

Collective Student Action and Student Associations in Quebec

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Abstract

Student associations have been a part of Canada's higher education systems for over a century, especially in the province of Quebec. Their formal roles and responsibilities as well as their impact and their inner workings are ill understood, even though they are ever-present in public space. Quebec student associations have used a remarkable arsenal of legal and political means to achieve their goals. Societal change, however, might be swinging legislation and civic rights momentum in Quebec in a direction that could force the student movement to alter its approach to advocacy and social contestation. This chapter describes the organization of student associations in the province. It further describes the rights provided to associations in the legal and legislative context of the province, as well as the recent challenges to these rights. Finally, we test the *orientation-focus* framework (Altbach, 1968) on the events of the Maple Spring of 2012.

Keywords

Maple Spring – student associations – Quebec higher education – orientation-focus framework – student activism

Introduction

Student associations are an inherent part of the higher education landscape in the largely French-speaking province of Quebec (Canada). They have undergone well-documented changes since the late 1960s, gaining legal protection, pushing affordability and social change agendas, and being credited with government turnovers (Bégin-Caouette & Jones, 2014). In 2012, social media and global attention came together to push the Quebec student protests to the fore

of public awareness. The spring social phenomenon which lasted well into the summer was quickly dubbed the *printemps érable* (“Maple Spring”), a play of words on the previous year’s *printemps arabe* (Arab Spring).

Yet, despite its media presence, the student organization has been surprisingly little studied. Of the general literature on student associations, Altbach (2007) said that “[s]tudent movements and organizations at the postsecondary level have an immense and *often ignored* impact not only on students and student cultures but also on academic institutions and sometimes on society” (p. 329, emphasis added). Likewise, Robinson (2010) observed that “[i]n spite of their active presence in Canadian higher education, the role and influence of these [...] student associations has been all but ignored in the literature and certainly merits further attention” (p. 92). In Europe, “it is rather surprising how little scholarly research exists on student representative organisations” (Klemenčič, 2012).

This chapter’s aim is twofold. It first complements the existing literature by presenting an overview of the student movement in Quebec that highlights its key legal and organizational characteristics. Second, it argues that Altbach’s orientation-focus theory (1968) provides a robust analytical tool to analyze the social institution of student associations, and illustrates this through a brief analysis using the lens of the Maple Spring.

Student Associations in Quebec: Historical, Organizational and Legal Considerations

Student associations, clubs and media have been part of Quebec higher education since its inception. Gagnon (2008) places their first activist purpose in the 1950s. When Quebec Premier Maurice Duplessis refused to allow federal funds to be transferred to universities, the Catholic French-Canadian Youth Association denounced the decision with a call for a strike (Bégin-Caouette & Jones, 2014; Gagnon, 2008).

In 1963, the student organizations from three Quebec universities founded the *Union générale des étudiants du Québec* (UGÉQ). Through its six years of existence, it set the path for a first cycle of radicalization, with rhetoric requesting, among other demands, that hierarchical barriers between students and professors be brought down and that universities be co-managed (Gagnon, 2008). UGÉQ folded in 1969 and was replaced with the equally assertive *Association nationale des étudiants et étudiantes du Québec* (ANEEQ) in 1975. In 1981, tensions between reformist and activist tendencies came to a head when the ANEEQ’s *university affairs caucus* split from the organization to form its

own federation of associations dedicated to university affairs and espousing a more reformist philosophy: the *Regroupement des associations étudiantes universitaires* (RAEU). That same year, a federation of college student associations was created, the *Fédération des associations étudiantes collégiales du Québec* (FAECQ) (Bélanger, 1984). These two associations would evolve into the *Fédération étudiante universitaire du Québec* (FEUQ) and the *Fédération étudiante collégiale du Québec* (FECQ), respectively. The ANEEQ dissolved a few years later, in 1994, amidst internal strife. The more radical wing of the student movement, which represented students from both colleges and universities, founded the *Association pour une solidarité syndicale étudiante* (ASSÉ) in 2001. Two opposite ideals of the student movement—a more utilitarian, pragmatist wing and a more idealistic, radical wing—were thus already in place in the late 1970s.

Today, student associations in Quebec are part of a uniquely structured higher education system. The *Report of the Royal Commission of Inquiry on Education* (Royal Commission of Inquiry on Education in the Province of Quebec, 1967) called for the creation of a post-secondary system divided into two discrete, sequential types of institutions: colleges and universities. Generally speaking, students are required to complete a two-year program at a college before applying at universities, usually for three-year bachelor degrees.

Colleges and universities tend to differ in their organization. Universities usually align with the classic model of discipline-based academic units (such as departments), which are grouped in larger structures (faculties or schools). Colleges, on the other hand, tend to have much flatter organizational structures, without schools or faculties.

As in many other jurisdictions,¹ Quebec students have their associative structures imbedded in the legal framework of higher education. The *Act respecting the accreditation and financing of students' associations* (the *Act*) grants student associations official recognition² and determines the nature of the membership, the financial relationship between the association and its members, the legal status of the association and its status within the institution (Klemenčič, 2014). As it turns out, the *Act* gives accredited associations access to considerable material and symbolic resources (Bégin-Caouette & Jones, 2014; Klemenčič, 2014; Lajoie & Gamache, 1990).

The *Act* makes membership automatic and grants the associations the right to collect dues from their members, the payment of which is enforced by the obligation to pay the dues in order to register (Article 54). Associations must be incorporated under the *Business Corporations Act*. Finally, the *Act* grants accredited associations a monopoly on student representation in the unit covered by the accreditation, excluding all other groups (Article 28).

The *Act* seems to go out of its way to ensure that associations will not depend on the institutions' authorities to function. Colleges and universities are removed from the decision-making process regarding the fees levied by the association. The obligation of incorporation precludes administrative intervention in the association's affairs, a level of autonomy that should technically allow the association to "hold authorities accountable to student interests" (Klemenčič, 2014, p. 401).

At the same time, we present the hypothesis that the *Act* facilitates the daily operations of associations in two ways. First, the *Act* mandates the institution to collect said dues together with the tuition fees (Article 53). Second, it mandates the institution to provide the accredited association with the names and addresses of the dues-paying members. These obligations relieve associations of having to devote time to gathering basic resources or information. In addition, the monopoly of representation conferred upon accredited associations further alleviates the political necessity of having to periodically defend their legal legitimacy when participating in institutional governance. The implications of such advantages are considerable, at least from an organisational standpoint, as the associations can use the resources that would have been devoted to fundraising for other purposes, such as community organization, lobbying, research and professional staff budgets. Research has yet to compare the impact of this shift of internal resources allocation on the efficiency of student associations.

Defining Student Associations

We use the term "student association" to describe the organization legislated by the aforementioned *Act*: an incorporated entity whose membership is made up exclusively of students from a definite unit of accreditation and which enjoys a monopoly over the representation of students' interests within said unit of accreditation. While this definition matches the *Act's* intent, it does not present a definition of what "students' interests" means.

The aforementioned *Act* spells out the areas covered by the term *students' interests*, as the legally imposed mission of student associations is to represent students and their interests, "particularly respecting teaching, educational methods, student services and the administration of the educational institution" (Article 3). This definition is very similar to that provided by Klemenčič (2014) for *student governments*, which "represent and defend the interests of the collective student body" (p. 396).

Maroy, Doray, and Kabore (2014), through the analysis of the public discourse at the provincial level, confirm the contemporary cohabitation of the two duelling ideologies identified through history. One³ considers the student as being primarily a *student* and assumes that organizations' focus should be to defend and enhance students' education and living conditions (Altbach, 1968; Maroy et al., 2014). This philosophy is best illustrated by the lobbying history of the *Federations*, which have focused on a freeze of tuition fees in order to foster access (Bégin-Caouette & Jones, 2014; Maroy et al., 2014), increased scrutiny of institutional administrations in order to insure efficient internal resource allocation (FEUQ, 2007; Maroy et al., 2014) and increased sharing of power within institutions (FEUQ, 2007). Compromise is often perceived as necessary because achieving the end becomes a justification for giving something away, an uneasy relationship explored in more detail by Klemenčič (2012).

The second ideology has been upheld by the *Association pour une solidarité syndicale étudiante* (ASSÉ) and is much more paradigm-shifting (Maroy et al., 2014) as it places the student at the centre of a broader social struggle against neoliberalism (ASSÉ, 2015; Maroy et al., 2014). It will usually reject compromise as a means of action (Bégin-Caouette & Jones, 2014) and adopt a more militant approach to mobilization. It also tends to embrace adjacent social causes such as gender equality, environmentalism and LGBT advocacy.

This dichotomy between a reformist, transactional student-centred philosophy on the one hand, and a more militant, activist and confrontational philosophy on the other, is also found in research regarding national student organizations in Europe (Klemenčič, 2012). Student associations are seen as either *interest groups* or *social movements*. The former establish a trading relationship with the State, one based on reciprocal benefit, a preference for lobbying over conflict and an emphasis on "issues directly affecting students" (Klemenčič, 2012). The latter tend to amalgamate student interests with resistance in a global fight against values (such as neoliberalism or capitalism) rather than specific events or policy items.

Much like Maroy et al. (2014) and Klemenčič (2012), Altbach (1968) uses dichotomies to characterize organizations and movements. However, he provides *two* spectra of analysis: one for the orientation taken by movements, and the other for the focus of their action.

The *orientation* spectrum ranges from a "normative" end to a "value" end. *Normative* orientation is the propensity of a movement to limit its actions to one specific issue, such as a tuition-fee hike or reduced financial aid. *Value* orientation, on the other end, is the action aimed at larger, ideological issues, such as feminism or class warfare.

The *focus* spectrum ranges from an “etudialist” to a “societal” focus. Altbach describes etudialism as student- or campus-centered activism, regardless of its cause or origin. The issues at hand tend to be more concrete for the average student and limited in scope to the student status. The societal focus, on the other hand, aims at a broader perspective and views student issues within a larger context reaching beyond the university. Thus, the variety of societal issues tends to be wider than that of purely student issues, as they can be of political (elections), macro-economical (capitalism) or social (poverty) in nature.

Having set the conceptual context of the study, we will first analyze the legal framework in which student associations operate, and contrast its key principles with the aforementioned concepts of common core, voluntary participation, and limited responsibility. We will then proceed with a preliminary analysis of the Maple Spring events and fallout using Altbach’s orientation-focus theory.

The Maple Spring: A Summary

In 2010–2011, at the urging of the university presidents’ association, the Liberal government announced tuition fees would be increased by \$1,625 over the five following years, starting from a base of \$2,200 (Maroy et al., 2014). While the Fall semester of 2011 was spent educating students and creating coalitions (Bégin-Caouette & Jones, 2014; Rashi, 2011), ASSÉ took a page from its 2005 campaign and widened its tactical membership to any association, even those members of the Federations, which shared the goal of abolishing tuition fees altogether and recognized striking as a legitimate mean to achieve that end (Bégin-Caouette & Jones, 2014; Nadeau-Dubois, 2013).

The notion of “strike” itself is blurry, as students in Quebec do not have the right to “strike” in the same way salaried workers have the right to collectively cease work as a means of exerting pressure on employers before or during collective bargaining negotiation (Labour code). As the relation between the HEIs and students is not the same as the relation between an employer and an employee, many argue that there is no “right to strike.” De facto strike action is, therefore, often referred to as “boycotting” (Weinstock, 2012b).

In reality, students’ associations use boycotting in much the same way as labour unions use strikes; boycotting is widely used and often successful in achieving its aims (Bédard, 2006; Bégin-Caouette & Jones, 2014; Lacoursière, 2007). Student associations use general assemblies or referenda to conduct strike votes that they then enforce by physically blocking access to classrooms

and other facilities – with the aim of creating enough pressure so that administration will give in to their demands.

Universities have reacted very differently over time and from one institution to the other. In some situations, the institution will recognize the decision as legitimate and “suspend classes” for the duration of the strike/boycott (“Étudiants en grève au cégep de Sherbrooke,” 2015). Others, as was the case during the 2012 Maple Spring and the 2015 spring action, use legal means to enforce the accessibility of their buildings (*Université du Québec à Montréal c. Association facultaire des étudiants en arts de l’Université du Québec à Montréal*).

There was very little challenge to the student associations’ practice of striking or boycotting until the events of 2012 (Makela, 2014). In March of that year, the *Law Students’ Association* of the Université de Montréal filed a provincial injunction to ensure that students would have access to institutions. While the application was denied (Lemay & Laperrière, 2012), it set the tone for a series of legal challenges, which came in two flavours: institutional (initiated by colleges or universities) and individual. While individual challenges aimed at providing individual students access to their classroom or their education (Makela & Audette-Chapdelaine, 2013), the institutional challenges tried more often than not to provide a safe working environment or general access to the buildings and classrooms.

In response, the government enacted Bill 78 in May 2012, *An Act to enable students to receive instruction from the postsecondary institutions they attend*, which was designed to reduce the impact of the protest by forcing professors to teach their courses and by forbidding associations from blocking the entrance to universities and colleges, thus almost nullifying associations’ means to enforce strike votes. Associations that did not comply with the legislation could lose their official recognition accreditation and be subject to fines. Importantly, the legislation also included provisions that were designed to limit protests, including requiring that the itinerary of every protest march of more than 50 people had to be provided to the police at least eight hours in advance (Bill 78, 2012; Weinstock, 2012a). This *Act* actually fanned the flames of public outcry, as more social groups joined in the protests. Altercations between police and protesters were daily news footage. It became obvious that the student protests provided a catalyst for those portions of Quebec society that felt that the Liberal government had lost its legitimacy to govern the province.

In August of 2012, Premier Jean Charest dissolved the Provincial Assembly and called a general election for the following month, which his Liberal Party lost to the Parti Québécois (PQ), thanks in part to the PQ’s promise to convene a summit on higher education. The summit was called only a few months after the election.

The Federations and the ASSÉ displayed widely divergent attitudes towards the Summit. The Federations' demands included a freeze on tuition fees, the creation of a *Conseil National des Universités* (a state agency monitoring quality, accessibility and management) and a modernization of the financial aid infrastructure (Corriveau, 2013). Meanwhile, the ASSÉ demanded that the Summit consider the abolition of tuition fees altogether, a core demand of the association. When the government refused to allow this possibility to be discussed at the Summit, the ASSÉ threatened to boycott the Summit (Shields, 2013).

In the end, the Federations came out partly victorious, securing a promise regarding the *Conseil national des universités* and investments in financial aid. On the core issue of the Printemps Érable, however, they had to admit defeat as the government announced a new formula to determine the increase of fees (Maroy et al., 2014). The government announced it would reduce the tuition fee increases to the value of a newly created indicator, the per-capita increase in disposable household income, based on an estimate by the federal statistics bureau, Statistics Canada (*Comité consultatif sur l'accessibilité financière aux études* [CCAFE], 2013).

Most promises from the summit were sidelined, including the much-vaunted Provincial Council of Universities, when the PQ was replaced by the Liberal Party after another election in May of 2014. The new formula for tuition increase, however, remained in place.

Chronologically, it was the beginning of the end for the FEUQ. The Summit was followed by a string of disaffiliations and, in 2015, the two largest member associations left the Federation (Blais, 2015). Faced with dwindling revenues and internal strife, the Federation announced a cessation of its representation activities in April of 2015 (Gerbet, 2015). A clear causality between the results of the Summit and the demise of the FEUQ remains to be established.

Analysis and Further Research Perspectives

The context and the narration of the events provide crucial data for an analysis based on Altbach's orientation-focus theory (1968). The discourse analysis of Maroy et al. (2014), notably, can be used as a first phase of analysis aimed at extracting broad themes (and clear illustrations) from the associations' public discourse.

As we have seen, the Federations' main objective did not waver: The fees increase had to be cancelled. With this came a limited number of well-defined policy demands. The same focus on a limited number of demands would be repeated during the Summit, as financial aid reform, oversight of institutions

and tuition fees freeze comprised the pragmatic, almost functionalist approach to negotiations.

However, once the government and the courts started issuing legislation and decisions that reduced or deterred the use of historically potent and effective strategies (boycotting/striking and protesting), the Federations were forced to alter their discourse and include the protection of these rights in their overall campaign. The announcement of the provisions of Bill 78 forced the Federations to publicly withdraw from their traditional negotiation-focused stance, prompting the president of the FEUQ to declare that “the government just declared war on the student movement. It’s worse than the increase in tuition fees!” (Chouinard & Journet, 2012).

The ASSÉ’s stated objectives went beyond the simple cancellation of the tuition hike and instead proposed a societal project for the higher education system. Opposing “market influences” (ASSÉ, 2009) in education (such as quality assurance and the professionalization of curricula), the ASSÉ suggested the complete abolition of tuition fees along the lines of the UN’s “International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights,” Article 13c of which states that “[h]igher 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” (United Nations, 1966, as cited in ASSÉ, 2012).

The rejection of market mechanisms colored the other considerations brought forth by the ASSÉ. For example, during the Summit debate on institutional governance, the Association rejected the inclusion of “external” members on Boards in favour of a more traditional interpretation of the concepts of autonomy and collegiality, an interpretation akin to the definition of self-management (ASSÉ, 2009).

While Maroy et al. (2014) argue that the summit delivered an overall victory for the FEUQ, others argue that the association actually suffered a tactical defeat (Asselin, 2015). By imposing a moderate, incremental tuition hike, the PQ essentially took away the FEUQ’s primary argument for its existence – tuition fees freeze – and left it to redefine its identity, without providing the Federation with a major victory to show to its members. For many students, the only outcome of the summit was that the bottom line of their bill would keep rising, albeit more slowly.

The difference between the two groups is glaring and illustrates rather well the two ends of the *orientation* spectrum. While the Federations adopted a normative stance, limiting their actions to demanding a small but well-defined number of demands, the scope of the ASSÉ’s discourse went much larger than the matters at hand and tried to address the issue of marketization of higher

education. The ASSÉ's actions are definitely over at the *values* end of the spectrum.

The same analysis is not so easily done for the focus spectrum. All associations claimed to place the student at the centre of their discourse. Yet, neither shied away from widening the debate to the subject of the overall performance of the Liberal government. The Federations' demands and program has a larger proportion of student-centred issues compared with the paradigm-changing demands and objectives of the ASSÉ, but even the Federations strayed away from a purely *etudialist* focus by spending quite a lot of resources lobbying, for example, for the *Conseil National des Universités*, although its direct impact on students *as students* was never made clear. On the other hand, the ASSÉ did make a conscious effort to make explicit the effects of their demands on students (notably through websites and pedagogical video packages).

This is where the lack of scaling becomes a detriment to the analysis. Since the actions of the groups do not fit exactly either of the ends of the spectrum, we are left with little or no indication as to how far from each end the groups really stand.

In addition to the lack of scaling, two more perspectives are neglected by the orientation-focus theory. The first blind spot is the inability to explain how a student organization manages to exit the realm of higher education politics and mobilize non-educational agents, be they economic or social. The second blind spot relates to the analytical void about the preferred mode of action, the organization's *modus operandi*.

These issues can be addressed using existing literature. First, identifying associations as *pressure groups* (Bégin-Caouette & Jones, 2014) could provide further insight into the associations' linking up with other organizations. This cooptation of emerging social organizations provided the basis for a concerted effort to channel social protest. However, such occurrences are rare, mostly *ad hoc* and do not explain the movement as a whole.

What is interesting is that despite the sheer number of external agents who joined in the social upheaval during the summer of 2012, the core of the active movement consisted of student associations, as we have defined them, rather than issue-specific student advocacy groups (with pro-feminism or environmental agendas, for example). While the latter did participate in the debate and the mobilization (Lamoureux, 2012), the organization and the enforcement of strikes in institutions remained the sole responsibility of the institutionalized, academic-unit-based student associations.

In reality, labeling student associations as pressure groups in the sense of Pross (1986) rather speaks of a latent potentiality for action, one which lies in the collective, if inconsistent, pooling of resources. This consideration of

resources could help link the associations' position on Altbach's scales with the yet unexplored issue of resource acquisition and allocation.

The second potentially useful perspective is the corporatist/militant dichotomy suggested by Makela and Audette-Chapdelaine (2013). Its emphasis on the relation associations have with institutional power distribution is revealing of an underlying conception of the higher education institution and of higher education in general. More importantly, in order to fully interpret the relationship that a specific association shares with the institutional power distribution, symbolic or not, the analyst must first consider the patterns of *institutional action*. The inclusion of action as an analytical concept could expand the scope of inquiry of the orientation-focus theory to a point where it could provide a much more accurate descriptive analysis of student associations.

Conclusion

A first consideration regarding the analysis is obfuscated by the obvious tension between the normative Federations and the values-oriented ASSÉ. What it fails to reveal is how *similar* the two groups are if we disregard ideological considerations. Both provincial associations worked according to the same pattern: Local associations, whether from academic units or campus-wide, would vote to affiliate to one of the two groups. Dues were levied and paid to the provincial level by the affiliate level. Decision-making happened in various forms of group meetings, and one needs to stretch the analysis to the perception of the legitimacy of decisions to find a divergence. For example, the ASSÉ viewed their Council as a conduit between individual members in local, general meetings and the provincial executive. Their perception was that the Federations left too much power to a rising class of locally and provincially elected officers to dictate the provincial strategy, thus depriving individual members of a say in the conduct of the campaign (ASSÉ, 2015). There has not yet been an in-depth, comparative analysis of the decision making process of the provincial associations. Moreover, the provincial-level analysis of discourse (Maroy et al., 2014) or action (Bégin-Caouette & Jones, 2014) fails to describe how the basic units of the provincial associations, the member associations, actually used their legal rights and subsequent organizational configuration to their advantage.

And yet, the extent of the legal and organizational autonomy of local and institutional associations is considerable, and "the legitimate power conferred on student governments as a key university constituency or stakeholder through legislation and institutional rules can be significant" (Klemenčič, 2014, p. 399). The *Act* grants accredited associations extensive rights in terms

of financial leverage and monopoly of representation. It also grants them protection against outside interference or contestation of their legitimacy. Moreover, the legal delimitations of jurisdiction, sometimes interpreted as restrictive, actually drive home the monopoly aspect of their autonomy. Finally, the obligation to conform to certain regulations (such as incorporation, respect of accounting norms or corporate responsibility considerations) has, in larger associations, spawned a whole professional sector of employees who must compensate the annual turnover of elected officials with additional human capital resources and expertise.

The stratified structure of the student movement created by the *Act* has placed various constituents of the movement in either category of two descriptive dichotomies. We used Altbach's (1968) orientation-focus spectra to qualify the whole of the movement but the orientation spectrum seems more revealing. On one end, associations that limit their members' identity to that of *students* tend to meet the needs and tackle the issues that affect that particular aspect of their identity. On the other end, associations that believe that students are members of the society as a whole tend to use the student movement as a leverage point for demands that go beyond the higher education level and enter the realm of societal protest. The coexistence of these two philosophies creates pressure and friction that ultimately produce internal conflict, external dissociation of discourse and operational shifts, depending on who is elected in which association.

Yet, the omnipresence of striking and boycotting as a means of leveraging pressure for major issues, with a surprisingly high success rate (Bégin-Caouette & Jones, 2014) and by associations at both ends of either spectrum of analysis, suggests that Altbach's dichotomies cannot capture the nuances of the cultures of student associations. Reformist organizations do use tactics that go beyond the "logic of influence" (Klemenčič, 2012).

The mass of yet-to-be-discovered data about student organizations and movements in Quebec (as in Canada) is staggering. Jones's 1995 survey of the financing of these massive lobby-like corporations which, in Quebec, have a legal monopoly over student representation, is about the most recent micro-economical data set we have. While the 2005 and the 2012 protests have sparked a string of books and testimonies, their value remains at that exact level: testimonial, perceptual and anecdotal evidence. Finally, while the organizations have a tendency to publish memoirs, research and memos about basically every aspect of higher education, they stop short of studying themselves.

The unknowns are considerable. For example: What is the socioeconomic profile of elected student leaders? How is student democracy articulated? Are the concepts of efficiency and efficacy shared uniformly across the movement?

What services do student organizations offer and how do they complement, supplement or compete with the services offered by their college or university? Are there patterns to be found in negotiating tactics?

Further research should, therefore, focus on two main areas. First, a serious, historiographical effort must be made to study the institutional, political and cultural evolution of the movement. The 2012 Maple Spring was not an accident. At least two other large-scale student mobilizations have occurred in the last 20 years: the protests against tuition fee hikes in 1996⁴ and the protests against cutbacks in financial aid in 2005.⁵ These three events are memorable because of their sheer scale, but a careful examination of existing literature reveals another event that should be considered as a turning point: the 2000 *Sommet du Québec et de la jeunesse* (Quebec Youth Summit) of 2000.⁶ These four events should serve as the four reference points, and the events leading up to them and their fallout promise to be as analytically revealing as the events themselves.

Second, associations themselves should be studied more closely in order to understand their dynamics and potentiality. Particular emphasis should be placed on how they have reacted to exogenous and endogenous pressures and change. Since these organizations rely in part on institutional memory to perpetuate their mission, there is sufficient rough documentary data available to start an exploratory, descriptive, yet exhaustive study.⁷

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Notes

- 1 Ontario enacted Bill 184, an *Act respecting student associations at post-secondary educational institutions in Ontario*, in 2011.
- 2 The *Act* only applies to associations covering an academic unit (in universities) or an institution. Provincial groupings of university and college associations were not included in the *Act* and remain unregulated.
- 3 The authors attribute this first ideology to the *Fédération des étudiants universitaires du Québec* (FEUQ) and the *Fédération des étudiants collégiaux du Québec* (FECQ), respectively representing university and college students.

- 4 In 1996, the Quebec government announced its intention to raise tuition fees by 30%. Student mobilization forced a reconsideration of the initiative; the government eventually announced a 10-year freeze on tuition fees (Coalition large de l'Association pour une solidarité syndicale étudiante [CLASSÉ], 2013; Lacoursière, 2007)
- 5 In 2004, the government announced that it would convert \$103 million worth of financial aid grants into loans. A year later, the decision was rescinded, although the ASSÉ's coalition denounced the agreement (CLASSÉ, 2013).
- 6 In 2000, the government conveyed a Summit to discuss a variety of issues affecting Quebec youth (Bureau du Sommet du Québec et de la Jeunesse, 2000). On the first day of the Summit, among many unique events, youth advocacy groups muscled through an amendment to the agenda, forcing the consideration of issues regarding social equity, poverty and education (Tenue du Sommet du Québec et de la Jeunesse, n.d.). The event is interesting for two reasons. First, the *Mouvement pour le droit à l'éducation*, one of the three provincial associations at the time, tried and failed at organizing protests to challenge the Summit, and folded a few months later (CLASSÉ, 2013; Lacoursière, 2007). Second, the Summit was one of the many consultations and initiatives that led to the formal introduction of quality as a steering principle in Quebec higher education (Bernatchez, 1999), which would be embodied later that year by new performance-based funding agreements.
- 7 Two limits should nonetheless be kept in mind. First would be the sub-conceptualization of the main theory, the orientation-focus theory. The lack of gradation on the spectra makes it very difficult to work into the model the nuances of human actions. The second caveat would be the authors' choice to focus on the contextual analysis rather than on improving existing typologies or analysis.

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