is based on those who reported protesting specifically against the tuition increase. When it comes to parental economic situation, living in an apartment, and having a high percentage of education costs paid for by personal funds or loans, we find little difference between protesters and non-

[6] The additive index was created with the responses to four items with a 5-point answer scale from "strongly agree" to "strongly disagree". The items include: 1) Education should be free, 2) I oppose any increase in tuition, 3) Students should be responsible to pay for their own education (reversed), and 4) A small increase in tuition will not prevent others from taking courses (reversed). The index has a 0.84 alpha.

protesters. The differences are significant and in the expected direction, but they are very small.

[Figure 1 about here]

The largest differences are for inability to bear the cost of the tuition increase, having debt, and having a job. In all three cases, protesters were much more likely to find themselves in each of these categories than non-protesters. The largest difference between protesters and non-protesters is that protesters were much more likely to say they would be unable to pay for the cost of education (17 percentage points) although wide gaps (13 percentage points) were also present for debt and having a job.

In Table 2, the second column provides a more stringent test of the effect of these variables. As with the Anti-Increase scale, we model the independent effect each of these variables has on protesting against the tuition increase, while controlling for salient socio-demographic variables as well as attitudes toward the tuition increase. The effects are largely in the expected direction, even after controlling for other variables. Debt, living independently, having a job and reported ainability to pay for higher costs in education are all positively associated with protesting against the tuition increase.

The notable exception to the pattern from the attitudinal model presented in the first column is the effect of parental socio-economic status. While students from less well-off families are more likely to oppose tuition increases, the relationship reverses for protest activity. The odds of protesting are almost twice as great for someone who comes from a family that is much better off than the average Quebecker compared to someone from a family that is much worse off. While this goes against the argument of self-interest, it is perfectly consistent with the large body of literature that suggests that socio-economic resources are important for political participation (Verba et al. 1995). This result also shows that students who participated in the protests come from wider economic backgrounds, and do not just reflect those from SES groups less well off. However, current financial pressures by debt, need to do paid work, and living alone also draw students to the streets.

We should note also that as in the first model, we find that those who pay a higher proportion of education costs themselves (either through personal funds or through loans), are actually less likely to participate. Notice that this relationship is *after* controlling for whether the student currently has debt or works. When we examine the raw relationship between the percentage of cost born by the student and protesting, the relationship is actually positive, and weakly significant (.028). In other words, the negative effect is only evident once controlling for a host of other socio-economic variables that are related to how education costs are paid for.

In addition to the socio-economic variables, we also find a massive effect for attitudes toward education costs. Not surprisingly, moving from a position of support to opposition to higher education costs increases the odds by 175 times that the student participated in protests. Clearly, the protest activity that animated the movement was heavily issue-

based. Students were mobilized around the cost of education, and their attitudes on this dimension heavily predicted participation. That being said, the inclusion of the attitudinal variable in the model does not drastically change the individual effects of the socio-economic variables of interest. In other words, protest activity was not only issue-based, but also based in the actual socio-economic realities of students.

In the third column of Table 2, we compare protest activity against the tuition increase to protest activity against Bill 78. Recall that Bill 78 was largely renounced by the student movement for putting restrictions on public assemblies and protest activities, and led to a broader set of protests that appeared to include a broader range of citizens that were concerned about issues of civil liberties. These protests were epitomized by the nightly casserole protests.

While the tuition protests were highly issue specific, we might expect that those who protested against Bill 78 were concerned about a broader set of democratic principles. If this is the case, then we would expect the socio-economic factors to perhaps play a less important role in predicting this action. Table 2 presents little evidence of this. The direction and size of effects are not drastically different between column two and column three. While the model explains less variance (a pseudo r-squared of .24 compared to .31), in general protesters in both activities have remarkably similar profiles. This may be partly because, at least among our student sample, the vast majority of Bill 78 protesters (92%) had also participated in tuition protests.

[Figure 1 about here]

In a final test, we return to protesting against the tuition increase and focus on explaining the intensity of protest activity. Table 3 presents a negative binomial regression where the dependent variable is the number of protests. We present a model for all respondents (column 1) and a separate model restricted to protesters (column 2). In column 1, the predictors of protest frequency largely resemble the results presented in Table 2. Yet, when we examine the intensity just among protesters, it is noteworthy that the size of the effects for the socio-economic variables is substantially reduced, and in the case of family situation, the variable becomes insignificant. In the case of attitudes toward the tuition increase, these also had a much weaker, although still significant, impact on the frequency of protest activity among protesters.

[Table 3 about here]

This suggests that students' socio-economic position and their feelings toward higher education costs were more important in the decision of whether to protest or not, but continued protest activity was based on a larger set of factors. We suspect that this larger set of factors is much more social in nature and includes a variety of collective benefits such as the building of a protest community or protest related social networks Recruitment into protests activities can happen in a number of ways, but when it came to more active protesters, we suspect that they were embedded in strong social networks where information about protests and invitations to take part were much more common,

and also in which there was more likely to be social pressure to participate. This is a question for future research.

What the current study shows is clearly that students protest activities appear to be based in part on self-interest, and also in a group consciousness around socio-economic issues. Students who were more likely to feel the cost of increases more directly were also more likely to oppose the tuition increase – both in terms of attitudes and in terms of concrete actions. But students with parents who are better off still participated in the protest disproportionately.

Conclusion

This paper has shown that socio-economic status played an important role in attitudes about the tuition increase as well as in the decision to protest. Somewhat contrary to traditional resource models of political participation we find that students with debt and students who do paid work (in addition to being a student), and those who feel that they could not pay the tuition increase were more opposed to tuition increase and participated more in the protests than other students. However, protesters came also from a variety of economic backgrounds as they disproportionately claimed that their parents were better off than the average Quebecker, indicating that not only self-interest was present in the decision to protest. Most importantly the strong attitudes about the tuition increase are the most important predictors of protest participation, thus over-riding the usual uniformly positive effects of SES resources. Further research will determine more comprehensively which collective incentives relate to the decision to protest, e.g. social network effects.

Table 1: Overview of Protest Activity

Public Expression	
Wore a red square on clothing or bags	33%
Displayed a red square or sign in support of movement where you live	17%
Protest Activity	
Participated in protests related to tuition increase	45%
Participated in protest against Bill 78	29%
All protests (combined)	48%
Protest Experiences	Among Protesters
Activities	
Brought posters or banners	47%
Participated in the 'casserole' protests	69%
Wore a mask or bandana	17%
Experience with police	
Ever get fined	3%
Ever get arrested	4%
Ever get detained	4%
Felt threatened by the police	55%
Experience with other protesters	
Felt threatened by other protesters	6%
Experienced a feeling of community	95%

Table 2 : Socio-Economic Resources on Tuition Attitudes and Protest Activity

	Anti-Increase Scale[a]	Protested against Tuition Increase[b]	Protested against Bill 78[b]
Parents' Economic Situation	-0.06***	0.62***	0.60***
	(0.01)	(0.11)	(0.11)
Debt	0.03***	0.44***	0.34***
	0.00	(0.05)	(0.05)
Living in apartment	0.06***	0.23***	0.51***
	(0.01)	(0.06)	(0.06)
Having a job	0.01*	0.65***	0.69***
	0.00	(0.05)	(0.05)
% Pay from Own Money/Loans	-0.10***	-0.20**	-0.19**
	(0.01)	(0.07)	(0.07)
Mother - University	0.03***	0.24***	0.26***
	0.00	(0.05)	(0.05)
Inability to Pay if Increase	0.28***	0.37***	0.21***
	(0.01)	(0.06)	(0.06)
Rural Region	0.00	0.42***	0.24***
	(0.01)	(0.06)	(0.06)
Montreal	0.01*	0.61***	0.54***
	0.00	(0.05)	(0.05)
Women	-0.02***	-0.38***	-0.35***
	0.00	(0.05)	(0.05)
Age / Continuous	-0.00*	-0.04***	0.01
	0.00	0.00	0.00
English	-0.06***	-1.28***	-0.72***
	(0.01)	(0.07)	(0.08)
Other	-0.05***	-1.09***	-0.84***
	(0.01)	(0.07)	(0.08)
Anti-Increase		5.17***	4.42***
		(0.10)	(0.10)
Constant	0.51***	-3.10***	-5.09***
	(0.01)	(0.15)	(0.16)
R-squared/Pseudo R-squared	0.21	0.31	0.24
N	14149	14149	14149

[a] Linear Regression

[b] Logistic Regression

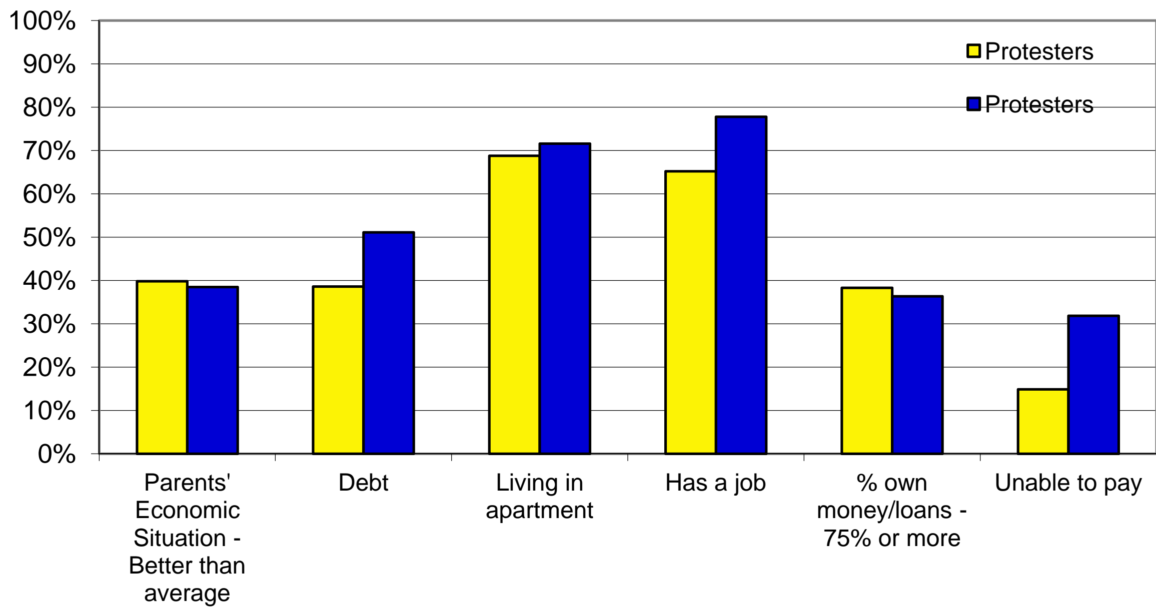
Note that cells include the beta estimates as well as standard errors in parentheses.

Table 3 : Socio-Economic Resources on Intensity of Protest Activity

	All Respondents	Protesters
Parents' Economic Situation	0.26***	-0.01
	(0.07)	(0.05)
Having a debt	0.24***	0.06**
	(0.03)	(0.02)
Living in apartment	0.24***	0.18***
	(0.04)	(0.03)
Having a job	0.44***	0.18***
	(0.03)	(0.03)
% Pay from Own Money/Loans	-0.15**	-0.08*
	(0.05)	(0.03)
Mother - University	0.17***	0.09***
	(0.03)	(0.02)
Inability to Pay if Increase	0.39***	0.09**
	(0.04)	(0.03)
Rural Region	0.23***	0.09**
	(0.04)	(0.03)
Montreal	0.38***	0.15***
	(0.03)	(0.02)
Women	-0.33***	-0.18***
	(0.03)	(0.02)
Age / Continuuous	-0.03***	-0.02***
	0.00	0.00
English	-0.94***	-0.32***
	(0.05)	(0.04)
Other	-0.86***	-0.36***
	(0.05)	(0.04)
Anti-Increase	4.29***	1.94***
	(0.06)	(0.05)
Constant	-1.64***	0.78***
	(0.10)	(0.08)
lnalpha	0.68	-0.71
	(0.02)	(0.02)
alpha	1.97	0.49
	(0.04)	(0.01)
N	14149	6471

Note: Model is a negative binomial regression.

Figure 1: Frequency of Economic Vulnerability Among Protesters and Non-Protesters



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