

**The 2012 Québec Student Movement:
Understanding activist patterns**

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Abstract

In March 2011, Québec finance minister Raymond Bachand officially announced the Liberal Cabinet's plan to raise university tuition from C\$2,168 to C\$3,793 over a period of five years beginning in the fall of 2012. Over the following 17 months, hundreds of thousands of Québec students built a mass movement in opposition to the tuition increase. However, not all students participated in the movement, and distinct, but not immediately explicable, activist patterns emerged throughout the course of the struggle; namely, activism was much stronger at Francophone universities than at Anglophone universities. This research is situated in the constructionist perspective of social movements and represents an addition to the small but growing body of research that uses the theoretical insights of social movement literature toward explaining sustained student activism. I applied a methodology that combines interviews, a novel use of social media as an information resource, data on economic and social trends in Québec, and a collection of general qualitative information. Within my case study of four Montréal universities, the evidence suggests that varied levels of activism may be attributed to differences in the relative financial impact of the tuition increase, perceived implications of the tuition increase, and organizational efficacy.

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List of Abbreviations

AR	Activism Rank
ASSÉ	Association pour une Solidarité Syndicale Étudiante [Association for student union solidarity]
AUS	Arts Undergraduate Society
CÉGEP	Collège d'enseignement général et professionnel [General and vocational college]
CLASSE	Coalition large de l'Association pour une solidarité syndicale étudiante [Broad coalition of the Association for student union solidarity]
CSU	Concordia Student Union
FAÉCUM	Fédération des associations étudiantes du campus de l'Université de Montréal [Federation of student associations at the University of Montréal]
POS	Political Opportunity Structure
PPT	Political Process Theory
SSMU	Student Society of McGill University
UdeM	Université de Montréal
UQAM	Université du Québec à Montréal

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Introduction

Of the eight student strikes¹ Québec has seen in the last half century, the 2012 Québec student movement has come to be widely recognized as historic in its magnitude (Bouzeboudjen, 2012). The movement began as a reaction to the tuition hike proposed by the Parti libéral du Québec (Québec liberal party) and culminated in a seven-month strike that involved hundreds of thousands of Québec students. Ultimately, the students claimed victory when the newly elected Parti Québécois government cancelled the hike the day after they took office in September of 2012 (for an abbreviated timeline of the movement, see Table 0.1).

However, despite the historic size and strength of the movement, not all students participated. Notably, Anglophone university students were much less likely to join the strike² than their Francophone counterparts, and amongst the Anglophones who did strike, their strikes were, on average, much shorter than those of Francophone participants. This thesis seeks to elucidate the reasons behind this polarization of activism. I select as my case study four Montréal universities; McGill University (Anglophone), Concordia University (Anglophone), the Université de Montréal (UdeM; Francophone), and the Université du Québec à Montréal (UQAM; Francophone). A number of important variables are held relatively constant across these four cases (location, size, student age), thus allowing for a uniquely clear-sighted analysis of other potentially relevant factors.

This research represents an addition to the small but growing body of research that applies the theoretical insights of social movement literature to analyses of sustained student activism. The most influential perspective within this body of literature for this project has proven to be the constructionist model, which Charles Kurzman (2004) describes as “the view that people construct their own history—not under circumstances chosen by themselves, certainly, but under circumstances they have the power to change” (p. 117). The present analysis rests on a methodology that combines interviews, a Facebook content-analysis, data on economic and social trends in Québec, and a collection of general qualitative information. Ultimately, I determine that differences in activism between McGill and Concordia on the one hand, and UdeM and UQAM on the other can be attributed to differences in relative financial impact of the tuition increase, perceived implications of the tuition increase, and organizational efficacy.

Having outlined what this study endeavors to explain, it is equally as important to outline the boundaries and limitations of the explanation. First, I focus largely on pre-conditional variables rather than factors that emerged and developed after the movement had begun. Substantively, this meant that I analyzed conditions or structures that were present before the movement and also that my Facebook content analysis was conducted only at the moment of movement emergence. Thus, this study leaves out things like student reactions to police brutality or Bill 78 (a major law passed during the strike that served as an attempt by the government to end the movement). While I consider such things to be important internal dynamics to the larger movement (indeed, the reactions to those two examples were especially important to the

¹ Some controversy revolved around the use of the term “strike” as some disputed the students’ actions as a legitimate strike, preferring to call it a “boycott.” However, I here use “strike” and will continue to do so for the rest of this paper because the term was the “default” for most students and media outlets, and in this context had a much less politicized meaning than “boycott.”

² This semantic and substantive linkage of “activism” to “striking” is purposeful, and is justified in Chapter 3.

movement's endurance and success), they are of only marginal importance to my question. This is because differences in activism between Anglophone and Francophone students were visible before many of these movement-internal dynamics began to emerge or be experienced to their full effect.

Second, this study is primarily an explanation of the divergent activist patterns within the movement, not an explanation of the emergence and continuance of the 2012 Québec student movement more generally. As such, there are some events and variables that I consider to have huge significance for the trajectory of the broader movement, but that I do not include in this analysis. Police brutality and Bill 78, mentioned above are certainly included in this category, as are disputes that occurred within movement activists (such as disagreements between ASSÉ and FEUQ, the two largest university union federations), negotiations with the government, the effect of the summer break, etc. Again, for reasons of scope, these dynamics are omitted.

Finally, this study considers only the strategic cognitive path, and not the affective cognitive path, when evaluating reasons behind participation decisions. This requires some explanation; social psychology research on behavioral regulation has confirmed the presence of at least two paths involved in decision-making; an affective path and a strategic path (Metcalfe & Mischel, 1999; Mackie, Devos, & Smith, 2000; Hogg & Abrams, 1999). Benjamin Giguère and Richard Lalonde (2010) confirmed the applicability of this research to social movements in their study of the 2005 Québec student movement (p. 230). Unlike the other two limitations I listed above, the affective path is omitted not because of irrelevance to the question, but rather due to methodological ability. Even the most experienced social movement scholars face many roadblocks to develop a methodology that accurately captures influence of affective determinants, and I was not equipped to accept such a challenge. Nonetheless, an examination of the strategic path offers us a rich, thoughtful, and conclusive theory regarding activist patterns within the 2012 Québec student movement.

Table 0.1

Timeline of Events

April 2003	Jean Charest and the Parti libéral du Québec (Québec liberal party) come to power in the National Assembly of Québec (“Liberal’s decisive win,” 2003).
Feb. 11, 2010	Education Minister Michelle Courchesne tells reporters that a consensus is developing in Québec in favor of higher tuition. She clarifies to say that the consensus does not include students (Chouinard, 2010).
Feb. 2010- Feb. 2011	A number of student demonstrations and actions are organized against the potential tuition increase (“Under Pressure,” ca. 2012).
Mar. 17, 2011	Raymond Bachand, Québec finance minister, officially announces the Liberal Cabinet’s plan to raise university tuition from C\$2,168 to C\$3,793 over a period of five years beginning in the fall of 2012 (Lacoursière, 2011).
Nov. 10-11, 2011	More than 200,000 students participate in a two day strike, and approximately 20,000 students march on Premier Jean Charest’s Montréal office to protest the tuition increase. Charest tells the press that he won’t back down on the higher fees (“Québec students stage massive tuition fee protest,” 2011).
Feb. 13, 2012	The indefinite general strike begins with votes taken by 550 students at Université Laval. More strike votes are taken in the following days. The strike quickly amasses thousands, then hundreds of thousands of student participants.
Mar. 22, 2012	Over 300,000 students strike on this day, making it the largest student strike in the history of Québec (“Associations en grève,” 2012).
Apr. 23, 2012	The provincial government agrees to enter negotiations with CLASSE and other student organizations on the condition that there are no disruptive demonstrations during the negotiation period.
Apr. 27, 2012	Premier Charest offers the first proposal. It is taken to the student associations and voted on. Students unanimously reject the proposal.
May 18, 2012	An emergency law titled Bill 78 is passed by the National Assembly. It restricts picketing and protests near university grounds and imposes harsh fines on students who disobey (Quebec National Assembly, 2012). Bill 78 was one of the most controversial issues in the movement, and has been considered by some to have been a turning point (Dehaas, 2012).
May 22, 2012	An enormous demonstration is held. Over 400,000 people, including many non-students, join to march against Bill 78 and the tuition hike (“Maple Spring,” 2012).
Jun. 2012	The university term ends. Student actions continue, but are more subdued.
Aug. 1, 2012	Charest calls for an election in September, urging the province’s “silent majority” to express their will (“Québec election for ‘silent majority,’” 2012). Pauline Marois, leader of the Parti Québécois, quickly begins to campaign. One of her top promises, if elected, is to repeal the tuition hike and Bill 78.
Sep. 4, 2012	Charest and the Parti libéral du Québec lose the election to Pauline Marois and the Parti Québécois (“Pauline Marois to become,” 2012).
Sep. 20, 2012	The new Parti Québécois government repeals the tuition hike (Séguin, 2012).

Chapter 1 Literature review

To theoretically ground my study, I look primarily to the rich literature on social movement theory. This in itself is a notable move, as student activism has generally *not* been viewed in this light. As Nella Van Dyke points out in her study on student activist locations; “With some notable exceptions...more recent theoretical developments and insights in the social movement literature have not been applied to student activism” (1998, p. 205). Since the time of her writing, some research has been conducted that do apply social movement frameworks to — most notably, Dixon and Van Dyke (2008), Carlon, Dixon, and Van Dyke (2007), Yang (2000), and Rojas (2007)—but the field is still relatively small and deserves expansion.

The use of social movement literature to the case of the 2012 Québec student strike is, I argue, a legitimate application. A reasonably representative example of the definitional consensus of social movements was articulated by Tarrow (1994) as “collective challenges by people with common purposes and solidarity in sustained interaction with elites, opponents and authorities. This definition has four empirical properties: collective challenge, common purpose, solidarity and sustained interaction” (p. 3-4). Indeed, a seven month strike (the time gets stretched to over a year when accounting for mobilization and organization prior to the beginning of the strike itself) involving hundreds of thousands of people, in direct opposition to the state, and centered around the protection of educational accessibility, seems to fit strongly into this definition of a social movement.

Having established the applicability of social movement theories to my research, I then must evaluate which theories within the sizable literature to employ. Within the past half century, social movement literature has gone through many transformations, but I will here limit myself to discussing only the few most relevant trends. In the 1980s, “political process theory” (PPT) was introduced as an alternative to the “classical strain model” and the “resource mobilization framework” (McAdam, 2013). Broadly, PPT emphasized the simultaneous importance of political opportunities, organizational structures, and interpretive processes. Some of the prolific names who built up the theory include Doug McAdam, Sidney Tarrow, Charles Tilly, and Mayer Zald. Soon, a more structuralist approach emerged, taking the “political opportunities” component proposed in PPT and turning it into a stand-alone theory of “political opportunity structures” (POS). For a time, POS was “one of the key emphases of the new American paradigm,” so much so that McAdam dedicated a section in the introduction to the 2nd edition of his classic book *Political Process and the Development of Black Insurgency* to debunk the “troubling implication of the current consensus” regarding political opportunity structures (Crossley, 2002, p. 14; McAdam, 1999, p. xi). However, this consensus had begun to break up even as these alarmed declarations were published. Critiques of structuralism now abound, and even some of the “soft” structuralists of the PPT tradition have been put on the defensive (Goodwin & Jasper, 1999; Goodwin & Jasper, 2004; Kurzman, 2004; Crossley, 2002; Tilly, 2004; Tarrow, 2004; McAdam, 2004).

I here build on the critiques of structuralism by arguing that the four universities in my study had the same political opportunity structure (POS) yet experienced significantly different levels of activism. Such an argument is, by now, yet another nail in the coffin of structuralism, but that does not mean that this endeavor is redundant. As Kurzman’s (2004) section heading,

“Structuralism Is Dead! Long Live—What?” suggests, “poststructuralist” theories of social movements are still in formation (p. 117). It should be noted that though I reject structuralism I do not deny that structures are an important *variable* within the social movement process. What I emphasize is the weakness of purely-applied structuralism and the importance of multivariable analysis when seeking to understand social movements.

This analysis loosely follows the framework established by PPT, but has absorbed a number of the important advances that have been made in recent decades. Most significantly, I take seriously the influence of subjective mechanisms, and strive to incorporate social psychology literature as much as possible to strengthen the validity of presented evidence.

The segment of social psychology literature that is of particular note for this project is that decision-making, and most usefully, decision-making in the context of collective action. Giguère and Lalonde (2010) point out that “A considerable body of research has...demonstrated the importance of the perceived instrumental value of collective actions in determining an individual’s willingness to participate in them (e.g., Finkle & Muller, 1998; Finkle & Opp, 1991; Klandermans, 1984; Simon et al., 1998; Stürmer & Simon, 2004a; Stürmer et al., 2003)” (p. 231). As indicated by the word “perceived,” this value is derived through both objective and subjective considerations. The exact mechanisms of the subjective mediation of objective conditions is extremely complicated and still somewhat unknown (in Chapter 4 I further discuss how I understand and use theories on these interpretive mechanisms), however, the significant point here is that instrumental value is not only defined on an objective basis.

Another relevant finding within social psychology literature is the confirmation of the presence of an affective path (or, switching to social movement terminology, an emotional path) in addition to the instrumental path discussed above (Metcalfe & Mischel, 1999; Mackie, Devos, & Smith, 2000; Hogg & Abrams, 1999). It is here that I must admit to the incompleteness of this paper—for reasons of ability and scope, I do not analyze the influence of the purely affective reasons that may have led to student participation in collective action. Nonetheless, an examination of the *strategic path* offers us a rich, thoughtful, and conclusive theory regarding activist patterns within the 2012 Québec student movement.

Finally, this research presents a novel use of social media as an information source. While there is a growing body of publications dedicated towards untangling the role of social media in activism, few have used the abundant information available on social media sites as data for social movement research. The Facebook-analysis conducted on four Facebook pages run by student organizations provided valuable insight into the thoughts and perceptions of students regarding the movement that would have otherwise been difficult or impossible to obtain. Thus, this research offers an example of the utility of data available on social media sites.

In sum, my contribution to the existent literature on social movements three-fold. First, this study serves to build upon the small but growing field that applies social movement theories to sustained student activism. Second, I infuse the framework of PPT with a more robust understanding of the subjective mechanisms that are present in decisions to participate in collective action. Finally, my Facebook content-analysis highlights the wealth of data contained within social media and its potential for future use in social science research.

Chapter 2 History and context

A historical contextualization of the case is particularly important because (1) so many of the studies of student activism are located in the 1960s and 1970s, and have tended to produce an ahistorical vision of those unfolding events because of the “special” temporality of those two decades of activism. I seek to uproot this trend. And (2) as I will discuss in Chapter 6 a history of activism in a given population has been demonstrated to be very important in influencing present and future activism.

An important, though perhaps obvious, fact about Québec is that it is an overwhelmingly French province—in 2006, 80.9% considered their mother tongue to be French, while only 8.4% said the same for English (Statistics Canada 2010). The ruling party throughout most of the 2000s was the Québec Liberal Party (PLQ). The main points of its platform centered on a reform of social programs and cuts to government spending and the civil service. And in early 2007, the PLQ introduced the proposal of higher university tuition fees to their official platform (“PLQ présente,” 2007). Three years later, in a February 2010 interview with *La Presse*, Education Minister Michelle Courchesne had spoken of a developing “consensus” for higher university tuition; qualifying her statement by adding, “When I speak of consensus, I exclude students” (Chouinard, 2012). Thus, it was not a surprise when the PLQ Finance minister officially released the tuition hike proposal in 2011.

In Québec, all universities are public, and all are bound by the same base tuition (though tuition rates are different for in-province, out-of-province, and international students, and universities may add supplementary fees on top of the base tuition), which is set by the Québec Ministry of Education, Leisure and Sports (MELS). Québec university tuition is unusually low in relation to other Canadian provinces—in the 2011-2012 academic year, Québec undergraduate tuition fees were less than half the national average (Statistics Canada, 2012b).

Table 2.1
2011-2012 average undergraduate tuition fees for Canadian full-time students, by province

Province	Current (Canadian) dollars
Québec	2,520
Newfoundland and Labrador	2,649
Manitoba	3,638
British Columbia	4,919
Prince Edward Island	5,258
Canada	5,313
Alberta	5,663
Nova Scotia	5,722
New Brunswick	5,728
Saskatchewan	5,734
Ontario	6,815

(source: Statistics Canada, 2012b)

The current framework of Québec’s higher education system was primarily crafted in the 1960s in the wake of Québec’s “Quiet Revolution;” a period of dramatic social and political change in the province (Deon, 1976). Prior to this era, education was under the authority of the Department of Public Instruction (DPI). This agency was made up of a Catholic committee and a Protestant committee and was highly decentralized; each of the 1,500 schools it oversaw had their own programs, textbooks, and criteria for diplomas (Corbo, 2008). During this time, higher education was extremely expensive, and thus inaccessible to most Québécois. The high cost also created stratification between the province’s two main language groups, as the Anglophone population had a significant economic advantage over the Francophone population (Vaillancourt, Lemay, & Vaillancourt, 2007). In 1960, only 3% of Francophones aged 20 to 24 attended university, compared to the 11% of Anglophones within the same age cohort (Pigeon, n.d.).

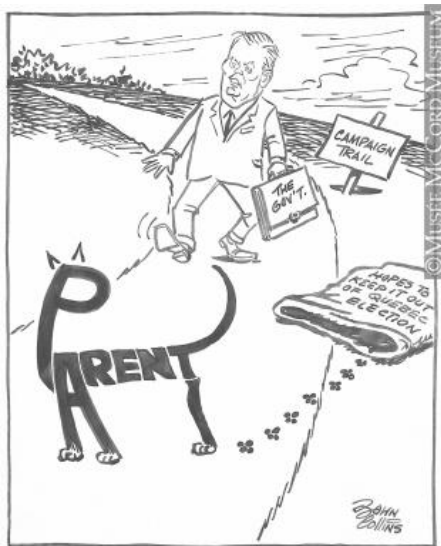


Figure 2.1
Letting the Cat Out of the Bag
(Collins, 1966)

All this changed with the release of the Parent Report, published in five volumes between 1963 and 1964. The report had been commissioned by the newly elected Liberal government, within the context of a quiet but rapid transformation of politics and society. The Parent Report introduced the idea of “Le droit de chacun à la meilleure éducation possible;” or “The right of all to the best education possible” (Rocher, 2003, p. 9). The recommendations made within the report revolutionized the Québec system of education. Two changes in particular reshaped Québec’s higher education system; first was the creation of free general and vocational colleges (known as Collège d’enseignement général et professionnel, or CÉGEP)³ separate from the university system to serve as both a kind of pre-university and as professional networks, and second was the increase in accessibility to university education (Rocher, 2003, p. 9). This was achieved by setting university tuition at the relatively affordable cost of \$540 per year and implementing a “freeze” on tuition which lasted until 1990.

The newly accessible university system was rapidly flooded with new Francophone students; but this influx strained the capacity of the existent universities, and so, in 1968, Québec saw its first massive student strike. This strike is credited with pushing the government to create the Université du Québec system, which ultimately established ten provincially-run, Francophone universities (Christoff, 2008). Since that time, student strikes have been staged in 1974, 1978, 1982, 1988, 1996, 2005, and 2012. This most recent strike was the longest and the largest in Québec history, lasting from February through the summer, and amassing a striking force of 310,000 students at its peak in March (Brett and Mehreen, 2012; “Forte mobilization,” 2012).

³ In Québec, students complete five years of primary school (grades 1 through 6), five years of secondary school (grades 7 through 11). They may then go on to attend two years at a CÉGEP. A Bachelors degree is typically earned in three years. The time of study for a Bachelors degree is the same as in the rest of North America.

Two important trends can be observed by looking back at these past strikes. First, students have come out on the winning side of most of the struggles. Tuition stayed frozen at \$540/year (in-province) until 1990, and despite increases in the past two decades it has remained the lowest tuition rate in Canada. Students have also come out victorious in fighting proposed educational readjustments such as the shifting grant money into loans (Giguère & Lalonde, 2010, p. 232).

Second; Québec's Anglophone universities—McGill, Concordia, and Bishop's—have rarely participating in these strikes, or if they did, it was never in a leading role. Of the three, Concordia has a more active history; in 1996 Concordia students had a notable presence within the protests of the general strike, in 1999 the Concordia Student Union went on strike from November 3rd to 5th (this was not a part of any larger province-wide strike), and in 2005 students joined in the larger strike for 24 hours. At McGill, a few scattered departments have participated in the strikes (mostly in recent years), but they have never voted to go on unlimited general strike (Andrew-Gee, 2012).

Chapter 3 **Methodology**

My research uses a combination of methods. The data for this study has come from interviews with Québec students, a Facebook content analysis, and a collection of statistics collected from government reports, newspaper articles, student-run websites, and other useful internet sites (often assisted by google translate).

Interviews

In December of 2012, I spent ten days in Montréal, during which I interviewed fifteen students from McGill University, Concordia University, the Université de Montréal (UdeM), and the Université du Québec à Montréal (UQAM). These interviews were geared primarily towards gaining insight into student impressions and understandings of the meaning of the movement. I do not use this information in any systematic way, but rather try and incorporate it into my analysis where appropriate.

Unit of Analysis

My unit of analysis is the university. The very nature of collective action implies that there is a *collectivity* that acts with some degree of cohesiveness (Tilly, 1978, p. 8). In the case of Québec, the university was the most salient group for activism. It acts as a geographically distinct body with a particular history, organization (both student and administration), social network, and culture. Using some other kind of cross-cutting identity as a means of comparison (e.g. Students from Québec vs. International Students) is not only impractical for data-collection purposes, but also obscures the relevant elements that students are subject to by virtue of their enrollment at a particular university.

Establishing the case study: McGill, Concordia, UdeM, UQAM

For my case, I focus on four universities; two Anglophone (McGill University and Concordia University) and two Francophone (the Université de Montréal (UdeM) and the Université du Québec à Montréal (UQAM)). I chose these four universities largely because of their similarities in variables that have been demonstrated to influence activism. All are similar in student body size (see Table 3.1), have similar biographical availability (inferred by age) (see Table 3.2), and are geographically centered in downtown Montréal (see Figure 3.1). With these variables held naturally constant, I am better able to assess the influence of other relevant variables on activism levels.

Table 3.1

Total number of enrolled students (2012)

University	# of students
McGill	37,500
Concordia	43,162
Université de Montréal (UdeM)	42,684
Université du Québec à Montréal (UQAM)	40,265

(“All about us,” ca. 2011; “Fast facts 2011-2012,” ca. 2011; Université du Québec à Montréal, 2011, p. 6; “Des faits,” ca. 2010)

Table 3.2

Age of undergraduate students enrolled full time (Fall 1994)

University	Mean Age (in years)	Median Age (in years)
McGill	21.8	21.0
Concordia	22.5	22.0
UdeM	23.7	22.0
UQAM	25.6	23.0

(Sales et. al., 1997)

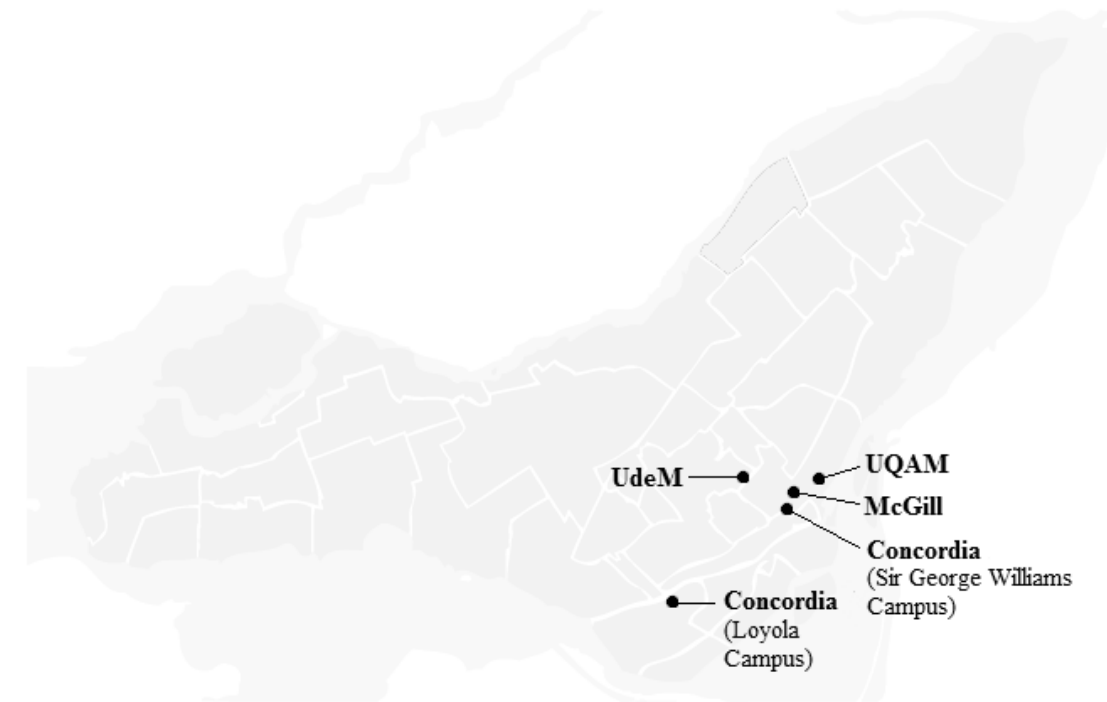


Figure 3.1

Map of Montréal and university campus locations

Note: This map displays the geographic location of McGill, Concordia, UdeM, and UQAM. UQAM, McGill, and Concordia’s Sir George Williams Campus are all located in the center of downtown Montréal. UdeM is approximately 5km from central downtown, or 30 minutes away via public transit; Concordia’s Loyola campus is approximately 7km from the center of downtown, or 35 minutes away via public transit. There is also a free shuttle for Concordia students that runs regularly between the two campuses.

Mapping Activism

Now that we have established the universities of our study, we are tasked with determining the activism levels at each. First, the definition of “activism” must be established. For the purposes of this research, the doctrinal side of activism (the set of beliefs, or so-called “philosophy” of activism) is neither measured nor considered. Instead, the focus is on outward manifestations of activism. For an action to be considered an “outward manifestation of activism” it must be within the movement’s repertoire of contention—meaning the (limited) forms of collective action available to any given challenging group, such as the petition, the strike, the demonstration, etc. (Tarrow, 1994, p. 19; Tilly, 1978, p. 151-166).

Within the 2012 Québec movement, the strike was one of the most prominent forms of activism, and it is also the only one that has reliable numerical data available. While activism was manifested in other ways (demonstrations, making and distributing flyers, etc.) strike data offer a representative image of overall activism. There are two dimensions to the “strength” of strike activism; size (the proportion of the student body that went on strike) and endurance (the number of days students were on strike). The process of going on strike is outlined in Chapter 7. Ultimately, I compiled a spreadsheet of the student associations at McGill, Concordia, UdeM, and UQAM that voted to strike, their size, when they began the strike, and when they ended the strike.⁴ From this information, I was able to construct Table 3.3, which outlines the two most important indicators of activism.

Column 2, “Average # days striking students were on strike,” was a particularly important indicator of activism. It captures the enormous difference in dedication and/or organization between a university where 50% of students struck for 1 day, and a university where 50% of students struck for seven months. However, because it only takes into account those students who did go on strike, this measure does not capture the *prevalence* of activism, only its strength. This indicator was estimated by using the following equation:

$$x = \frac{(a_s)(a_d) + (b_s)(b_d) + \dots}{n}$$

x = Average number of days striking students were on strike

a_s = Number of students in organization “a” (only organizations that voted to strike are captured in this equation)

a_d = Number of days that organization “a” was on strike (end date of strike – start date of strike + 1)

(the sequence in the numerator continues until all the organizations that were on strike are captured)

n = total number of students who were on strike

Column 4, “% students who went on strike,” was derived simply by dividing the number of students who went on strike at a given university (at one point or another during the strike, they were not necessarily all on strike at the same time) by the general number of students

⁴ This spreadsheet was too large to include in the appendix of this paper, but can be viewed upon request by emailing niabischmaltz2013@u.northwestern.edu.

enrolled at said university. The slash signifies that that university had one large (20% of the study body or more) organization that went on strike for less than nine days. The number preceding the slash includes the large student organization, the number following does not. In other words, the number following the slash removes an outlier.

Column 5, “Activism Rank,” ranks, on a scale of 1 to 10 (where 1 is the least active and 10 is the most active), the level of activism at a given university. This number was derived through an arithmetic process based on the first two indicators, with qualitative data taken into consideration to account for numerical distortions (see Appendix A for the full calculation).

Table 3.3
2012 Activism at McGill, Concordia, UdeM, and UQAM

University	Average # days striking students were on strike	% students who went on strike	Activism Rank (AR)
McGill University	8.65	33.28 / 12.83	0.5
Concordia University	62.30	96.96 / 33.66	2.5
Université de Montréal (UdeM)	109.41	61.09	6
Université du Québec à Montréal (UQAM)	124.84	94.32 / 62.04	6

Facebook Content Analysis

I reviewed comments, likes, and shares on three Facebook pages and one Facebook event and coded them according to a 12-point schema that I created. I chose the Facebook sites based mainly on how representative I judged the student organization sponsoring the Facebook page to be of the university as a whole, using individualized criteria per university. For Concordia and UdeM, the two largest organizations representing the vast majority of the student body were, respectively, the Concordia Student Union (CSU) and the Fédération des associations étudiantes du campus de l'Université de Montréal (FAÉCUM). UQAM does not have a student union that represents the general student body, and most UQAM associations represent less than 10 percent of the student body. Therefore, I chose the student union federation Association pour une Solidarité Syndicale Étudiante (ASSÉ) as representative of UQAM. 37.69 percent of UQAM students were members of ASSÉ during the 2012 student strike, and while ASSÉ is not an exclusively UQAM student association, 82.82 percent of its 18,323 members were UQAM students. Of the other 17.18 percent, 10.56 percent were from UdeM and 6.62 percent were from the Université Laval. For McGill, the Student Society of McGill University (SSMU) was the most representative student organization on campus, however, there were close to zero posts regarding the movement. So I turned to the Arts Undergraduate Society (AUS) which represents approximately 20 percent of the student body and was the second largest student organization at McGill that took a strike vote and the one that was talked about most in newspapers and by students. Unfortunately, its Facebook page was relatively inactive during the winter/spring of 2012, especially regarding content pertaining to the student strike; however, the event page for the AUS General Assembly on March 13, 2012, in which the organization voted on joining the strike, had more activity, and thus that was the page that I used.

I did *not* select the organizations according to ease of inter-comparability—the usage and “culture” of individual sites were simply too varied to be able to pick pages from the four universities of study that could be directly comparable to each other on all points.

For CSU (Concordia) the date range was selected so that I would analyze seven days of posts prior to the strike vote, the day of the strike vote, and the six days after the strike vote. For FAÉCUM (UdeM) and ASSÉ (UQAM) I determined that 2/20/12 and 2/14/12, respectively, were the dates that most of organizations’ member associations voted to go on strike, thus I analyzed posts from that date, from seven days prior, and from six days after. I was unable to conduct a full two week analysis for AUS (McGill), as the posts on the event wall only spanned for four days.

Table 3.4
Facebook Content Analysis Description

AR	University	FB type	Name of organization	# of page “likes” as of 3/31/13	Date range of content analysis	
0.5	McGill	Event	Arts Undergraduate Society (AUS)	426 “going”*	3/10/12	3/13/12
2.5	Concordia	Page	Concordia Student Union (CSU)	2,072	2/29/12	3/15/12
6	UdeM	Page	Fédération des associations étudiantes du campus de l’Université de Montréal (FAÉCUM)	4,394	2/13/12	2/26/12
6	UQAM	Page	Association pour une Solidarité Syndicale Étudiante (ASSÉ)	11,591	2/7/12	2/20/12

Note: *Because the AUS is an “event,” it cannot have “likes,” but 426 people responded that they were “going” to the event.

Full Coding Schema

I constructed a 12-point coding schema by which I categorized content from the Facebook sites. For the two Francophone universities, I used the translation extension provided by google to translate the posts and linked articles, and for any ambiguously translated phrases I was assisted by a non-professional translator. Eight of the categories (Table 3.5) were distinct and non-overlapping. If a comment did happen to fit into multiple categories, I split the value of the comments and its associated “likes” and “shares” between the relevant categories.

Table 3.5

Facebook Coding Schema 1

1	Expressed opposition to the strike/movement
2	Expressed support towards the strike/movement
3	Negative towards the group/voting process
4	Positive towards the group/voting process
5	Information provided, relating negatively towards the strike/movement
6	Information provided, relating neutrally towards the strike/movement
7	Information provided, relating positively towards the strike/movement
8	Information request

Table 3.6 shows the four categories that code for perspectives on the tuition hike. These categories are a more specific subset of the eight categories in Table 3.5 (e.g. a commenter that expressed support to the strike/movement may explain that he/she believes that the tuition hike will decrease educational accessibility, or an informative article that relates negatively towards the strike/movement may outline evidence that the hike is needed to help underfunded universities). Comments frequently applied to more than one of these categories (e.g. a comment may express the opinion that the tuition hike is both financially undesirable and will decrease educational accessibility). When this occurred, I split the value of the comments and its associated “likes” and “shares” into the relevant categories.

Table 3.6

Facebook Coding Schema 2

a	(pro-hike) Supports the tuition hike
b	(anti-hike) The hike is financially undesirable
c	(anti-hike) The hike will decrease educational accessibility
d	(anti-hike) The hike is a symptom of/will exacerbate larger systemic/societal problems

Tables 3.7 and 3.8 display the raw data of the Facebook analysis. I treated posts/comments/likes/shares of the organization as the same as those of students mainly because I assumed that it was the student representatives of the organization that were running the Facebook page. The one user that I systematically excluded in the analysis was “Grève Étudiante” who posted frequently on the walls of three of the organizations, but the posts never invoked any debates, nor garnered any “likes,” or “shares.” As it was unclear what university Grève Étudiante attended, if any, I concluded that the posts would be better excluded.

Table 3.7
Facebook Content-Analysis Data 1

	Posts and Comments				Likes and Shares			
	AUS (n=20)	CSU (n=102)	FAÉCUM (n=183)	ASSÉ (n=59)	AUS (n=80)	CSU (n=283)	FAÉCUM (n=1071)	ASSÉ (n=313)
1	4.5	14	3	2	13	56	0	0
2	2	14	14	10	1	37	588.5	238
3	9.5	33.5	2	1	28	140	6	1
4	0	6	3	3	0	13	17	3
5	1	3	1	0	1	3	9	0
6	4	13	55	17	1	7	110.5	31
7	8	8	59	16	36	23	319	36
8	0	10.5	46	10	0	4	21	4

Table 3.8
Facebook Content-Analysis Data 2

	Posts and Comments				Likes and Shares			
	AUS (n=8)	CSU (n=18)	FAÉCUM (n=25)	ASSÉ (n=12)	AUS (n=32)	CSU (n=50)	FAÉCUM (n=233)	ASSÉ (n=62)
a	1	6	1	0	1	27	0	0
b	1.67	2.5	3.17	2	4	4.17	34.17	8.67
c	4.67	5	7.67	2.5	25	12.17	72.17	21.17
d	0.67	4.5	13.17	7.5	2	6.67	126.67	32.17

Facebook media analysis

In addition to using the facebook pages to code for perceptions of the tuition hike, I used them as a means of evaluating the proliferation of various news outlets within the Anglophone and Francophone communities. The process was simple; using the same Facebook pages and the same timeframe listed in Table 3.4, I found every link to any news outlet, recorded its presence, and also recorded whether or not it was positive, negative, or neutral towards the movement. Tables 3.9 and 3.10 display the raw data.

Table 3.9

Links to newspapers on Francophone Facebook pages

Newspapers	Total observations (n=35)	Neutral	Positive towards movement	Negative towards movement
Le Devoir	11	5	6	--
Radio Canada	3	3	--	--
TVA Nouvelles	2	2	--	--
La Presse	10	6	3	1
Canoe	1	1	--	--
Journal Metro	2	1	1	--
Newswire	2	2	--	--
CSN	1	--	1	--
Voir	2	--	2	--
L'Informateur	1	1	--	--

Table 3.10

Links to newspapers on Anglophone Facebook pages

Newspapers	Total observations (n=7)	Neutral	Positive towards movement	Negative towards movement
Montreal Gazette	3	--	--	3
Canoe	1	--	1	--
La Presse	1	1	--	--
Montreal ctv	1	1	--	--
IRIS	1	--	1	--

Chapter 4

Alternative hypotheses and hypothesis

To again reiterate our puzzle; how might we explain the divergence in activism between Anglophone and Francophone universities? We have already established the basic similarities between these four universities to rule out; but what are the salient differences? I here examine three potential hypotheses—logistical problems of the language barrier, the structuralist view of the centrality of political opportunity structures, and rational actor theory-- but ultimately find them unsatisfactory. I then propose my own hypothesis based loosely on Political Process Theory and the constructionist perspective of social movements.

Logistical Problems of the Language Barrier

The most obvious difference to address is language. As the movement was located in a majority-Francophone province, perhaps the language barrier ostracized Anglophone university students from the broader movement. However, while the linguistic difference did factor into the shape of the movement, I argue that we cannot ascribe activist levels to the immediate effects of language. First, bilingualism in Québec is high; in 2006, 35.8% of Québec Francophones and 68.9% of Anglophones reported knowing both English and French (Statistics Canada, 2006). And these rates are likely climb even higher when we specify for region and education level. In a survey conducted by the magazine “L’actualité,” 79% of Montréalers and 83% of university graduates reported that they spoke French well enough to carry a meaningful conversation (L’actualité, 2012). And on the flip side, one is hard-pressed to find non-English speakers in downtown Montréal; as one McGill student said of the city, “Oh yeah, everyone here speaks English” (A. Cernavskis, personal communication , December 4, 2012). So it appears that the purely logistical barrier of the language difference appears to be surmountable.

Second, an argument that hinges on the language difference ignores the possibility that Anglophone students could have started their own, English-language movement against the tuition hikes. With nearly 80,000 Anglophone university students housed in downtown Montréal, they had the potential to develop their own sizeable contingent. However, enthusiasm for collective action did not develop, and even after given specific outreach from the activists at Francophone universities (for example, an Anglo-Franco committee was formed by UQAM students who wanted to work with interested Anglophone peers), apathy or antagonism prevailed (L. Guénette, personal communication December 4, 2012).

Political Opportunity Structures

As I established earlier, this research serves as a direct critique of purely applied structuralism in the way of a central emphasis on political opportunity structures. Before we dive in, it is necessary to try and establish a definition of POS. Unfortunately, the term has been so loosely used over the past few decades as to be rendered nearly meaningless, a frustrating reality acknowledged by a number of scholars (Koopmans, 1999; Goodwin & Jasper, 1999; Crossley, 2002; Meyer, 2004). I here use Crossley’s (2002) definition of POS as “institutional political arrangements in society which variously facilitate and constrain political activity” (p. 14). Of all the versions of the term that have been used, this definition is somewhat on the narrower end. The decision to use this more narrow definition has been made purposefully, as I agree with

Goodwin and Jasper (1999) in their argument that broader versions (e.g. definitions that include “framing” as a structure) tend to incorporate and conflate so much that the concept of POS is rendered trivial (p. 29). Variables that are *not* included in this definition include culture, ideology, non-institutional political arrangements (e.g. student associations), and the media (as Crossley (2002) points out, “the media field is a distinct and relatively autonomous social field with its own ‘rules’, dynamics, agents, rhythms, etc.”)(p. 14).

So what were the POS before and during the 2012 Québec student movement, and how did they differ between McGill and Concordia on the one hand, and UdeM and UQAM on the other? As was mentioned earlier, all universities in Québec are public; this system unifies university students in a number of ways. First, if tuition goes up, it goes up for everyone. It is the same situation if there is a change in the provincial loans and grants program. This allows for an easy foundation of solidarity between students and a unified message that can be broadcast within the student body and into the broader province. It also simplifies negotiations if all challenging parties begin on the same page. Second, all university students know that the provincial government holds primary power when it comes to the finances of their education. While individual universities can and do charge extra fees and provide scholarships, it is the government that sets the base tuition rate and it is the government that crafts provincial financial aid policies (for both grants and loans). A single entity that can be easily essentialized into the Premier or the Education Minister allows for antagonisms to be both focused (at the government) and generalized (to all Québec university students).

But though certainly helpful, Québec’s system of public universities is not particularly unique to Canada. Of the ten provinces, only four have private universities (which includes Manitoba, whose only private university is the Canadian Mennonite University). What is unique about Québec is its language profile. As a Francophone province in a primarily Anglophone continent, Québec cannot simply pull people from neighboring provinces if there is a labor shortage, especially in fields that require university degrees, because of the language barrier. In other words, Québec relies on a steady stream of university graduates from its own education system to supply the province’s workforce. The main threat that the government has at its disposal when students go on strike is that it will cancel the university semester; however, the threat is an empty one and the students know it. It would be prohibitively expensive for the government to do so because the costs of the ensuing labor shortage and loss of tax revenues due to thousands of late graduates have always been much higher than simply cancelling any plans to increase tuition or cut grants (Student Strike FAQ, 2012). As Giguère and Lalonde (2012) point out, “A disruption of this cycle is a difficult situation for the leaders of the province to reconcile. Such a power dynamic grants students an opportunity to mobilize in order to obtain particular concessions from the government” (para. 3). And indeed, this structure has borne out in the favor of university students many times in the past; the government has never cancelled a university semester, and students have come out on the winning side of most of the eight student strikes.

Before we discuss the Anglophone/Francophone divide, it’s useful to point out that already we find a flaw in some of the theories regarding the relationship of POS to social movements. Namely, that the *opening* of POS has been considered central to understanding movement emergence; as Tarrow (1994) put it, “the ‘when’ of social movement mobilization—when political opportunities are opening up—goes a long way towards explaining its ‘why’” (p. 17). Structuralists often assume that in modern society there is a perpetual level of discontent,

and that all people need to be spurred into action is an opportunity. However, this dynamic model of an “opening” POS is not seen in Québec. Though the province does have a structure that is relatively open towards student collective action (for the reasons outlined above) this structure has been in place for the past half-century. It was not an increase in a structural opportunity, but rather a shared grievance and the accompanying non-structural opportunity to mobilize around it that catalyzed the movement.

Returning to our original purpose; is this structure as opportune for Anglophone universities as it is for Francophone universities? Though the structures themselves were not identical, I argue that the *degree of opportunity* afforded by political structures to Anglophone and Francophone universities was equal. The first thing to note is that McGill and Concordia are public like the rest of Québec’s universities, so students have the same opportunities regarding solidarity and focused antagonisms.

The argument regarding student power due to labor dynamics requires students from our Anglophone universities to be valued similarly in the labor market as students from our Francophone universities. The first obvious potential barrier to the job market for McGill and Concordia students in francophone Québec is language. But rates of bilingualism as well as the not-insignificant unilingual-English job market indicate that graduates from McGill and Concordia would not have difficulty breaking into the Québec job market.

At McGill, 25% of students’ first language at home is French and a full 50% are bilingual (OCLC, 2011, p. 2). Similarly 21% of Concordia students’ claim French to be their mother tongue (bilingualism rates were unavailable) (Concordia University, ca. 2011, p. 30). These numbers do not include those students who may not consider themselves bilingual, but have a high proficiency in the language. Certain graduate programs at these universities, such as McGill’s Faculty of Law, do not demand full bilingualism, but do require all students to demonstrate a substantial proficiency in both English and French (“Requirements for admission, 2013). And again, referencing the poll taken by “L’actualité,” a full 83% of Anglophones with a university degree reported that they spoke French well enough to carry a meaningful conversation (L’actualité, 2012). These numbers indicate that many students at Anglophone universities have a sufficiently advanced knowledge of French to easily enter into the Québec bilingual/French job market.

Another point is that French is not a requirement for all jobs in Québec. There is a substantial unilingual-English job market in Québec (most of the market is centered in Montréal, but as that is where our universities are located, the geographical restriction does not seem to impose undue barriers). Anglophones once had a significant economic advantage over Francophones in Québec, and while that dominance has been steadily declining over the past four decades, Anglophones have still not completely lost their place in the Québec labor market. As Table 4.1 indicates, in 2000 unilingual Anglophones still held an advantage in average income over unilingual Francophones, though both were surpassed by bilingual Anglophones and Francophones.

Table 4.1

Average Labor Income by Language Skills, Québec Men and Women, 1970–2000

	Language Group	1970		1980		1990		2000	
		C\$	RRC	C\$	RRC	C\$	RRC	C\$	RRC
Men	Unilingual anglophones	8,171	1.59	17,635	1.22	30,034	1.22	34,097	1.15
	Bilingual anglophones	8,938	1.74	19,562	1.36	33,511	1.3	38,745	1.31
	Unilingual francophones	5,136	--	14,408	--	24,702	--	29,665	--
	Bilingual francophones	7,363	1.43	19,547	1.36	33,065	1.34	38,851	1.31
Women	Unilingual anglophones	3,835	1.24	10,271	1.17	18,844	1.19	23,002	1.11
	Bilingual anglophones	3,956	1.28	10,759	1.22	20,292	1.28	26,247	1.26
	Unilingual francophones	3,097	--	8,801	--	15,850	--	20,786	--
	Bilingual francophones	3,842	1.24	11,195	1.27	20,261	1.28	26,644	1.28

Note: Dollar amounts are in 2007 dollars; RRC = ratio to reference category (unilingual francophones = 1). (Vaillancourt, Lemay, & Vaillancourt, 2007, p. 3, 4.)

Finally, it should be noted that the Montréal government has taken specific steps to retain international graduates, many of whom are housed at McGill and Concordia. In 2006, la Conférence régionale des élus de Montréal (CRE) published a report titled “To intensify efforts to attract and retain the best international students to Montréal.” The report recommends that “Montréal and the entire province should establish a vigorous policy of attraction and retention of international students,” by eliminating or greatly decreasing any barriers for international students (CRÉ de Montréal, 2006, p. 12). With 35.07% and 21.91% of Montréal’s international students housed at McGill and Concordia (respectively), as compared to the 17.68% and 11.73% at UdeM and UQAM, much of these efforts are directed towards Montréal’s Anglophone universities (CRÉ de Montréal, 2006, p. 5).

Rational Actor Theory

The framework and implications of Rational Actor Theory (RAT) have long hovered over social movement scholars. Upon its introduction in the 1960s, RAT reframed the study of collective action by treating actors as rational and strategic instead of irrational or psychologically deviant, thus opening up a completely different research agenda for the study of social movements. Though few currently advocate for RAT in its pure form, many scholars continue to feel compelled to address the basic logic behind the theory, as I will do here.

In brief, RAT, as most famously articulated by Mancur Olson, understands individuals as rational and self-interested. This proves problematic for collective action due to the “free-rider”

problem, and thus Olson concludes that “unless the number of individuals in a group is quite small, or unless there is coercion or some other special device to make individuals act in their common interest, *rational, self-interested individuals will not act to achieve their common or group interests* [original emphasis]” (Olson, 1965, p. 2). But though theoretically elegant, this basic argument has proven to be empirically flawed; as Mark Irving Lichbach (1998) frankly states, “The obvious challenge to Olson is that he is simply wrong: people quite often rebel, sometimes in very large numbers” (p. 11). What, then, is the problem with the theory? And what might we replace it with?

Olson himself provides us with the means to critique his theory. In a footnote, he admits that “‘affective’ groups such as family and friendship groups could normally be studied much more usefully with entirely different sorts of theories, since the analysis used in this study does not shed much light on these groups” (Olson, 1965, p. 62). In fact, we know from psychological research that affective connections to groups can extend far beyond families or intimate social circles to much larger and abstract groups (Islam & Hewstone, 1993; Giguère & Lalonde, 2010). Thus, by his own logic Olson’s theory is insufficient. Similarly, in considering individuals as only motivated by purely instrumental desires, Olson disregards the affective dynamics that constantly influence individuals. I contend that a strategic calculation of cost-benefits is indeed an important path of cognition for potential movement participants, however, this strategic calculation is not only driven by material or objective costs and benefits as Olson claims, but also by affective or perceived costs and benefits.

The inadequacy of the Olsonian model of RAT is made clear in the case of the Québec student movement. First, the 2012 Québec student movement is an example in which a large, non-familial group engaged in collective action without being coerced. This directly contradicts Olson’s fundamental prediction that “unless the number of individuals in a group is quite small, or unless there is coercion or some other special device to make individuals act in their common interest, *rational, self-interested individuals will not act to achieve their common or group interests* [original emphasis]” (Olson, 1965, p. 2). Second, Giguère & Lalonde’s (2010) psychological research on the 2005 Québec student movement (a case so close to ours that we can reasonably use it to draw inferences about the 2012 movement) demonstrates clearly that an individual’s decision to participate in the movement involved much more than simple an objective calculation by a self-interested individual. They conclude that “the results suggest two paths which lead individuals to become involved in collective actions: a direct path that was driven by the affective aspect of identification and a strategic path, which operated through the perceived instrumental value of collective actions” (Giguère & Lalonde, 2010, p. 241). The latter path, they argue, is mediated by various social mechanisms such as group message and ingroup ties. Thus, even within the strategic path there is subjective mediation, reformulating Olson’s objective cost/benefit analysis into a calculation based on *perceived* costs and benefits.

Hypothesis

Now that I have somewhat cleared the field of the various incomplete explanations of activist levels within the Québec student movement, I am tasked with the challenge of crafting my own hypothesis. Ultimately, I determine that differences in activism between McGill and

Concordia on the one hand, and UdeM and UQAM on the other can be attributed to differences in (1) relative financial impact of the tuition hike, (2) perceived implications of the tuition hike, and (3) organizational efficacy.

An important grounding to establish is that I only analyze variables that operate through the *strategic path*. As discussed in the Chapter 1, social psychology research has confirmed the presence of the strategic path involved in deciding to participate in collective action (Giguère & Lalonde, 2010; see Stürmer & Simon, 2004).⁵ A strategic or “instrumental” decision is derived through a calculation of associated costs and benefits. Rephrased; “In situations where individuals perceive that the benefits outweigh the costs of action, it can be said that individuals are perceiving instrumental value from the actions” (Giguère & Lalonde, 2010, p. 231). The idea of “perception” is very important here; costs and benefits are not simply derived from an objective evaluation of circumstances, but rather a subjectively mediated perception of these circumstances. Figure 4.1 outlines the basic process (I will discuss the “interpretive frame” more in depth later on in this Chapter).

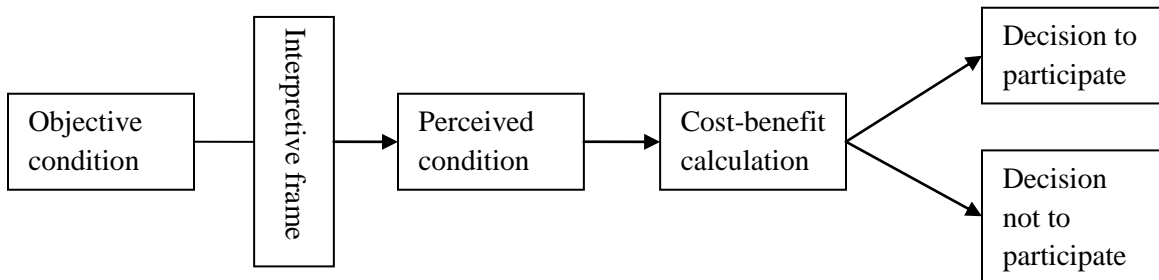


Figure 4.1
Outline of the strategic cognitive path

In our case, the relevant strategic calculation we are most concerned with is the analysis of the costs and benefits associated with participation in activism. It ought to be noted that these costs and benefits may not necessarily be immediate or guaranteed; instead, psychologists have created an “expectancy-value model” which accounts for *anticipated* costs and benefits (see Feather, 1982, 1992). This is particularly important given that the central goals (i.e. “expected benefits”) of collective action tend to be long-term and not immediately awarded. Another important component to this expected-value is the *expectation of the success* of collective action (Feather, 1982, 1992).

Having established the basic foundation of our model, we may now proceed to our three chosen variables; (1) relative financial impact of the tuition hike, (2) perceived implications of the tuition hike, and (3) organizational efficacy.

⁵As explained in Chapter 1, the present research does not focus on non-strategic, affective, and/or emotional paths. However, I acknowledge importance of these factors and encourage further investigations into illuminating their particular effects and mechanisms.

Financial impact of the tuition hike

The major exogenous change that inspired the movement was, at its most basic level, a financial change. And while the tuition increase was, in real terms, the same for all students regardless of their university (about C\$300 each year), other economic theories may be applied in order to parse the relative financial effect of the tuition hike. I use three different models in order to evaluate these differences; namely, the law of diminishing marginal utility, relative deprivation, and expectancy-value. While costs of participation remained the same across all universities, some differences were present in the expected-value of participation. Ultimately, I determine that activism levels did align with the predictions of three of the four variables, however, the relationships were weak and alone the financial explanation appears to be unsatisfying.

Perceived implications of the tuition hike

Second, I assess differences in the perceived implications of the tuition hike. While none of these perceptions altered the costs of movement participation in any way, significant differences in the expected benefit of movement participation were associated with various perceptions. The Facebook analysis suggests that Francophone students were more likely to hold perceptions with higher expected-value than their Anglophone peers. This distribution of high and low expected-value perceptions helps to further explain the activism difference between Anglophone and Francophone universities.

As discussed above, perceived instrumental value is derived through the mediation of objective conditions by an interpretive frame.⁶ I admit here that I am using the term “interpretive frame” as a catch-all for many of the complex subjective mechanisms that mediate the observation/experience an objective condition and result in the perception or interpretation of that condition. I label these various mechanisms an “interpretive frame” not to conflate them into one, but rather simply for semantic clarity. While there is no current consensus regarding the components or operation of these interpretive mechanisms, some recent research has been able to shed some light on the processes. The present analysis considers influences of the media, a history of activism, and political ideology.

Organizational efficacy

Finally, I consider the relationship between organizational efficacy and activism. Since the 1960s, a number of scholars have developed theories regarding the influence of organizations on social movements (McAdam, 1982; McCarthy & Zald, 1977; Clemens, 1993; Taylor, 1989; among many others). I do not rely upon any one particular model of organization, preferring to instead compare Anglophone and Francophone organizations on their own terms. However, the evaluative method I use is based on the degree to which the organization can decrease the cost of participation and increase the expected success of the movement (a role of organizations that Lichbach (1998) among other scholars have taken seriously). Francophone organizations were far more efficacious and enjoyed a much greater legitimacy than Anglophone universities, thereby both decreasing costs of participation, and increasing the expected success.

⁶ My use of the term “interpretive frame” is distinct from the concept of “strategic framing,” in which group leaders consciously frame their message in a way that they think will resonate with potential participants.

While the evidence provided information about the relative value of the costs and expected-benefits associated with the different variables (e.g. Anglophones perceived lower-expected value of movement participation than Francophones), no “objective” valuing of the costs and benefits was assigned (e.g. Anglophones perceived x expected-value, while Francophones perceived y expected-value). Additionally, due to the nature of this analysis I was unable to determine the independent effects of these three variables listed above. Therefore my explanation of the difference in activism levels between universities is based on an aggregation of relative levels of costs and expected-benefits.

Table 4.2

Summary of Anglophone and Francophone relative costs and expected-benefits of participation in activism

	Costs of participation	Expected-benefits of participation
Relative effects of tuition hike	--	Anglo < Franco
Perceived implications of tuition hike	--	Anglo < Franco
Organizational efficacy	Anglo > Franco	Anglo < Franco
Aggregate	Anglo > Franco	Anglo < Franco

Finally, the observant reader may have noticed that there is a notable difference in activism between Concordia and McGill. For reasons of analytic clarity, I omit any systematic consideration of this activism divide, however, a number of patterns that I identify as relevant for activism differences between Anglophones and Francophones also apply to McGill and Concordia (namely, percent international students, historical experience with student movements, prevalence of the sub-perspective that the tuition hike was a symptom of a societal problem, attunement to U.S. tuition, and perhaps others).

Chapter 5 **Relative financial effects of the tuition hike**

McAdam (1982) greatly advanced the study of social movements when he argued against the dominant stimulus-response explanation of collective action and instead posited that social movements emerge over a much longer time period (p. 60). I accept and take to heart this argument (for considerations of history, see Chapters 2 and 6), however, it is undeniable that the “stimulus-response” model holds a certain degree of validity in the case of the 2012 Québec movement, the stimulus being the tuition hike, and the response being the movement. While there were many other more long-term variables involved, it is difficult to imagine the emergence of the movement without the provocation of the hike. Because of its importance, I devote the next two chapters to examining the impact of the tuition hike on students and how it may have affected activism. In this chapter, I consider the relative financial effects of the tuition increase.

The central questions of this chapter are: Did the tuition hike financially impact Anglophone and Francophone students in different ways? And if so, did those differences impact student decisions to participate in the movement? The answer to the first question is yes, but only to a limited extent. The answer to the second question is probably, but again, only to a limited extent, and certainly not enough to explain the significant polarization of activism we measured between Anglophone and Francophone students. I here consider three ways in which the tuition hike may have differentially affected students on a financial level; (1) student financial situation, as derived from eligibility for provincial grants and loans, (2) projected income, as estimated by majors and corresponding jobs, (3) distribution of In-Province, Out-of-Province, and International students by university and the accompanying variation in base tuition fees, and (4) the relative attunement of Anglophone students with tuition in the U.S. and Canada.

Student financial situation

First, I consider student financial situation, employing the concept of diminishing marginal utility. Diminishing marginal utility is the theory that “the marginal utility of each (homogenous) unit decreases as the supply of units increases (and vice versa)” (Polliet, T., 2011). This theory predicts that wealthier students would be less affected by the tuition increase because that (lost) money has less utility to them than it does to poorer students. Or, in terms of the costs/expected-benefits of participation, this translates into having a lower expected-value, since the utility of the expected cancellation of the tuition hike would be lower for wealthier students than for poorer students, thereby affecting the instrumental calculation of movement participation. Data from student eligibility for provincial loans and grants is used to extrapolate student wealth by university. Loan and grant eligibility is determined by the following criteria:

1. Canadian citizen or permanent resident, refugee or protected person under the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act;
2. Reside in Québec or be deemed to be resident at the time of application for financial assistance;
3. Be admitted or about to be admitted to an educational institution recognized by MELS (Ministère de l'éducation)
4. Follow or be deemed a full-time student;

5. Have not exceeded the maximum number of months of study for which financial assistance may be granted;
6. Not have sufficient financial resources to continue his/her studies (La Commission de Planification de l'Université du Québec, 2011, p. 14).

Table 5.1 shows the percent of students at each of our four universities that meet all of the above criteria. Criteria 2 – 5 are neutral for our purposes (we will assume students in these categories are equally distributed across the universities). The significant criterion is the last (“Not have sufficient financial resources to continue his/her studies”) which allows us to assess to some degree the overall financial situation of students. Criterion 1 creates some distortion—because the program is limited to Canadian students, general eligibility would differ between two (hypothetical) universities that have students of the same financial situation, but with different numbers of international students. To account for this, we may assume McGill and Concordia’s eligibility due to financial reasons to be slightly too low in relation to UdeM and UQAM because of their larger international student population. We see here a loose correlation with activism, though not a perfect one. McGill and Concordia do demonstrate less eligibility (therefore implying their students are wealthier), however, Concordia and UQAM are within two percentage points of each other (and given the distortion from Criterion 1, the two might be closer, or Concordia may even have a higher eligibility due to financial reasons than UQAM). Also, despite similar activism levels at UQAM and UdeM there was a 10 percentage point difference between loan and grant eligibility.

Table 5.1
Eligibility for Provincial Loans and Grants by University (2009)

AR	University	% of Student Body Eligible for Provincial Loans and Grants (Fall 2009)
0.5	McGill	38.07
2.5	Concordia	50.81
6	UdeM	61.78
6	UQAM	52.72

(La Commission de Planification de l'Université du Québec, 2011, p. 19)

Projected income, as estimated by majors and corresponding jobs

The second variable I consider in assessing the relative financial impact of the tuition hike is student projected income, which may have led to a different cost/benefit calculation by students comparing the expense of the increased tuition to their expected future earnings. This variable is also based on the law of diminishing marginal utility—that “the marginal utility of each (homogenous) unit decreases as the supply of units increases (and vice versa)” —but here considers the supply of units not as current wealth but as *expected* wealth, earned at a job after graduation (Polliet, T., 2011). I estimated expected wealth by matching student majors to industry and the corresponding average wage. Table 5.2 displays the average wage of ten industries, and the average hourly wage earned in January 2012 (the month before the strike began). The third column of in Table 5.2 lists the majors that I determined would likely go into each industry (for example, a health sciences major was expected to go into the industry “health occupations,” thus the health sciences major would expect to earn C\$24.42). Table 5.3 lists the

distribution of majors (ordered by their corresponding wage as determined in Table 5.2) at each university, first within the general student body then within the striking students. Table 5.4 refines that information into a more meaningful format with the following equation:

$$x = \frac{\% \text{ of striking students within major } a, \text{ at university } r}{\% \text{ of general student body within major } a, \text{ at university } r}$$

If $x = 1$, major_a was perfectly represented within the striking student population of university r , if $x > 1$, major_a was overrepresented, and if $x < 1$, major_a was underrepresented. If students did not join the strike because of high expected earnings, then we would expect to see an underrepresentation of majors than have high projected earnings and an overrepresentation of majors that have low projected earnings. This pattern, however, is *not* manifested in the data, as can be clearly seen in Figure 5.1.

Table 5.2
Average wage of Québec industries (2012) and corresponding majors

Industry	Jan 2012 average hourly wage (C\$)	Accompanying Majors
Management occupations	33.02	Administration
Natural and applied sciences and related occupations	31.21	Pure Sciences, Engineering, Applied Sciences (other than Engineering)
Occupations in social science, education, government service and religion	28.04	Education Sciences, Social Sciences
Health occupations	24.42	Health Sciences
Occupations in art, culture, recreation and sport	22.95	Law and Humanities
Trades, transport and equipment operators and related occupations	21.36	
Business, finance and administrative occupations	21.3	
Occupations unique to primary industry	17.65	
Occupations unique to processing, manufacturing and utilities	18.3	
Sales and service occupations	15.09	

(Statistics Canada, 2012a)

Table 5.3

Distribution of majors within each university (2008-2009) and within the body of striking students, ordered by the expected wage of the major

hrly wage (C\$)	Accompanying Majors	% of general student body w/in each major				% of striking students within each major				
		McG	Con	UdeM	UQAM	McG	Con	UdeM	UQAM1 ⁷	UQAM2
33.02	Administration	9.58	21.91	3.33	20.67	0.00	0.00	5.47	0.00	34.23
31.21	Pure Sciences	10.15	5.56	8.33	6.42	0.00	0.00	14.70	14.41	9.48
31.21	Engineering	11.49	11.70	0.27	0.30	0.00	24.09	1.44	0.00	0.00
31.21	Applied Sciences (other than Engineering)	5.07	6.33	5.82	6.16	0.00	2.58	6.26	1.82	1.20
28.04	Education Sciences	7.55	6.27	11.48	19.38	20.82	1.72	10.49	21.62	14.22
28.04	Social Sciences	9.08	17.58	15.94	18.05	11.00	33.56	12.57	9.37	6.16
24.42	Health Sciences	16.58	N/A	24.10	N/A	6.25	N/A	15.93	N/A	N/A
22.95	Law and Humanities	19.75	29.66	24.89	28.70	61.94	38.04	30.33	52.78	34.72

(Statistics Canada, 2012a; CREPUQ, 2009)

Table 5.4

Representation of majors within the strike, ordered by expected wage

Jan 2012 average hourly wage (C\$)	McGill	Concordia	UdeM	UQAM1	UQAM2
33.02	0.00	0.00	1.64	0.00	1.66
31.21	0.00	0.00	1.76	2.24	1.48
31.21	0.00	2.06	5.33	0.00	0.00
31.21	0.00	0.41	1.08	0.30	0.19
28.04	2.76	0.27	0.91	1.12	0.73
28.04	1.21	1.91	0.79	0.52	0.34
24.42	0.38	N/A	0.66	N/A	N/A
22.95	3.14	1.28	1.22	1.84	1.21

Note: If $x = 1$, major_a was perfectly represented within the striking student population of university_r, if $x > 1$, major_a was overrepresented, and if $x < 1$, major_a was underrepresented.

⁷ UQAM1 omits the Association étudiante de l'École des Sciences de la gestion [Student association of the School of Management Sciences] while UQAM2 includes the association. This is because that association was very large (13,000), was the only association with students in administration, and only went on strike for one day (in contrast with the 124.84 days UQAM strikers averaged).

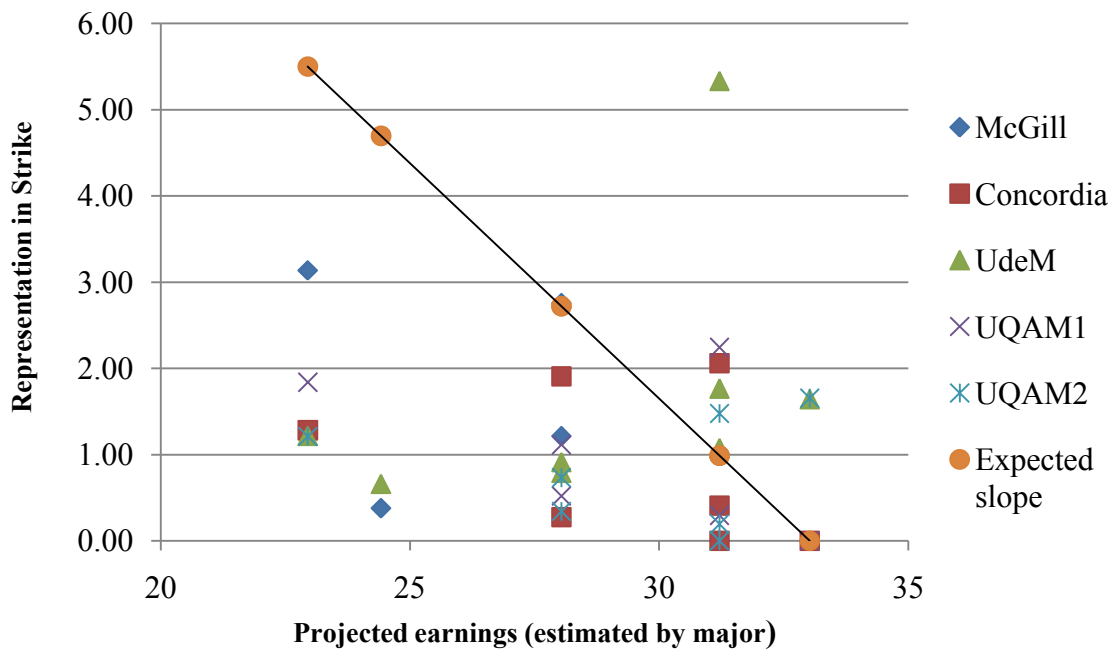


Figure 5.1
Graph of Representation of majors within the strike by projected earnings.
 Notes: Data does *not* align with expected slope. No relationship is observed between a students' projected earnings and their propensity to participate in the strike.

Differential tuition and the distribution of In-Province, Out-of-Province, and International students

While all universities in Québec are public and charge the same base tuition across universities, tuition is set on a differential basis according to residency status (in-province, out-of-province, and international). In determining how this might influence the financial impact of the tuition increase, I turn to relative deprivation theory. As defined by Smith et. al. (2012), “Relative deprivation (RD) is the judgment that one is worse off compared to some standard accompanied by feelings of anger and resentment” (p. 1). In this case, the standard is set by what tuition the student had been accustomed to before the proposed tuition hike. Perhaps if the change in tuition was much greater in *relative terms* (as determined by tuition before the hike) for certain students, and not as much for other students, the decision to participate in activism might be affected. Table 5.5 lays out the three tuition brackets for university students in Québec. As can be readily seen, the percent change was three times greater for in-province than for out of province students, and seven-and-a-half times greater than for international students.

Table 5.5

Proposed Tuition Increase: Change and Percent Change for In-Province, Out-of-Province, and International Students

	2011-2012 tuition	2012-2013 proposed tuition	change	% change
In-Province	C\$2,168	C\$2,493	C\$325	15
Out-of-Province	C\$5,858	C\$6,155	C\$297	5
International	C\$14,562	C\$14,891	C\$329	2

(“Tuition Increases 2012-2013,” n.d.)

Table 5.6 displays the percent enrollment of international students at each university (unfortunately, data was not available for in-province or out-of-province enrollment estimates). Given that international students experienced the smallest percentage increase from the tuition hike, we might expect those students to have been less bothered by the proposed tuition hike and therefore less likely to participate. And indeed, as it lays out, a relationship can be observed between the universities with the highest percentage of international students (McGill and Concordia) and the lowest levels of activism (again, McGill and Concordia). This evidence is the strongest yet correlation between relative financial effect and activism levels. However, let’s consider for a moment what this would mean. Was it really the extra 10 percent of non-international students (and thus, those who were more proportionately affected by the tuition change) that pushed UdeM and UQAM to a seven month strike, while Concordia and McGill lagged behind? Even without international students, McGill and Concordia still had respectively 30,500 and 37,600 students who could have built a movement within their own community. So it appears that the distribution of international students holds only weak ability to fully explain the differences in activism across Anglophone and Francophone universities.

Table 5.6

Percent International Students by University

AR	University	% International Students
0.5	McGill	18.7
2.5	Concordia	12.9
6	UdeM	7.2
6	UQAM	7.4

Relative attunement with U.S., Canadian tuition

Another frame to consider in using the relative deprivation model is attunement with other universities. In general, Anglophones tended to contextualize the tuition increase within the reality of North American university tuition. Within this frame, Québec’s tuition was relatively very low, especially compared to tuition in the United States whose average public and private university tuition was, respectively, 6.3 and 12.8 times more expensive than Québec’s (U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, 2012). Even with the increase, Québec’s tuition would have remained among the lowest, a point that appeared to be salient for many Anglophone students. As one McGill student said, “Honestly, as someone who has come from the U.S... I’ve never thought of this as being like an expensive thing for me, just

compared to what everyone else I know is paying. Just in comparison this is very cheap for me... so I find it interesting that people are getting so angry” (Wattiaux, A., personal communication, December 7, 2012). Francophones, on the other hand, were more attuned to Europe and/or were more likely to reject the North American comparison. One UdeM student dismissed the “impossibility” of free education, arguing that certain European countries had achieved it; similarly, one UQAM student referred in a blog post to Article 13 of the International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights, pointing out that Canada, alongside 160 countries, agreed that “Higher education shall be made equally accessible to all, on the basis of capacity, by every appropriate means, and in particular by the progressive introduction of free education” (Tetreault, A, personal communication, December 9, 2012; as quoted in Crépeault, 2012). Even outsiders picked up on this phenomenon; one op-ed in the *National Post* argued that “anglos are culturally tuned in to the rest of the country; they are far more realistic than their bubble-dwelling franco peers about the cost of tuition elsewhere” (Kay, 2012).

The differences in how Anglophones and Francophones contextualized the tuition increase may be due to at least two factors. First, the language difference may account for different information streams. The rest of North America speaks English, therefore information channels established by media outlets and social networking websites flow more easily between North America and Québec Anglophones than between North American and Québec



Figure 5.2
T-shirt: “McGill:
Harvard of Canada”
 (“Teeguise,” n.d.)

Francophones. Also, McGill is very attuned to American universities due to international prestige levels. McGill has traditionally ranked high amongst the world’s top universities, alongside American schools such as Stanford, Johns Hopkins, and Cornell. There are even t-shirts printed with the slogan, “McGill: Harvard of Canada.” When contrasting McGill’s tuition with that of Harvard’s (which was \$36,305 for the 2011-2012 academic year), the proposed tuition increase could be readily trivialized (“Harvard at a glance,” n.d.).

To conclude, we have demonstrated that indeed, the financial impact of the proposed tuition increase was different between the Anglophone and Francophone universities. However, when present, the correlations tended to be weak. It is also important to remember that despite the relative financial differences between the universities, *all* students faced an increase of only about C\$300 per year (Table 5.5). Even for a student who absorbed four years of the tuition hike in loans, they could pay the entire amount of the increase back in two weeks of work with a C\$15/hour wage (though as we observed earlier, most college grads would be earning more than that and thus would be able to pay back the loan even faster). As one UdeM student put it, “The hike will not touch me, I can afford to pay. But I study education and I think of all my future students, who will not have the means to pursue their studies at the university” (Jasmine Raymond-Drainville, 2012). Such stories were not uncommon, and indicate that there were other, non-financially-motivated ways in which students understood the proposed tuition increase.

Chapter 6 Perceived implications of the tuition increase

The perceived implications of the tuition hike are somewhat more elusive than the financial implications. “Perceptions” are not so easily put into numbers and published by newspapers or research organizations. However, this does not diminish the influence that they may have on outcomes of activism nor does it preclude any kind of objective measurement. In this section I elaborate on what the perceived implications of the tuition hike were, how these perceptions were distributed across universities, what mechanisms influenced the creation of the perceptions, and how they affected decisions to participate in the movement.⁸ Results from the Facebook content-analysis, backed by qualitative information from interviews and public statements/speeches/writings by student spokespeople and leaders were used to draw inferences and to provide at least partial answers to these queries.

As established in Chapter 4, the strategic cognitive path that is used to make decisions (here, to make the decision of whether or not to participate in activism) is mediated by subjective mechanisms. For purposes of clarity, I will analyze these components somewhat out of their causal order, beginning first by analyzing the distribution of perceptions and the impact this distribution would have on the strategic decision to participate, and second I discuss the mechanisms by which these perceptions were interpreted.

Pro-Hike, Anti-Hike

By March of 2012, the controversy over the tuition hike had become a nearly inescapable subject for university students in Montréal. Some students had long been informed of the impending tuition increase, having known it was a part of Charest’s 2007 campaign platform or having heard the 2010 interview with Education Minister Michelle Courchesne (Chouinard, 2010). But even those students who had been unaware of the increase though the start of 2012 were very much *made* aware of the existence of the dispute, whether by riot cops on campus, daily demonstrations under their dorm window, class disruptions by activists, propaganda posters from both sides, or heavy media coverage. As one McGill student put it, “[The movement] was something that was kind of like *unavoidable*” (A. Wattiaux, personal communication, December 7, 2012).

Alongside simple awareness of the tuition hike came *interpretations* and *perspectives* regarding the hike’s implications. And as the issue was a politically contentious one, support (the hike is good) or opposition (the hike is bad) were frequently adopted as broad perspectives. Of course, not all students fit definitively into either perspective, but for most of these students, their un-affiliation was due to ambivalence of conscious indifference, not lack of awareness.

Figures 6.1 and 6.2 display the distribution of pro-hike and anti-hike sentiments as observed on the Facebook pages of four student organizations (each organization was determined to be loosely representative of a university, for this rationale please see Chapter 3). Two patterns can be readily seen: (1) a greater proportion of students at Anglophone universities expressed a

⁸It is worthwhile to clarify that I do not believe perceptions to be static. However, my analysis does rely on the assumption of a certain degree of continuity of interpretation, as my quantitative data is drawn on a time period of only two weeks and does not attempt to trace changes in perceptions.

pro-hike perspective than students at Francophone universities and (2) even among Anglophones, pro-hike comments/likes/shares were generally in the minority.⁹

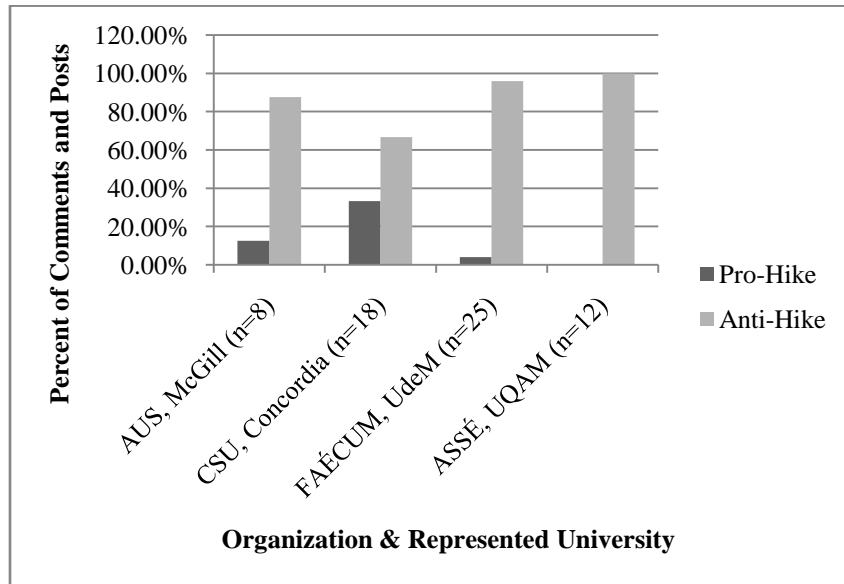


Figure 6.1
Pro-hike, anti-hike comments and posts

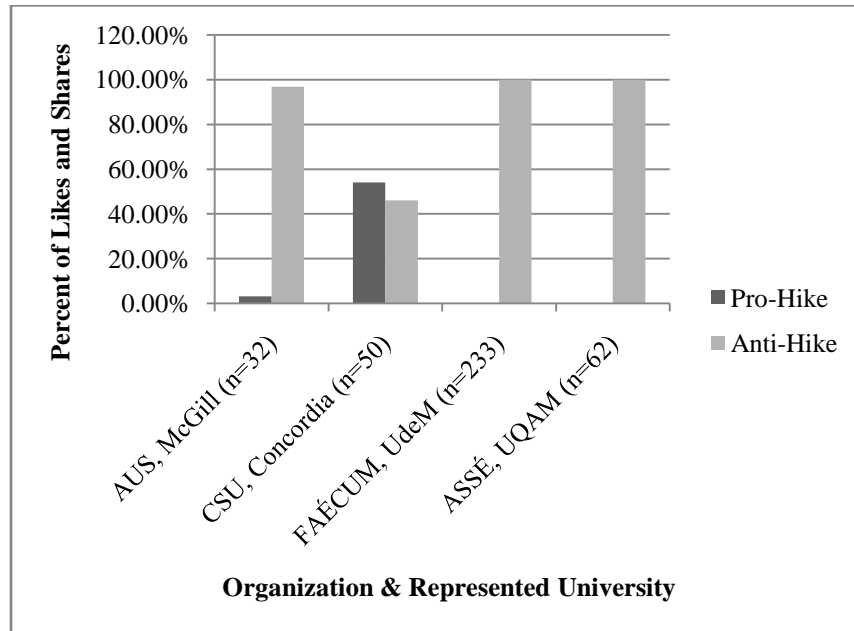


Figure 6.2
Pro-hike, anti-hike likes and shares

⁹ The concentration of “likes” and “shares” on the Concordia page for pro-hike sentiments appears to indicate that many, perhaps a majority of, Concordia students were pro-hike—however, I believe this to be somewhat of a distortion. Most of the pro-hike comments were made on one thread relating to the immediate results of the CSU strike vote. Hike supporters were unhappy with the outcome (in favor of a one-week strike) had very immediate reason to be vocal (namely, to convince other students to vote against the renewal of the strike mandate).

Let's consider first the higher presence of pro-hike sentiments expressed by Anglophones. As our mission is to explain differences in activism, we may ask what effect these perspectives might have had on the strategic decision to participate in the movement. Regarding the pro-hike perspective, the clear implication of this perspective is that it would lead the actor to decide to stay out of the movement. To elaborate, the three most commonly voiced arguments made by pro-hike students were; (1) the cost of services increase over time, and the proposed C\$3,793 tuition would match the original tuition set in 1968 when adjusted for inflation, thus it was a sensible adjustment, (2) universities were underfunded, and the government needed the tuition money to properly finance them, and (3) it makes more sense to raise tuition to fund universities (charge the people who are actually getting the education) than to raise taxes (asking for all Québécois to pay for the education of only some people). For these students who believed that a cancellation of the tuition hike was actually a bad thing it made very little sense for them to join in the movement. The relatively higher presence of Anglophone students who perceived the tuition hike to be a good thing provides a partial answer to variations in activism levels.

Now, if a majority of Anglophone students were pro-hike, this would have provided us with an easy answer for their relatively low levels of activism. However, this was not the case. As observed in the Facebook-content analysis, pro-hike sentiments were less frequently expressed than anti-hike sentiments even on Anglophone pages.¹⁰ The dominance of anti-hike interpretations at Anglophone universities is further evidenced by the motions passed, usually with overwhelming majorities, within Anglophone student associations that verbally condemned the tuition increase. Most notably, both the Students Society of McGill (SSMU, of which all undergraduate McGill students are a member) and the Concordia Student Union (CSU, also representative of all undergraduate students) both passed mandates in 2011 voicing opposition to the tuition increase (Student Strike FAQ, 2012; Arsem-O'Malley, 2011).

This seems to further deepen our puzzle. Not only did Anglophone and Francophone universities share equal Political Opportunity Structures, but they also both housed widespread opposition to the tuition hike. Keeping in mind that this analysis is concerned with the strategic considerations that are involved in deciding whether or not to participate, it is logical that an anti-hike perspective may not have directly translated into activism. This is because participation is filled with associated costs (time, energy, possibility of police violence, etc.) and even if a student does not like the tuition hike, he or she simply may not consider it "worth it" to fight back via activism. Thus while pro-hike translates to non-participation, anti-hike does not necessarily translate to participation.

But significantly, differences in the perceived implications of the tuition hike do *not* end at pro-hike/anti-hike opinions. Results from the Facebook content-analysis, backed by qualitative data, confirm the presence of three "sub-perspectives" regarding the implications of the tuition hike *within* the anti-hike perspective. Each of these perspectives contained different expected-values for participation within the movement, thus influencing the strategic cost/benefit calculation. The three sub-perspectives expressed were the perception of the tuition hike as (1) a personal financial burden, (2) negatively impacting educational accessibility, and (3) a symptom and exacerbation of larger societal problems. These perspectives are not distinct (in fact, it would

¹⁰ For a further explanation of the relatively high presence of pro-hike sentiments on the CSU Facebook page, please see the previous footnote.

be logical for all students to consider the tuition hike an unpleasant financial burden), however, the importance lies in what perspectives were emphasized. The following section elaborates on each of these perspectives and discusses the implications on movement activism.

Anti-Hike Sub-Perspectives

Figures 6.3, 6.4, and 6.5 visually represent the three observed sub-perspectives. Each poster was created in October or November of 2011 in preparation for a one day strike on November 10th, which was the last large-scale action to be taken before students played their last card, the general unlimited strike. Each poster is anti-hike, and each encourages students to participate in the movement. Figure 6.3 emphasizes the personal financial burden that the proposed tuition hike would cause if it were enacted. Figure 6.4 connects the issue of educational accessibility with the tuition hikes and the student movement, implying that to be against the hike is to be for accessibility. Finally, Figure 6.5 greatly broadens the scope of the issue and into deeper problems with how provincial finances are run. And, perhaps most significantly, the Francophone poster introduces class-based rhetoric, setting themselves distinctly apart from “the rich.”

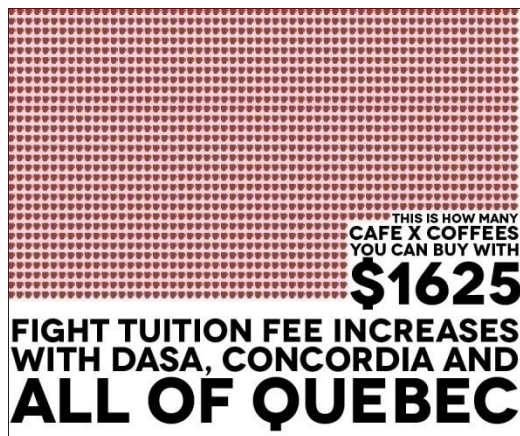


Figure 6.3
 Poster: Tuition hike is financially undesirable
 (“November 10 — Concordia Against,” 2011)

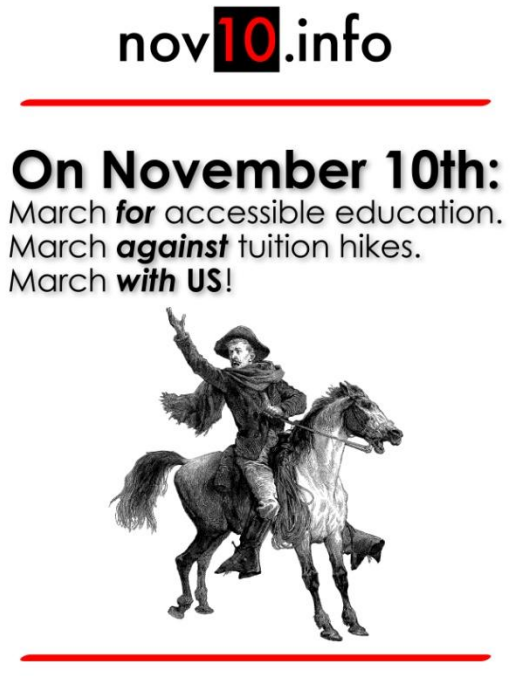


Figure 6.4
 Poster: Tuition hike will negatively affect educational accessibility
 (“Demonstration on November 10th,” 2011)



Figure 6.5
 Poster: Tuition hike is a symptom of a larger societal problem
 Note: [“Free education: Utopian?
 The current fiscal crisis is due to the *choice* of governments last year: tax cuts for the richest, elimination of the tax on capital safe, etc. *Alternatives* to finance education exist. For example, in 2007, the liberal government consented to a \$950 million reduction in taxes, for the benefit of the rich. In contrast, to make education free at all levels would cost approximately \$700 million. It is time to remember our *priorities*.”]
 (“La gratuitéscolaire,” 2011)

Figures 6.6 and 6.7 display the relative emphasis of each perspective on the Facebook pages of four organizations representative of each of the universities in our study. In order to understand the significance of these expressions on activism levels, it is necessary to consider what they represent and in what way they may have altered a cost/benefit calculation. As discussed earlier, this distribution is not necessarily representative of the perspectives held by each individual, but rather the perspectives that were most outwardly emphasized. However, we may consider these perspectives as representative of the distribution of cognitively central perspectives of individuals at each university.

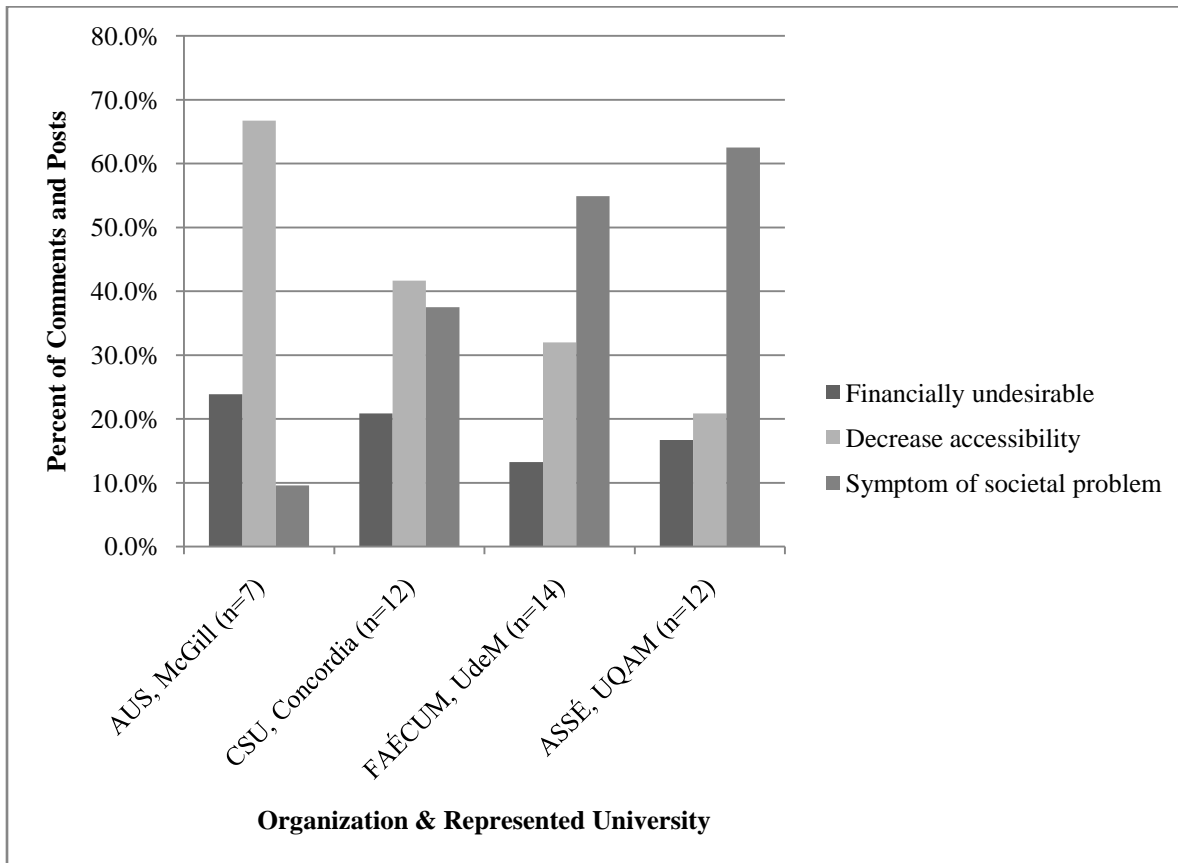


Figure 6.6
Expressions of the implications of the tuition hike, posts and comments.

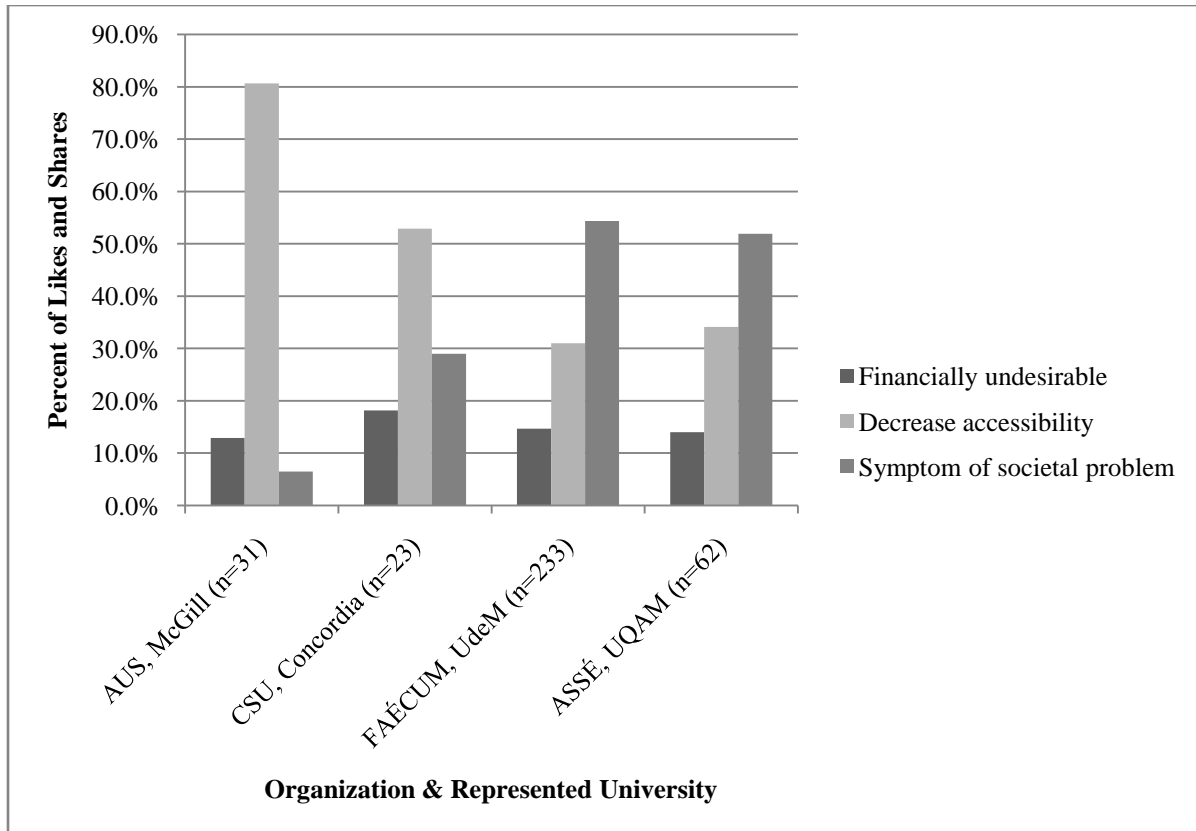


Figure 6.7
Expressions of the implications of the tuition hike, likes and shares.

Distribution of cognitively central perspectives

Cognitive centrality has been widely used in psychological literature regarding behavioral regulation, as well as within other fields (see Scott et. al, 1980, p. 13). The common definition is that “centrality refers to the importance of one element in relation to others in the context” (Scott et. al., 1980, p. 14). I evaluated expressions of each perspective on Facebook as evidence of the *centrality* of that perspective. While the student may have held other perspectives (e.g. the tuition hike is financially undesirable) those other arguments were not *central* in that they were not considered the most important in the context of the tuition hike controversy. The importance for our purposes here is that it is this cognitively central perspective that is most influential to the strategic cost/benefit calculation.

Keeping this in mind, we turn to an analysis of the patterns of distribution of these cognitively central perspectives. First, the perspective that the tuition hike is financially undesirable is one of the least emphasized perspectives, suggesting that we were correct to look beyond purely economic justifications for participation. Second, we see that Anglophone universities have an “arc” pattern, where accessibility is most emphasized. Third, the Francophone universities see fewest comments and likes about financial undesirability, the second least about accessibility, and the most about symptom of societal problem. Finally, the perspective that the tuition hike was a symptom of a societal problem is consistently over 50% of the comments and likes at Francophone universities, while it never reaches above 40% at

Anglophone universities. These patterns take on decisive significance when as we consider the specific expected-value (i.e. benefit) associated with each perspective. None of the perspectives decreased the cost of participation in any way.

Tuition hike as financially undesirable

One anti-hike perspective was the interpretation that the tuition hike was financially undesirable on a personal level. Figure 6.3 is a good representation of such an argument; the tuition hike is bad because it means less money with which one could purchase coffee. Another example of this perspective, published by the Graduate Student Association of McGill, argued that “With the planned tuition increase, by 2015 it will take almost 9 [weeks of full time work at minimum wage to earn the cost of tuition]” (“Québec tuition,” 2012). What we can infer from these arguments that the expected-value of participation is financial—a successful fight against the tuition increase would mean the benefit of getting to buy a lot more coffee or keeping the extra four weeks of work earnings (the nine weeks they cite includes current tuition plus the hike).

If taken alone, this perspective offers a rational reason for students to participate in the movement. However, the expected-value (namely, keeping the money that the tuition hike would have absorbed) was easily offset in comparison to many of the costs associated with participation. First, on a purely financial level, activism could be costly. In March, 150 students were arrested and fined C\$494 for obstructing a roadway, and in May, Bill 78 imposed fines between C\$1,000 and C\$5,000 on individuals (\$7,000 and \$35,000 on leaders) who prevented someone from entering an educational institution (Santerre, 2012; “Emergency Québec legislation,” 2012). Second, other non-financial costs such as police violence, expended time, tear gas, etc. were often an associated cost of movement participation. Thus the expected-value of participation derived from the perspective that the tuition hike was financially undesirable was somewhat weak when considered alongside the associated cost of movement participation.

Tuition hike as negatively impacting educational accessibility

The second perspective observed regarding the implications the tuition increase was the belief that educational accessibility would decrease as a result of the hike. Various statistics and numbers were cited, the most frequent was an estimate published by the Institut de recherches socio-économiques (IRIS), which declared that the tuition increase “would deny 30,000 students access to university studies” (Martin & Tremblay-Pepin, 2011, p. 15). However, these figures were perpetually disputed, most vocally by the government which argued that the accompanying financial aid increase would offset any potential financial barriers to university attendance but also by students (Bruemmer & Muise, 2012; videotpb, 2011).

Interestingly, throughout the research process, I never encountered a student who themselves would not be able to afford to attend university because of the tuition hike. While I do not mean this to call into question the research that determined that the hike would negatively affect accessibility, what this does point out is that the argument that the tuition hike would have negatively affected accessibility was most frequently expressed on purely altruistic terms. Given these two points, it appears that the expected-value of this argument was fairly weak. First, confusion over the statistical validity of the argument made the expected-value somewhat

unclear; second, the commonly altruistic nature of the argument meant that the expected-value was generally distant and about “principles” rather than self-interest.

Tuition hike as a symptom of a larger societal problem

The third anti-hike perspective observed is somewhat distinct from the other two perspectives in that the tuition hike was not the central problem—instead, the tuition hike was a *symptom* of a larger societal problem. An informational document published by FAÉCUM (UdeM) expressed discontent with the chronic failures of government funding schemes and argued that “a detailed analysis of ‘the liberal promise’ is very disappointing—even frustrating” (“Autres effets d'une hausse,” ca. 2012). And one UQAM student expressed deep concern over the future of Québec and world politics; saying “now that capitalism is in crisis...I really feel like we’re going backwards...it’s kind of scary and dangerous. And people have less and less power” (L. Guénette, personal communication, December 4, 2012). This feeling of systemic crisis was connected directly with the tuition increase. In the words of Gabriel Nadeau-Dubois, a spokesperson for the primarily Francophone organization CLASSE; “The struggle against rising tuition fees, the struggle of the Occupy movement around the world, this struggle must be referred to by its name. This is a class struggle: a struggle between a possessing minority and a majority that owns nothing” (as quoted in Healey, ca. 2012). And one reporter observed that “Québec's movement was built on an alignment against a specific tuition fee, but many mobilizers connected the chants against student debt to deeper critiques of the neoliberal state” (Bell, 2012).

In believing that the tuition increase was both a symptom of a larger societal problem (e.g. a further advancement of the neoliberal/capitalist agenda, driven by incentives to profit) and also an exacerbation of social ills (e.g. the tuition hike would increase economic disparities by preventing lower classes from attending university), a greater expected-value was placed on the outcome of the strike. Winning didn’t just mean they got an extra few dollars in their pocket, or that (other) students (might) be able to attend university. A cancellation of the tuition hike meant a small but important victory in preserving the kind of social ideal—be it socialist, anarchist, social democratic, egalitarian—that they strove for, and a beating-back of what they viewed as an encroaching corruption of neoliberalism and profit-maximization.

Having attached an expected-value to each anti-hike subperspective, we can now infuse meaning into the patterns observed in Figures 6.6 and 6.7. In particular, the differences between universities in the expression of the argument that the tuition hike was the symptom of a structural problem is most salient. It was observed that this argument was consistently the most popular amongst Francophones, but for Anglophones it was always secondary or last. As this perspective lent the highest expected-value to participation, we may suggest that the activism polarization observed between Anglophone and Francophone universities may be attributed in part to the different distribution of perspectives regarding the implications of the tuition hike.

Interpretive frames: considering the mechanisms of perception

While no full answer can be provided in this study, I offer a few reasons as to *why* such a divergence of preferences is present between Anglophone and Francophone universities. As

established in Chapter 4, perceptions about instrumentality are shaped by objective conditions and an interpretive frame. As we have already discussed the similarities and differences in objective conditions, I turn now to an analysis of three relevant variables within the interpretive frame; the media, a history of activism, and political ideology.

Media

The influence of media on public attitudes has long been studied. Denis McQuail (1994), an influential scholar in the field of mass communication studies, wrote that “The entire study of mass communication is based on the premise that the media have significant effects” (p. 327). The questions that remain are *what* those effects are and *through what mechanisms* the influence of the media operates. However, before we consider these questions, we must ask if there was a difference in media frames between Anglophones and Francophones. A number of clues suggest that yes, there was a difference, and that it likely had some kind of effect on interpreting the movement.

First, the language divide suggests that Anglophones and Francophones may read different newspapers—while I established in Chapter 4 that there is indeed a great deal of bilingualism, it might be expected that when reading the news a student would be drawn to outlets published in his or her first language. Second, data collected from the Facebook pages of the four student organizations analyzed earlier suggests that there was indeed a difference in the news sites referenced, and also that Anglophone news sources (especially the Montreal Gazette) had more negative coverage of the movement, while Francophone sources had more positive coverage (see Figures 6.8 and 6.9). Of particular note, the links to *Le Devoir* (which one UQAM student referred to as “the most left-wing newspaper”) frequently expressed the perspective that the tuition hike was a part of a structural problem (L. Guénette, personal communication, December 4, 2012). *Le Devoir* was the most frequently linked news-source on Francophone pages, but wasn’t once present on Anglophone pages.

While the number of total observations is too low (especially for the Anglophone universities) to draw any kind of strong conclusions it does suggest that differences in the media mattered in some way. This observation is backed up by the existence of the popular website named *Translating the printemps érable*. It was founded during the strike by a collective of volunteers with the mission of translating French news articles into English in order “to balance the English media's extremely poor coverage of the student movement” (“Translating the printemps,” ca. 2012).

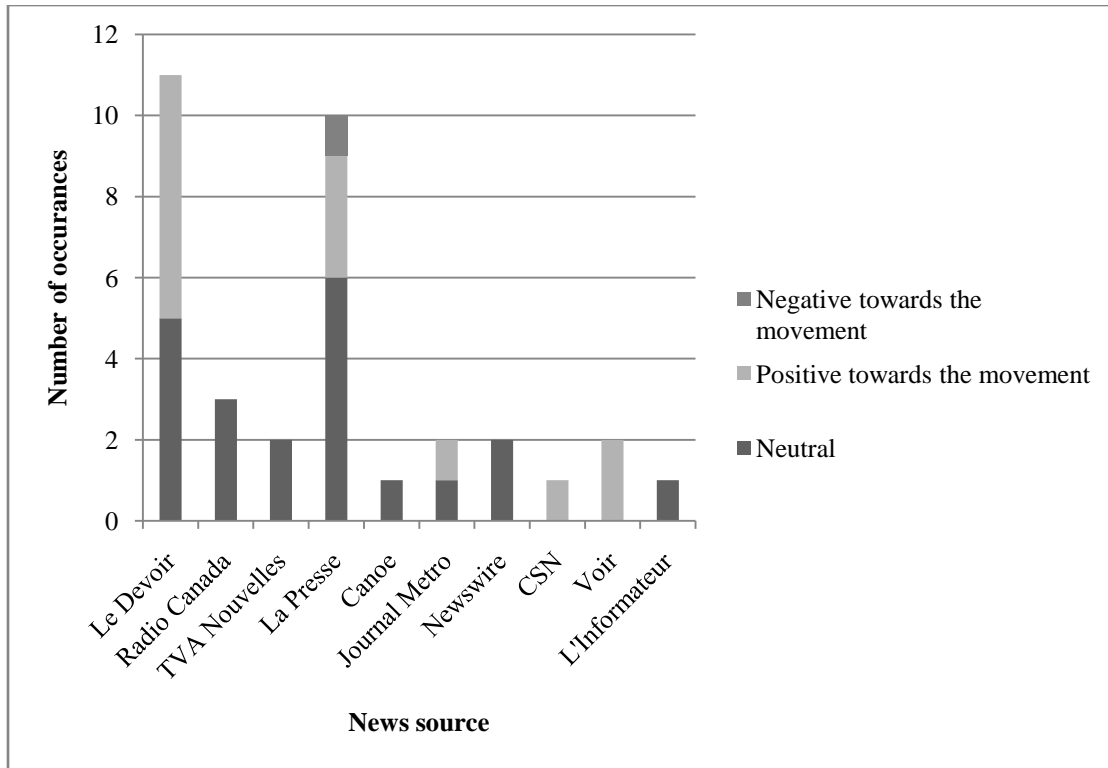


Figure 6.8
 Number of links to each news source on Francophone Facebook pages, sorted by attitude towards the movement.

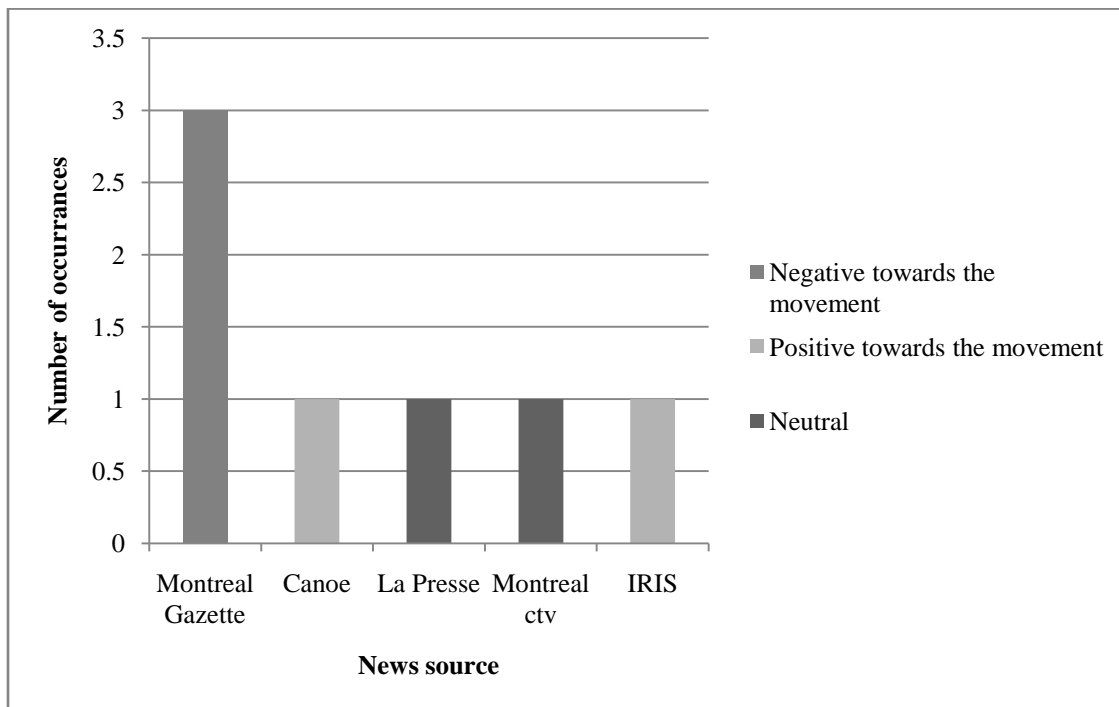


Figure 6.9
 Number of links to each news source on Anglophone Facebook pages, sorted by attitude towards the movement.

So how may we understand the mechanisms of media influence? In a widely cited article, Dietram Scheufele (1999) drew a distinction between individual frames and media frames. Scheufele (1999) cites Kinder and Sanders (1990) to elaborate, writing; “frames serve both as ‘devices embedded in political discourse,’ which is equivalent to the concept of media frames, and as ‘internal structures of the mind’ which is equivalent to individual frames (p. 74)” (p. 106). But though distinct, individual and media frames continually interact to shape and reshape each other; Scheufele (1999) developed what he termed a “process model of framing” which describes this dialectical relationship (p. 114). Inferring from this, we may suggest that the observed differences in the media exposure of Anglophones and Francophones meant that each group experienced a difference “media frame” as well as may have different “individual frames” as a result of the influence of the media. While the exact workings of this are not clear, the media sources on the four Facebook pages as well as the website *Translating the printemps érable* offer evidence that the Anglophone media provided a more negative picture of the movement than did the Francophone media.

History of activism: activist subcultures

In her essay, “Hotbeds of Activism,” Nella Van Dyke (1998) considered the effect of historical campus activism on later activism at 423 U.S. colleges. Ultimately, Van Dyke (1998) concluded that “These findings demonstrate the importance of history in determining the locations of protest” (p. 215). This trend is very clearly visible in the case of Québec’s universities. Québec has now seen eight student strikes, all of them led by Francophone students. Being in the heart of Montréal, both UQAM and UdeM have been exceptionally involved in activism, and information on the FAÉCUM and ASSÉ websites suggest that these universities are both aware and proud of this history (Andrew-Gee, 2012; “Histoire de la Fédération,” n.d.; “Historique,” n.d.). McGill and Concordia, on the other hand, have rarely participating in these strikes, or if they did, it was never in a leading role. Of the two, Concordia has a more active history; in 1996 Concordia students had a notable presence within the protests of the general strike, in 1999 the Concordia Student Union went on strike from November 3rd to 5th (this was not a part of any larger province-wide strike), and in 2005 students joined in the larger strike for 24 hours. At McGill, a few scattered departments have participated in the strikes (mostly in recent years), but they have never voted to go on unlimited general strike (Andrew-Gee, 2012).

So it is clear that activism histories have some kind of effect on later movements, however, the mechanisms through which this process operates are somewhat more opaque. In the aforementioned study, Van Dyke (1998) was unable to test the specific mechanisms, however, she does propose that “a likely factor is the presence of long-standing activist subcultures, that may endure on college campuses over many generations” (p. 207). It is possible that these activist subcultures passed down particular political narratives or knowledge of the persistent struggle between student and government, contributing to the perspective that the tuition hike was not just a one-time event, but yet another symptom of the structure at work. Of particular salience within the Québec case is the remembered history of *success* and previous successful strategies. As noted in Chapter 2, most of the Québec student movements have claimed victory, all with the strike as the central tactic of their repertoire of activism. This knowledge was frequently emphasized by students and organizations and may well have played an important

role in the evaluation of expected-value of participation in the movement (“Histoire de la Fédération,” n.d.; “Historique,” n.d.; “Historique des grèves générales,” n.d.).

Political ideology

As defined by Mayor Zald (1996), ideology is “the set of beliefs that are used to justify or challenge a given socio-political order and are used to interpret the world” (p. 262). In my reading of the events of the Québec student movement, political ideology may very well have been one of the most important mediating frames between the objective circumstances and student perceptions of them. Unfortunately, it is the mechanism for which I have the least concrete data available. However, I can say that from my interviews with students as well as a general osmosis of data from newspapers and Facebook pages, it appears that there was a notable difference in the way in which these two groups “interpreted the world.” Anarchism, socialism, social democracy, or general “radical leftism” seemed to be comfortable titles for some Francophone students (L Guénette, personal communication, December 4, 2012; B. Victor, personal communication, December 10, 2012; A. McKay, personal communication, December 4, 2012). Anglophones, on the other hand, seemed to be further right on the political spectrum, though still considering themselves left-of-center (A. Wattiaux, personal communication, December 7, 2012; M. Page, personal communication, December 4, 2012; J. Zaib, December 8, 2012, personal communication; D. Tarazi, December 7, 2012, personal communication). Evidence for this may be seen in the traditional support Anglophones provide for the Liberal party in Quebec—however, this inference is limited. Anglophone and Francophone student bodies are not necessarily concentric with the Anglophone and Francophone populations in Quebec. Also, the attunement of McGill students to the U.S. discussed in Chapter 5 seems to carry into politics as well; one student related a story of a campus news outlet asking students if they knew anyone who supported Mitt Romney in the U.S. presidential election (A. Wattiaux, personal communication, December 7, 2012). So while potentially significant, the data does not fully allow us to examine the fully implications of the mechanism of ideology on perceptions.

Chapter 7 **Organizational efficacy**

One of the most significant paradigm shifts in social movement theory happened in the 1960s when scholars began to offer a corrective to the long-held belief of social movements as spontaneous and disorganized affairs. Since that time, numerous studies have demonstrated the complex organizational webs, both informal and formal, involved in social movement emergence and endurance. As Goodwin and Jasper (2003) point out, “In order to sustain protest, people need to communicate with one another, strategize, advertise, recruit new protestors, and generally coordinate their activities” (p. 165). All of these tasks are greatly facilitated by efficacious organizations. Within the Quebec student movement, organizations held great importance, most obviously because they regulated the primary mechanism of activism—the strike. While Francophone student organizations were well-run and highly respected, organizations at Anglophone universities experienced significant problems of inefficacy and perceived illegitimacy—these differences meant that that cost of participation was higher and the expected success of the movement was lower for Anglophone students than for Francophone students.

Review of organizational structures within Québec universities

The structure of the Québec university student organizations is somewhat complicated for the outsider, so it is useful to provide a brief overview before diving into analysis. Figure 7.1 outlines the hierarchy of the student organizations most relevant to the Québec student movement. While universities house a number of other kinds of student organizations (fraternities/sororities, social advocacy clubs, etc.) Figure 7.1 only depicts those that could take strike votes or, in the case of the Student Union Federations, umbrella organizations for those that could take strike votes.

At the lowest level of the structure are the Departments (known in Québec as “Faculties,” notably separate from the U.S. definition of “faculty”), such as the Association étudiante de cycle supérieur en science politique [Association of political science graduate students] at UQAM. Next are the faculty associations, such as the Fédération des associations étudiantes du campus de l'Université de Montréal [Federation of student associations at the University of Montréal] (FAÉCUM). Student unions may encompass the entire undergraduate or graduate schools of the university; an example would be the Concordia Student Union (CSU). I here refer to these three lower levels of organizations as “student associations.” It must be noted that membership to each of these “kinds” of organizations is variable; a McGill student who has not declared their major yet may not belong to a faculty organization, and a student at UQAM may not have a faculty association that represents them. However, all students are members of a Student Union Federation. The three Union Federations that represent university students are the Table de concertation étudiante du Québec [Québec Student Roundtable] (TaCEQ), Fédération étudiante universitaire du Québec [Student federation of Québec] (FEUQ), and the Association pour une solidarité syndicale étudiante [Association for student union solidarity] (ASSÉ). To make the entire thing more complicated, in 2010 the student union federation ASSÉ created a separation coalition—the Coalition large de l'Association pour une solidarité syndicale étudiante

(CLASSE)—which was designed specifically to be a unit of organization against the proposed 2012 tuition hike.

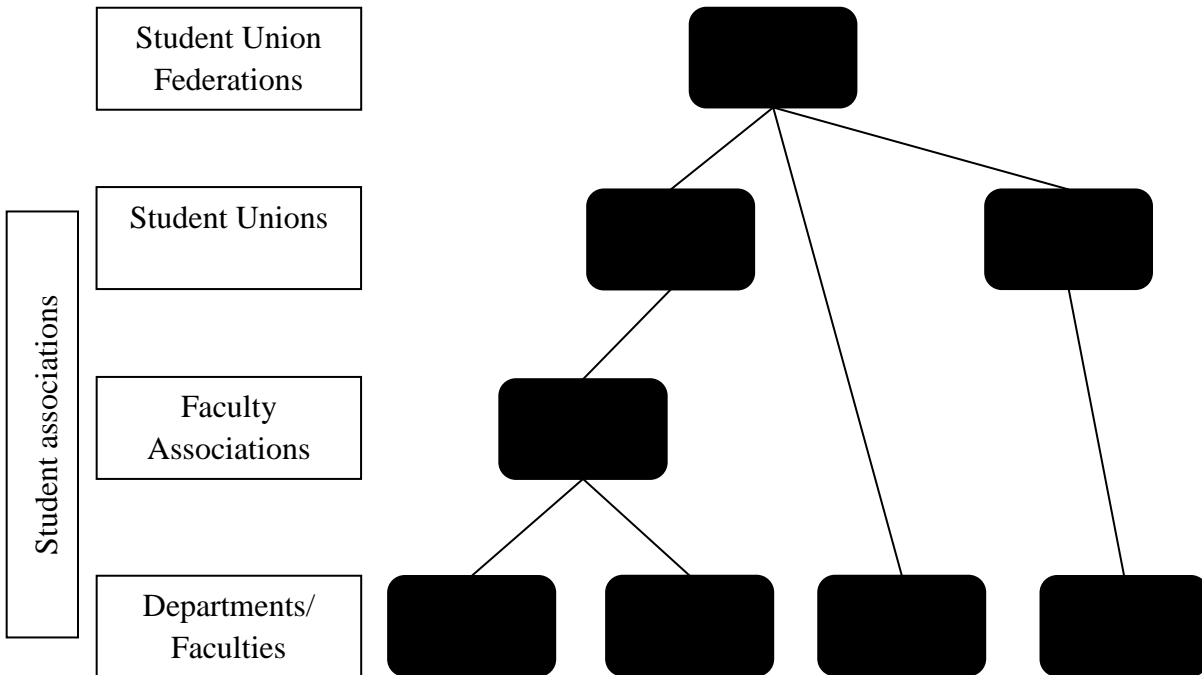


Figure 7.1
Structure of Québec student organizations

Departments/Faculties, Faculty Associations, and Student Unions have the (non-legal) ability to call a strike through a vote by its members. Strike votes can be scheduled by each association’s executive council. The logistics of the vote can vary, but for our four schools strike votes were placed on the agenda of the association’s General Assembly (GA), and could only be taken if quorum was reached (which is judged by the rules of each individual association). The percent of students required (simple majority, two-thirds, etc.) needed to approve of the strike proposal also varied according to the established rules of the association. A strike vote within a faculty is only “binding”¹¹ to that faculty, but a strike vote within a faculty association or a student union is “binding” to all the faculties beneath it. A strike vote higher up on the organizational hierarchy supercedes any faculty votes—even if a faculty votes to stop striking, if their union is still on strike, they are still technically on strike. As striking was the primary tactic of the student movement, these associations served an incredibly important role in coordination and mobilization. As Nadeau-Dubois, CLASSE spokesperson, (2012b) said, “each step of the struggle was planned, decided, and executed by the student[s], in the student association.”

In addition to these structures, in 2010 the student union federation ASSÉ created a separate organization— the Coalition large de l’Association pour une solidarité syndicale étudiante

¹¹ Used in a non-legal sense.

(CLASSE). This coalition was designed specifically to be a mobilizing force against the 2012 tuition hike. Student associations were encouraged to join CLASSE if they agreed to the following criteria:

1. Have adopted the idea that “Education should be free, and we oppose any tuition hike”
2. Agree that the General Assembly is the supreme decision-making body of the Student Association
3. Have voted to join the CLASSE general assembly or referendum
4. Commit to make a financial contribution to the CLASSE (it is suggested to give about \$ 1 per member)
5. Have a mandate to hold a general meeting consultation on general strike or have already voted in favor of a general strike (Bédard-Wien and Thériault, 2012; “Devenirmembre,” 2012)

General Assembly efficacy and organizational legitimacy

General Assemblies (GAs) acted as the main forum for political discussions regarding events (such as the tuition hike) and also as the location for collective decision-making (such as decisions to strike). As such, they played an incredibly important role within the Québec movement. The basic structure of the GA is the same across all student associations and universities. As was mentioned before, strike votes could only be passed if the GA had reached quorum and if a certain percentage of students voted in favor of the strike. The same principles apply to non-strike decisions (though the exact numbers for quorum and minimum threshold of support may vary depending on the kind of decision being considered) such as consideration of a motion to join the student union federation ASSÉ, a motion regarding a university’s sustainability policy, a motion to create a “Solidarity Fund,” etc.

But despite structural similarities, significant differences in organizational practices can be observed across different universities, and a notable cleavage in GA efficiency can be discerned between Anglophone and Francophone universities. Perhaps the most illustrative evidence of organizational differences can be seen in student opinions towards their organization. Figures 7.2 and 7.3 display the observed instances of comments/posts/likes/shares that voiced either positive or negative opinions towards the functioning of student associations within the context of the movement and strike votes.

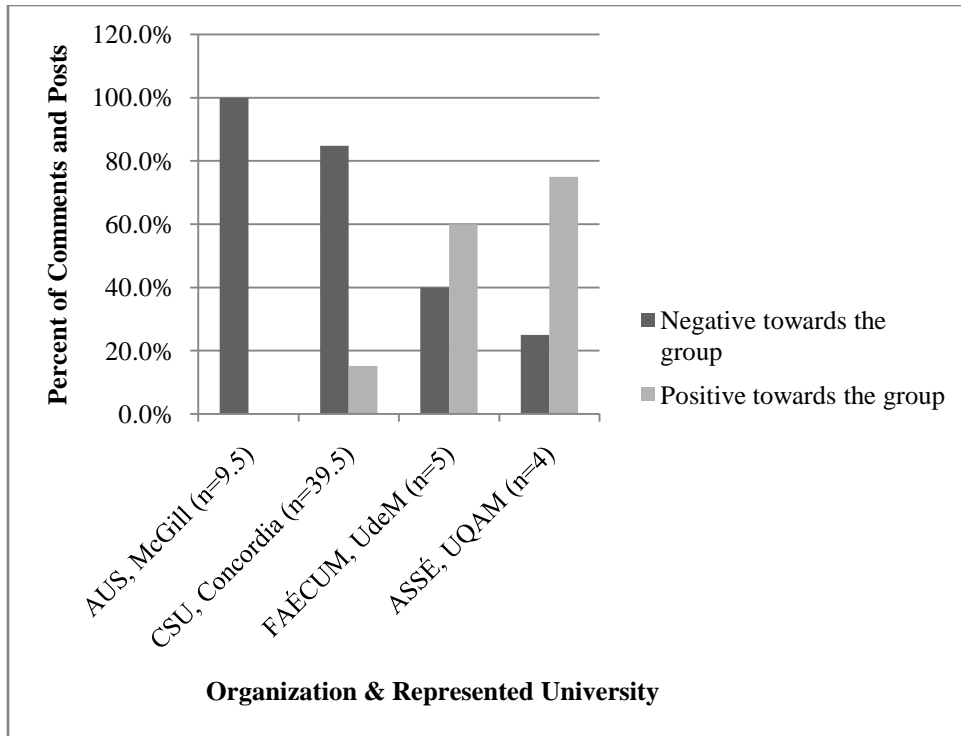


Figure 7.2
Negative/positive comments and posts about the student association

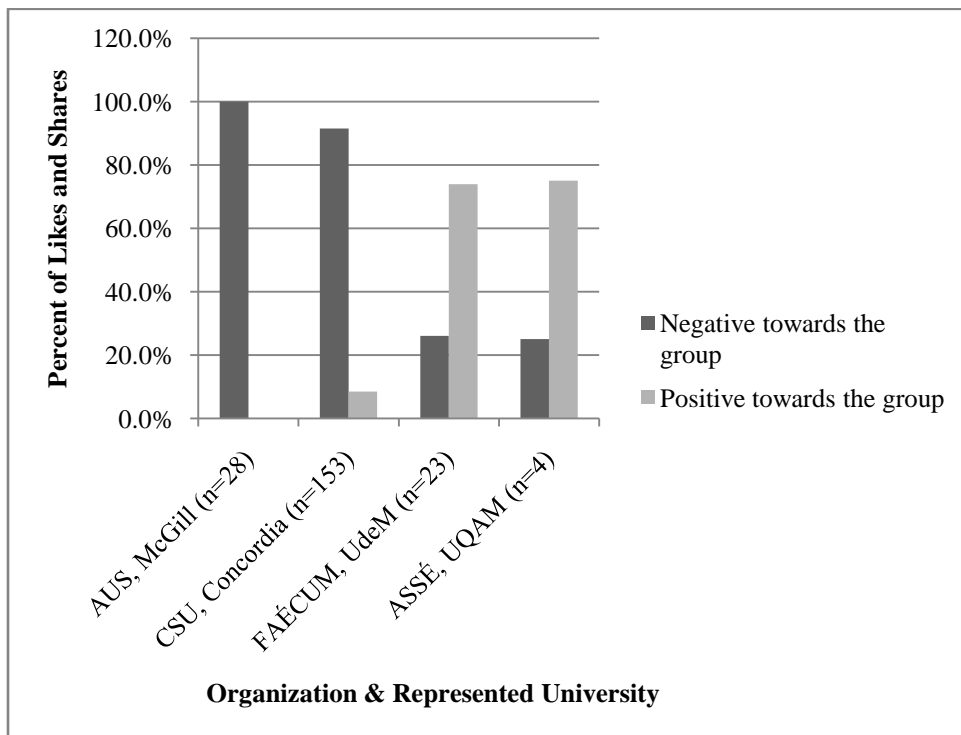


Figure 7.3
Negative/positive likes and shares about the student association

The difference between Anglophone and Francophone opinion is striking. Anglophone students overwhelmingly expressed negative opinions towards their student organizations, while Francophones generally were happy with their organizations. The primary reason behind the ire of Anglophones came from extremely disorganized strike-vote GAs (i.e. GAs at which a vote for the organization to go on strike was on the agenda). At one McGill strike-vote GA for a student association of 7,500 students, it was recalled that “the line to enter the Shatner building [the location of the GA] stretched across campus for over an hour – resulting in a [sic] hours-long scramble for additional space” (Kesner & Venton-Rublee, 2012). Similarly, Concordia GAs faced organizational fiascos; one student wrote to CSU “I just thought you should know that your meeting was so disorganized and long that I had to leave without being able to vote” (Nicole Charbonneau, 2012). Other Concordia students were not so polite, and the disorder of some organizations caused emotions to run high, as evidenced by the shrill student who wrote “CSU YOUR TACTICS ARE WRONG! YOU NEED TO FIX THIS SITUATION!” (Tina Cook, 2012).

This inefficacy of Anglophone student associations resulted not only in student anger and disappointment, but also in the more serious problem of illegitimacy. Many students criticized the democratic representativeness of their organizations and thus called into question decisions made at GAs. A Concordia student wrote on CSU Facebook page that “After reading so many comments on this page, as well as speaking to some fellow students, what the CSU has done here is WRONG and UNDEMOCRATIC” (Audrey Brown, 2012). McGill faced similar problems, and in an interview with *The McGill Tribune*, Colleen Alkalay-Houlihan stated frankly that “I think a lot of people [at McGill] don’t feel the GAs really do represent them” (as quoted in Friesen & Ronchetti, 2012).

This lack of legitimacy meant that decisions made by GAs, most significantly decisions to strike, were not respected. For example, after a GA the entire McGill Undergraduate Geography Society was technically on strike, but “In reality...only approximately 5 students went on strike and did not attend classes” (Stephanie, personal communication, February 28, 2013). Additionally, the organization “ModPAC” created a Facebook event called, “I’m a McGill student, and I am proud to cross illegal picket lines!” announcing that regardless of the striking status of the student organization, they considered the strike and the picket lines enforcing the strike to be illegitimate, and in fact illegal (“I’m a McGill student,” ca. 2012). Again, we see the same pattern at Concordia. After CSU voted to strike, many comments began to appear on the Facebook page of students announcing their intention to ignore the strike (e.g. “Im [sic] excited to see when someone try’s [sic] to stop me or my classmates from getting into class #comeatmebro”) (Kevin Alexander, 2012).

One of the most significant repercussions this situation had on student activism at Anglophone universities is that it obstructed students who otherwise would have wanted to participate in the strike, but couldn’t because strike votes were so often flouted. This problem is best captured by Concordia student Natalie Bocking:

“I really wish we were organizing hard picket lines for the strike. I wish I could participate in the strike, but I have no choice but to go to class if everyone else does. People talk about their right to go to class, but where were you when we took a collective decision to go on strike? Now, because there are no hard picket lines, only the people

who are willing to lose marks can strike. Either we all go on strike, or none of us. At this point, it's basically none of us" (Natalie Bocking, 2012).

Strikes derive their power from high levels of participation—either voluntary or coerced—and even when small numbers of people ignore the strike it shatters the strength of the action. In the case of a traditional labor strike, this means preventing the complete halt of the production cycle; in this case, class attendance means that students who don't go can be penalized (it is more difficult to penalize an entirely absent class, especially if it means that the labor of imminent graduates may be withheld from the labor market by failing all of them). The prevalence of students who were willing to "break" strikes had two very important implications for the instrumentality of movement participation; first, it meant that costs of going on strike by oneself were extremely high. Second, it dramatically decreased the movement's potential for success, thus decreasing any kind of expected-benefit. Thus, those students at McGill and Concordia who may have been willing to participate given a fully-respected strike were often deterred by the high costs and low benefits of going it alone.

As indicated by the Facebook analysis (Figure 7.2 and Figure 7.3), Francophone students did not face the same organizational problems as Anglophone students. One Francophone student who had attended the AUS GA as an observer from CLASSE noted the differences between the efficacy of Anglophone and Francophone associations, commenting that "[Debates in French institutions] are more structured. We take more time to discuss the motions...[The AUS] result is pretty sad for the movement" (as quoted in Friesen & Ronchetti, 2012). Stories of long lines, questionable voting strategies, capacity issues that were so visible at McGill and Concordia were absent at UdeM and UQAM. The organizations themselves (or rather, the executive committee running them) were often dedicated and responsive to student needs. One student association at UQAM, the Association des étudiantes et étudiants de la Faculté des sciences de l'éducation [Association of Students of the Faculty of Education] (ADEESE), put out two polls on their Facebook page (see Figures 7.4 and 7.5) after having tried a new kind of organization. This highlights a few things, (1) the adjustments that ADEESE made in order to have a better-run GA, (2) the effort ADEESE made to gauge the satisfaction of their represented students, and (3) the positive response these endeavors were met with. The example of ADEESE is illustrative of the culture within many of the Francophone student associations.



Figure 7.4

ADEESE Facebook Poll 1

Note: [Do you think the student barcode-reader cards improved waiting times for registration? Yes, +52, Non [0], No notable difference, +2] (ADEESE, 2012).



Figure 7.5

ADEESE Facebook Poll 2

Note: [Do you think the use of the second room was a success? Yes, +48, No, +1] (ADEESE, 2012).

Also unlike at the Anglophone universities, Francophone GAs were essential locations for debates over political issues such as the tuition increase (Brett, 2011). In the words of one UQAM student, “The most important thing for students to get involved is the faculties at the General Assemblies. That’s where the debates are. It’s where you learn to express yourself” (L. Guénette, personal communication, December 4, 2012). This active debate infused the GA with substantial legitimacy, and while hard picket lines were not always held at UdeM and UQAM, strike decisions were never flaunted in the same way that they were at McGill and Concordia. As

Nadeau-Dubois (2012a), spokesperson for the primarily francophone student organization CLASSE, said; “Because people feel involved in decision making, they are ready to mobilize... A lot of students see their union as their first political vehicle, like their natural political vehicle... They feel a lot more represented by their student union than by their MP or any political party.”

The organizational efficacy and perceived legitimacy of Francophone organizations had notable impact on the costs/benefits of movement participation. First, the smoothly-run GAs and respected strike votes meant that Francophones experienced relatively lower costs than their Anglophone peers. Second, the fact that strikes were respected greatly increased the expected success of the movement. As discussed in Chapter 6, the past experience of activism can have a positive effect on future student activism, especially if the past activism was successful. Past successes for Québec students all revolved around strong strike movements, and that knowledge combined with the presence of strong and respected strikes during the 2012 movement created an expectation of success.

Chapter 8 Conclusions

Now that we have reviewed the data and have at least partially untangled the significance behind each of our three variables, we can better understand the content of the summary of the relative costs and expected-benefits of participation as depicted in Table 8.1. While I was unable to test the independent effect of each of the variables, the aggregate conclusions offer insight into the activism polarization between McGill and Concordia on the one hand, and UdeM and UQAM on the other. Because of differences in the (1) relative financial impact of the tuition hike, (2) perceived implications of the tuition hike, and (3) organizational efficacy, different costs and expected-benefits were associated with movement participation. As Table 8.1 shows, Anglophones experienced higher costs and lower expected-benefits compared to their Anglophone peers, leading to different strategic calculations regarding movement participation.

Table 8.1

Summary of Anglophone and Francophone relative costs and expected-benefits of participation in activism

	Costs of participation	Expected-benefits of participation
Relative effects of tuition hike	--	Anglo < Franco
Perceived implications of tuition hike	--	Anglo < Franco
Organizational efficacy	Anglo > Franco	Anglo < Franco
Aggregate	Anglo > Franco	Anglo < Franco

This analysis has provided a look into a few dimensions of the 2012 Québec student movement. However, a further paths of exploration are certainly merited—both in the study of Québec student activism, and in the study of social movements in general. First, I would like to add my voice to those scholars who call for a need to look further into the *mechanisms* through which perceptions relevant to social movements are crafted. Second, a full study of the Québec student movement, both the 2012 uprising and past struggles, would be a fascinating project. My focus on the difference between Anglophones and Francophones meant that many important and interesting dimensions of the movement as a whole were regrettably left unexamined, such as reactions to police brutality, connection to and importance of public opinion, nuances of the “direct democracy” of student unions, and others. Finally, there are many yet-unexplored data treasure-troves available social media sites. Various tools and methodologies are starting to be developed (such as the NodeXL extension) but I see great potential for social science research within facebook, twitter, and the like.

The 2012 Québec student movement was a historic case of student mobilization. And those students who fought against the tuition hikes ultimately saw success; Premier Jean Charest was abandoned by voters in favor of Pauline Marois in the September 2012 elections, who cancelled the tuition hike the day she took office (Séguin, 2012). However, a new struggle is brewing. Marois’ Parti Québécois government has refused to implement the tuition freeze demanded by students, instead calling for tuition “indexation” (“PQ proposes tuition indexation,” 2013). While nothing on the scale of the strikes of 2012 have yet taken place, various protests have been staged in which thousands have taken to the streets on Montréal, reviving the memory

of Québec's "Maple Spring" of 2012 (Blatchford & Ouellet, 2013). It remains to be seen what further activism will result from the government's tuition plans, but the framework established through this study may help to better understand the decisions students make in the upcoming debate.

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Appendix A Calculation of Activism Rank

Calculation of activism rank was based on the two variables “average number of days striking students were on strike” and “percent of students who went on strike.” I assigned equal weight to each variable.

First, I scaled the “days” variable, where 0 is lowest number of days on strike and 10 is highest number of days on strike. This scale was calibrated such that 0 on the scale meant 0 days on strike, and 10 on the scale meant 199 days on strike (the longest recorded strike in the 2012 Quebec movement).

$$\begin{aligned} \text{McGill:} & \quad \frac{8.65 \text{ days}}{(199 \text{ days})\left(\frac{1}{10}\right)} = 0.43 \\ \text{Concordia:} & \quad \frac{62.30 \text{ days}}{(199 \text{ days})\left(\frac{1}{10}\right)} = 3.13 \\ \text{UdeM:} & \quad \frac{109.41 \text{ days}}{(199 \text{ days})\left(\frac{1}{10}\right)} = 5.50 \\ \text{UQAM:} & \quad \frac{124.84 \text{ days}}{(199 \text{ days})\left(\frac{1}{10}\right)} = 6.27 \end{aligned}$$

Second, I scaled the “percent on strike” variable so that 0 was lowest percentage of students on strike and 10 was highest percentage of students on strike. This was calibrated such that 0 on the scale meant 0 percent of students on strike, and 10 on the scale mean 100 percent of students on strike.

$$\begin{aligned} \text{McGill:} & \quad \frac{12.83 \text{ percent}}{(100 \text{ percent})\left(\frac{1}{10}\right)} = 1.28 \\ \text{Concordia:} & \quad \frac{33.66 \text{ percent}}{(100 \text{ percent})\left(\frac{1}{10}\right)} = 3.37 \\ \text{UdeM:} & \quad \frac{61.09 \text{ percent}}{(100 \text{ percent})\left(\frac{1}{10}\right)} = 6.11 \\ \text{UQAM:} & \quad \frac{62.04 \text{ percent}}{(100 \text{ percent})\left(\frac{1}{10}\right)} = 6.20 \end{aligned}$$

These two numbers were then combined as a simple average:

$$\begin{aligned} \text{McGill:} & \quad \frac{0.43 + 1.28}{2} = 0.86 \\ \text{Concordia:} & \quad \frac{3.13 + 3.37}{2} = 3.25 \\ \text{UdeM:} & \quad \frac{5.50 + 6.11}{2} = 5.80 \\ \text{UQAM:} & \quad \frac{6.27 + 6.20}{2} = 6.24 \end{aligned}$$

For clarity, each number was then rounded to produce the following activism ranks:

Table A1
Unadjusted activism rank

University	Activism Rank
McGill	1
Concordia	3
UdeM	6
UQAM	6

However, I observed some distortion in the data regarding strike numbers. Often, strike votes were not respected by the students within the striking department. This is illustrated by one McGill student who related her story of the “strike” within her department:

“Following a vote at a general assembly held by the McGill Undergraduate Geography Society (MUGS) in winter 2012 semester, all undergraduate geography students were technically on strike. In reality however, only approximately 5 students went on strike and did not attend classes. A week later two general assemblies were held to vote on whether to renew the strike, but neither general assembly reached quorum, so finally we held a vote by email and the strike was ended.” (Stephanie, personal communication, February 28, 2013).

Stories like this were not uncommon for both McGill and Concordia. More often than not, a striking organization would only endorse “soft” pickets (in which striking students may be present outside of the class, but do not attempt to prevent entry of students or professors) (Healy, n.d.). This gave rise to situations like the one above, in which an organization and its members might technically have been “on strike,” but the designation was not enforced by picket lines, and many classes would continue regardless (Smith, 2012). One reporter for the National Post noted in May that, “True, at Concordia...almost a quarter –12,000 of 45,000–were out, but only a small number of actual classes were disrupted, unlike at the franco colleges...[and that]McGill estimated only 40 – yes, forty – students out of 38,000 were on strike and no classes had been disrupted” (Kay, 2012).

This stands in sharp contrast with UdeM and UQAM, where “hard” pickets (in which pro-strike students stand outside of classes and prevent students or professors from continuing with the class) were the norm, and were a key part of the power of the strikes. The reaction from CLASSE (a primarily Francophone coalition of student organizations) to the anti-picket phrasing in Bill 78 demonstrated just how important hard picket lines were to those students. As reported by Coop média de Montréal, “The effect of the law, said CLASSE, is essentially the same as a lock-out: at schools where students are still on strike, they either stop enforcing picket lines - eliminating any power that the strike may have - or they will see classes suspended, removing the element that they are striking against” (McSorley, 2012).

To account for this, I subtracted 0.5 from each of the Anglophone university activism rank. Table A2 represents the final activism ranks.

Table A2
Adjusted Activism Rank

University	Activism Rank
McGill	0.5
Concordia	2.5
UdeM	6
UQAM	6