

# **Beyond the Usual Suspects?**

## **New Participants in Anti-Austerity Protests in Greece**

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Forthcoming (2013): *Mobilization*

## **Abstract**

Following the emergence of mass protest against the austerity measures taken by the Greek government in 2010, the question arises to what extent the protests are just mobilizing the ‘usual suspects’ of left-wing trade union activists or a new protest generation. Using a general population survey carried out in December 2010, we find that almost one third of the adult Greek population had taken part in anti-austerity protests, but less than one in five had been first time protesters. Comparing new with veteran protesters but also non-protesters, we find that new protest recruits do not fit the expected pattern in many respects. In particular new demonstrators are less left-wing than veterans and do not differ significantly from non-demonstrators, thus fitting the model of ‘apprentice’ protesters. For the recruitment of new strikers, on the other hand, factors such as a trade union membership and support for left-wing parties are more important.

## Introduction

All social movements seek to mobilize those who already have acquired protest experience as well as reach out to sections of the population not previously touched by protest politics. Nevertheless, while in recent years there has been a wealth of empirical studies on the general causes of protest behaviour (e.g. Heath 2008; Dalton, van Sickle and Weldon 2009; Walgrave and Rucht 2010), the dynamics of first-time participation remain scarcely analysed. This apparent gap in the literature limits our ability to gauge the political significance of a specific protest movement and assess its longevity, strength and impact.

There is only one previous study dedicated to systematically analysing the profile of protest debutants, Verhulst and Walgrave (2009), who provide an innovative theoretical framework to analyse first-time activism. Based on surveys of demonstrators on a wide range of issues in Belgium, as well as participants of 2003 anti-Iraq war demonstrations across a range of countries, Verhulst and Walgrave compare 'new' protesters with those who had taken part in protest before, testing a range of hypotheses to explain the differences between them. The underlying assumption behind their approach is that 'new' protesters are mobilized because they share with established protesters a great degree of individual factors that promote protest, in other words, they are drawn from the same pool as the 'usual suspects'. More recently, this has been adapted by Saunders and colleagues, who similarly hypothesize that 'novice' protesters in May Day and climate protests would share with regular protesters, the 'stalwarts', a higher degree of biographical availability, as well as psychological and political engagement traits, in comparison with more occasional demonstrators (Saunders, Grasso, Olcese, Rainsford and Rootes 2012). Yet, their empirical analysis finds little support for these hypotheses.

The aim of this paper is to contribute to our understanding of the individual drivers of first-time activism, revisiting the framework offered by Verhulst and Walgrave but also going beyond it, both methodologically and conceptually. Methodologically, a chief limitation of previous attempts to study the mobilisation of novice protesters on the basis of surveys of demonstrators is the absence of data on non-protesters. The process of recruiting novice protesters involves the mobilisation of people without previous involvement, and thus the comparison of new protesters with non-protesters should play a crucial role in any analysis. Conceptually, we propose to contrast Verhulst and Walgrave's assumptions on the profile of new protesters with an alternative approach, derived from the wider theoretical literature on the recruitment of new members to other forms of political behaviour (Rothenberg 1988, 1992). In particular, applying insights from how new members join campaigning organizations to protest behaviour would suggest that protest debutants will be more similar to the general population rather than to established protesters, exactly the opposite of what Verhulst and Walgrave (2009) propose.

Greece offers an ideal setting to explore the dynamics of first-time protest participation. Stimulated by the government's austerity measures in order to meet the demands of the European Union and the International Monetary Fund (IMF), hundreds of thousands of people took the streets in 2010 in demonstrations and a total of seven general strikes were called. While the occurrence of anti-austerity protests in the face of major cuts in public expenditure is hardly surprising and follows a well-established pattern (Ponticelli and

Voth 2011), the key question which will determine the wider political impact of this movement arguably concerns the nature of protesters. If the popular image of the 2010 protests in Greece as dominated by left-wing trade unionists and political activists is correct, then the significance of the protests may be rather limited. However, given the huge numbers of participants, the possibility arises that the movement may have mobilized a large number of people who have not previously been involved in protest. To what extent are we seeing a widespread protest movement that transcends traditional political boundaries and goes beyond the 'usual suspects'? Crucial for a proper understanding of the Greek anti-austerity protest movement, including its implications for Greek politics as well as for other countries that may face similarly radical austerity measures, is thus an analysis of the identity of these new protesters.

Unusually, the size of the Greek movement enables us to analyse protest with the help of a general population survey, conducted in December 2010, which asked our respondents a series of questions about their engagement in the anti-austerity movement. This allows us not only to distinguish between 'new' protesters, who had never taken part in this type of action before, and protest 'veterans', who were mobilized again, but also to compare protesters with non-protesters.

One specific feature of the Greek case is the combination of two manifestations of protest, street demonstrations and strikes, which are both an integral part of the anti-austerity movement.<sup>1</sup> The use of strikes for explicitly political purposes has become rather uncommon in most of the Western world and is, in fact, illegal in many countries. In Greece, on the other hand, general strikes to protest against specific government policies have been part of the standard operating procedures of protest movements for many years (Hamann, Johnston and Kelly 2012). The presence of both strikes and demonstrations as part of the anti-austerity movement presents us with a particular challenge. The recruitment patterns and the factors distinguishing 'novice' from 'veteran' protesters and non-protesters could be expected to vary in important respects. We thus present separate analyses of participation in strikes and demonstrations.

Our paper starts with a review of a range of theories that may explain the recruitment of new protesters. On this basis, we generate a number of hypotheses that are testable in the Greek case. Given the scarcity of other studies that explore first-time activism, and particularly the lack of research that distinguishes between the two different forms of protest, strikes and demonstrations, not all aspects can be covered by hypotheses drawn from the theoretical literature. The paper thus also has an important exploratory function, analysing new empirical phenomena for the first time. In the final part of the paper, the findings are presented and analysed, followed by a discussion of their theoretical and empirical implications.

### **Theorizing First-Time Protest Participation**

Verhulst and Walgrave (2009) develop their framework to explain the involvement of new protesters around the concept of participation barriers. They start with the idea that protest participation may be habit forming. Once people have first overcome the various obstacles and acquired experience with protest behaviour, they are more likely to take part in protest again. In other words, 'once a person has found out how protest participation works, the threshold for further participation goes down' (Verhulst and Walgrave 2009: 458). On the other hand, protest debutants who are not familiar with

protest participation will be more uncertain about the costs and benefits of protest and the practicalities involved and thus will find it more difficult to overcome the thresholds to participate. As a result, Verhulst and Walgrave hypothesize that only those for whom the individual factors that promote protest are particularly prevalent are likely to be recruited for the first time, which means that ‘new’ protesters will fit the model of the typical protesters even more closely than those with previous protest experience.

However, drawing on the wider political behaviour literature on first-timers’ recruitment in political organizations rather than protest movements leads us to an alternative interpretation. Starting from the premise that potential members are usually not in a position to assess costs and benefits of membership adequately, Lawrence S. Rothenberg (1988, 1992) introduced the idea that members join an organization as part of an ‘experiential’ search, in order to learn more about the organization. As a result of this learning process, the new members would then decide to remain or leave the organization. The longer an individual participates in the organization, Rothenberg (1992) continues, the more he/she learns about it, and provided this leads to a positive evaluation, the more likely the member is to remain actively involved (also see Krackhardt and Porter 1985). For instance, new members of Common Cause, a US public interest group, were found to be far more likely to leave than long-established members (Rothenberg 1992: 117-118). This is not only because participation results to a greater level of attachment to the organization, which in turn promotes retention decisions, but also because new recruits could be expected to become gradually ‘socialized’ into the organization, internalizing its underlying values (Melucci 1989; Diani 2004).

Rothenberg’s approach shares with Verhulst and Walgrave a recognition that new participants will not know a lot about what is involved in the actions they are taking for the first time. However, the two approaches point towards competing explanations as to the recruitment of new members. According to Rothenberg’s approach, we would expect first-time protesters to be ‘apprentice’ strikers and demonstrators. The implication of this would be that the new recruits should be more similar to the general population, rather than established protesters, exactly the opposite of what Verhulst and Walgrave (2009) propose. In this light, new protesters would be expected to approximate the ideology and specific features of protest veterans as a result of the learning process of engaging in protest, not prior to it.

Protest movements are, of course, different to organizations; they are rather more fickle phenomena, often linked to specific events, without the continuity of organizations, such as lobbying groups or political parties. But even if participation is limited to one or two events, following Rothenberg’s approach we would expect that those who have attended a demonstration or joined a strike before would have gained important experiences that might influence their subsequent behaviour (Sherkat and Blocker 1997). Accordingly, those protesting in 2010 with a background of previous involvement in strikes and demonstrations could be expected to fit the picture of the ‘usual suspects’ of protest participants, compared with new protest recruits.

How can we best adapt these two competing perspectives to the case of anti-austerity protest in Greece? The main task we have to perform is to compare new protesters, veteran protesters and non-protesters in terms of the key factors that we would expect would determine protest behaviour. Our point of departure is to formulate a number of

hypotheses that draw on the theory put forward by Walgrave and Verhulst (2009). These hypotheses, we propose, should refer both to the comparison of novice and veteran protesters, as well as novice and non-protesters. To the extent that these hypotheses are confirmed, we would find support for Walgrave and Verhulst's approach; rejection of all or most of these hypotheses would instead indicate support for the theory of the 'apprentice' protester, which we derived from Rothenberg (1988, 1992).

There are a number of general theories of political behaviour that will help us determine what factors to look at. The first important range of factors concerns the relationship of protest behaviour to the main political divide in Greece in terms of party politics and the left-right ideological dimension. Apart from the country's trade unions, key organizers of these protests were the parties positioned to the left of the ruling PASOK, a moderate social-democratic party that had won the general elections of 2009, in particular KKE and SYRIZA. The parties of the political right, including the previous government party New Democracy (ND) and the populist LAOS party did not ask their supporters to join in these protests and thus, at least indirectly, provided support for the government's measures.

Unlike Verhulst and Walgrave (2009), we are therefore not dealing with a broad range of protests covering a variety of issues but with a very specific protest movement. The established discourse of this movement appears to define it as a left-of-centre movement. Our key question is whether this pattern only applies, if at all, to established protesters or also to new protesters, and how their attitudes contrast with those of non-protesters. If new protesters follow the pattern of the 'usual suspects', then we would expect that they are more likely to have a left-wing ideology and support left-wing opposition parties. While Verhulst and Walgrave make no specific mention of ideological factors, the logic of their analysis would lead us to expect new protesters to be even more left-wing than veteran protesters. In contrast, if we follow Rothenberg's 'experiential' approach, we would expect that new protesters are less ideologically defined.

*H1. New protesters are more likely to have a left-wing ideology and support left-wing opposition parties (KKE, SYRIZA) in comparison with established protesters and non-protesters.*

Going beyond the ideological connotations of protest behaviour, there are a number of other factors stemming from general theories of political behaviour and political protest. Some of these theories could be used to formulate rival hypotheses relating to our two main explanatory frameworks, 'usual suspects' versus 'experiential search'. Other variables, however, are less clearly related to these frames but still need to be taken into account as 'control' variables.

Among the most influential approaches for the study of political protest are theories of social networks. The literature clearly highlights that the relationship between protest and organizational involvement is not one-directional but a dynamic, two-way relationship (Diani 2004: 339). In their analysis, Verhulst and Walgrave (2009: 462) suggest that new protesters are mainly recruited 'via open mobilization channels and display less organizational membership or affiliations'. Established protesters may indeed acquire a higher number of such ties as a result of their past protest involvement (Downton and Wehr 1997), which would support this view.

On the other hand, the general logic of Verhulst and Walgrave (2009) that new protesters have higher thresholds to overcome points toward the opposite conclusion: novice protesters should have a higher, not a lower degree of organizational ties. Previous studies on the impact of social capital on recruitment have found that it is personal ties and being part of networks that appear to be crucial for turning potential into actual protest behaviour (McAdam 1986; Klandermans and Oegema 1987). We thus propose that it would be more appropriate for the pursuit of the idea of novice protesters as ‘usual suspects’ to hypothesize that those who take part in protest for the first time should have a higher level of social ties than both veteran and non-protesters. A rejection of this hypothesis would indicate support for Rothenberg’s experiential approach.

*H2. New protesters have a higher level of ties with voluntary organizations and trade unions in comparison with protesters with a record of previous participation and with non-protesters.*

Another classical theory of political behaviour that should be relevant here is relative deprivation. The basic notion of this theory is that it is not the ‘absolute’ level of deprivation but the deprivation perceived by the individual relative to other groups or what he/she considers to be entitled to that is a cause of protest behaviour (Davies 1962; Gurr 1970; Walker and Smith 2002). The narrative of Greek anti-austerity protest is one of protest against severe economic deprivation. A substantial section of the population is deprived of income and resources they previously took for granted. As confirmed by our survey, a vast majority of Greeks, 89 %, considers that the burden of the austerity measures is not distributed fairly. It thus appears to be a reasonable expectation that new members in particular may be motivated by the degree of economic deprivation suffered to become engaged in protest activities. On the assumption that those with previous protest involvement may be more motivated by ideological factors, new protesters should experience a higher degree of economic deprivation compared with both established protesters and non-protesters.

*H3. New protesters will perceive to be suffering from a higher degree of economic deprivation as a result of the austerity measures than established protesters and non-protesters.*

One of the most popular and, arguably, empirically powerful theories of political behaviour focuses on the resources of individuals. Resource variables relevant to people’s socio-economic status (SES), such as education, occupation and income, are at the heart of this analysis. Education in particular has from the beginning of political behaviour research been the most important predictor of any form of political participation (Verba and Nie 1972). High levels of education have been closely linked with both actual and potential participation in protest behaviour in Western Europe (Barnes, Kaase, Allerbeck, Farah, Heunks, Inglehart, Jennings, Klingemann, Marsh, and Rosenmayr 1979). Other socio-economic factors have been discussed under the label of ‘biographical availability’ (Schussman and Soule 2005), with the ‘typical’ protester being young and male.

An extension of the SES model known as ‘civic voluntarism’ focuses in particular on opportunities to take part in political activities. Civic voluntarism theory suggests that people become engaged in politics if they have the resources and the time, and if they are asked to participate (Verba, Schlozman, and Brady 1995; Brady, Verba, and Schlozman 1995). Having the opportunity to take part in a collective protest is an important element, and therefore we will have to control for the perception of the opportunity to take part in anti-austerity protests (see next section on Data and Methodology). Verhulst and

Walgrave (2009: 460) concentrate on just one factor of biographical availability, and that is age, suggesting that first-time protesters will be younger than those with a record of previous protests. If we follow the 'resources' approach, new protesters could thus be expected to be younger than veteran protesters but also people with higher formal education and males could be expected to be more prevalent among old and new protesters compared with non-protesters.

*H4. New protesters are likely to be younger and male and have a higher level of formal education than established protesters and non-protesters.*

Finally, let us return to questions of costs and benefits. Verhulst and Walgrave (2009: 461) suggest that first time protesters will be more 'optimistic' about the outcome of the protest. This, essentially, is a rational choice approach to protest: people are more likely to become politically active if they consider the action to be effective. To complete this model, we would also have to consider the cost element, anticipating that new protesters would consider that the cost of protest is going to be low, at least in comparison with non-protesters.

*H5. New protesters are more likely than established protesters as well as non-protesters to consider protest behaviour to be effective and the cost of such protest to be low.*

To summarize, we are seeking to test two rival theories of the social forces that promote new protest participation, leading to a range of hypotheses predicting rather different characteristics of new versus veteran protesters and how they compare to non-protesters. On the one hand, there is idea that new protesters are a kind of 'usual suspects' that fit the common patterns of protest participation even more than veteran protesters. On the other hand, if we follow the idea of new protesters engaged in an 'experiential' approach, then we would find exactly the opposite, with new protesters more likely to approach the characteristics of non-protesters rather than veteran protesters.

In our analysis, we have to distinguish between two different types of protest behaviour, namely joining in strikes and attending demonstrations. Can we expect that all independent variables will have the same effect for strikes as well as participation in demonstrations? Previous work on strike participation has mainly focused on questions of industrial relations, such as job satisfaction, and is dominated by analyses of the propensity to strike rather than actual strike participation (see Monnot, Wagner, and Beehr 2011 for a recent meta-analysis of empirical studies). There is some limited work on strike activity as a form of social movement participation which raises a number of questions closer to our research agenda (Dixon and Roscigno 2003; Dixon, Roscigno, and Hodson 2004). The only previous survey work that has ever examined participation in political strikes in protest against government policy which is comparable to the Greek case is Converse and Pierce's (1986) study of the 1968 uprising in France. Nevertheless, none of these studies explicitly address the question of 'new' versus 'old' strikers, and thus we have very little to go on in terms of hypotheses on the specific differences between 'new' recruits in demonstrations and political strikes.

If we consider that strike action for political aims shares some features with industrial actions, then we could expect strike activity to be less ideologically motivated and trade union membership to be more important. Also, we have to consider that strike action involves the withdrawal of labour which implies that protest participants are engaged in



gainful employment. Those in full-time employment could be considered to have a higher degree of opportunity to take part in such actions than those with a different employment status. Beyond that, there are no theoretical grounds for expecting new strikers to be different from new demonstrators but exploring this question empirically could potentially raise interesting issues not previously observed. This now takes us to our final hypothesis:

*H6. In comparing 'new' strikers with 'new' demonstrators, strikers could be expected to be less ideologically defined and rely more on work-based recruitment pathways associated with full-time employment and trade union membership.*

## **Data and Methodology**

The data were gathered with the help of a telephone survey conducted by Kappa Research, Athens, in December 2010.<sup>2</sup> The polling organization used a stratified quota sampling method, making use of Greek census data to ensure that the dataset generated was representative of the adult population (Greek citizens, minimum age of 18) in terms of gender, age and regional distribution. Computer software produced random dialling codes; per household contacted, only one person was interviewed. A total of 1014 valid responses were received.

The main task of this paper is to analyse the characteristics of new protesters. In order to identify those engaged in protests against the austerity measures, we faced the problem that strikes and demonstrations were not necessarily available for all citizens to join throughout Greece. In particular in rural areas and smaller towns, the opportunity to take part in collective protests may have been limited. As we were dealing with the involvement of people in a series of protest events, we considered the best option to ask respondents whether there had been strikes or demonstrations in protest against the government's austerity measures in the town or community where they lived.<sup>3</sup> About one third of all respondents reported that no strike and/or demonstration against the austerity measures had taken place in their community. Combining both questions revealed that about one quarter of participants perceived no protest opportunity in their community.<sup>4</sup> For the analyses comparing new protesters with non-protesters, a control variable on this basis was constructed as an indicator of the opportunity to protest. In this way, we can ensure that the determinants of protest behaviour account for the lack of protest opportunities faced by some individuals.

We asked respondents whether they had taken part in a demonstration and/or a strike against the government's austerity policy in their local community, and whether they had taken part in a demonstration outside of their town or community. 20% of all respondents had taken part in a strike. As to demonstrators, 18% had participated in a demonstration in their local community and 8% had attended a demonstration outside of their home community, producing a combined figure of 23% having taken part in any form of anti-austerity demonstration. In order to distinguish between new and established protesters, we asked respondents whether, 'prior to the current economic crisis', they had taken part in a strike or a demonstration in the last 10 years. Of those who joined strikes against the government, 24 % had never taken part in a strike before (over the last 10 years), and 28% were novice demonstrators. If we combined both actions, then of those engaged in anti-austerity protest, only 20% had not taken part in any strike or demonstration in the

decade before, with almost 50% having participated in both strikes and demonstrations in the 10 previous years.<sup>5</sup>

To assess who these new protesters are, the first step is to replicate Verhulst and Walgrave's (2009) approach by comparing new members and established protesters. In this way, we can compare our results directly with those obtained by Verhulst and Walgrave. This will be done separately for strikers and demonstrators. Unlike Verhulst and Walgrave (2009), as well as Saunders et al. (2012), who base their analysis on surveys of demonstrators, we are not only able to compare new and old demonstrators but also contrast them with non-protesters. In the second stage of the analysis, veteran protesters and new protesters will be compared with non-protesters.

How did we operationalize our independent variables? The first group of variables we looked at is ideology. We asked respondents to locate themselves on a range of 0-10, where 0 represents a more left and 10 the most right-wing position. (All original question wordings are documented in the Appendix.) A fairly large minority, 16% of respondents, refused to answer this question. We also run all analyses using left-right positioning based on attitude questions about redistribution of income and private enterprise, but this made no difference in any of the overall models. In order to reduce the number of missing cases, we combined both methods to create one left-right variable. The main contrast that was relevant is whether a respondent places him/herself as left-of-centre (0-4) or centre-right (5-10); the left-right variable used is thus a dummy variable, 0 center-right and 1 left-wing.

In addition to left-right positioning, we constructed a variable which distinguishes those who voted for the left-wing parties KKE and SYRIZA in the general elections of 2009. Both parties were the main left-wing critics of the ruling PASOK party at the time and continue to play a key role in the organization of the protest movement against the government measures. A combination of being left-wing and a supporter of KKE and SYRIZA before the current economic crisis started could thus be seen as a definition of the 'usual suspects' of left-wing activists.

Moving on to organizational ties, we asked respondents about membership in trade unions as well as voluntary organizations, such as neighbourhood groups, churches, cultural groups and non-governmental organizations. We also asked respondents about their current employment status.

Turning to relative deprivation, we asked a number of questions about the economic experiences and perceptions of respondents. This included questions about the perceived change in their personal financial situation over the last 12 months, their economic expectation for the next twelve months, and the fairness of the distribution of the burden of the austerity measures. Overall, the differences between new, established and non-protesters were very small for all deprivation related variables.<sup>6</sup>

The measurement of key aspects of biographical availability, such as age,<sup>7</sup> gender, and education was straightforward. For education, we opted for a dummy variable contrasting those with a university education with others.

Finally, in our effort to test a rational choice theory of protest (cf. Opp 1989; 1998), we asked respondents about the effectiveness of attending demonstrations and joining in strikes in terms of pressing for changes in government policy. In addition, we asked about the possible cost of protest in terms of being arrested or injured, although this was only asked with reference to demonstrations and not strikes. We also tried to measure other relevant aspects such as public goods preferences and perceived personal efficacy but they proved to be irrelevant for explaining all aspects of protest participation. We thus restrict ourselves to fairly simple measures of perceived costs and benefits of protest action.

## **Findings**

How similar or different are new protesters in comparison with veteran protest participants? In Table 1, we present the results of binary logistic regressions comparing new and veteran protesters for strikers (column 1) and demonstrators (column 2), replicating the method chosen by Verhulst and Walgrave (2009).

Table 1 about here

New strikers are mainly distinguished by their non-membership of voluntary organizations, lack of full-time employment, gender (female) and higher education levels; new demonstrators, on the other hand, are far more defined by ideological variables. Some of these results confirm our expectations, while others were not predicted by either the ‘usual suspects’ or the ‘experiential search’ approach. Despite the low number of cases, both models display quite a respectable fit, with pseudo-r<sup>2</sup> values (McKelvey and Zavoina) of .382 and .335.

What do these results tell us about the main determinants of new protest participation? Starting with ideology, compared with those with previous records of attending demonstrations, new demonstrators are far less likely to be ‘left-wing’ and supporters of KKE and SYRIZA while there is no statistically significant difference for strikers. Hypothesis H1 is thus clearly falsified. Furthermore, as predicted by Hypothesis H6, ideology is less important for strikers.

Turning to organizational ties, there is no confirmation at all for the ‘usual suspects’ approach. This is most evident with regards to participation in strikes, with new recruits fitting the profile of ‘apprentice’ strikers best: they are less likely to be involved in voluntary organizations and they are also less likely to be in full-time employment. In addition, neither trade union membership nor the relative deprivation variables play any role whatsoever for either demonstrators or strikers. Therefore, both Hypotheses H2 and H3 are clearly falsified and have to be rejected.

The results on biographical availability are contradictory. New strikers are more educated, as predicted in Hypothesis H4 but are also more likely to be female. This is rather puzzling. None of our theories expected that women should play such an important role among new strikers. Further analysis would be required to illuminate this finding. One possibility might be found in a deprivation-based explanation as female workers faced particularly heavy cuts in their pension provision and may thus have had an additional incentive to participate in protest for the first time. Also, the economic crisis led to an increase of unemployment across the board, but women remained

disproportionately affected by it. For instance, unemployment in the 30-44 age bracket was 8.2% for men and 15% for women in 2010 (Matsaganis and Leventi 2011).

Finally, the hypotheses based on rational choice approaches are also not confirmed. All co-efficients are negative, although none is statistically significant. New strikers and protesters do not have a higher perception of the cost-benefit balance of protest in comparison with veteran protesters, and thus Hypothesis H5 is, too, falsified.

Overall, there is no evidence here for the idea that new protesters are drawn from the pool of the ‘usual suspects’, as predicted by Verhulst and Walgrave. To the contrary, new demonstrators are less ideological and have a lower expectation of the efficacy of joining a protest march. Novice strikers are less likely to be members of voluntary organizations, more likely to be female. The only result that could be seen as confirming the ‘usual suspects’ approach relates to education, with a higher level of university educated novice strikers. On balance therefore, our results suggest that the profile of new anti-austerity protesters provides support for Rothenberg’s ‘experiential’ approach.

Having established the character of new strikers and demonstrators, as compared with protesters with a previous record of protest involvement, our data allows us to go one step further from previous studies. An arguably more comprehensive account of the drivers of first-time activism can be drawn from the comparison of ‘new’ and ‘veteran’ members with non-protesters. In Tables 2 and 3, the results of multinomial logistic regressions are presented, using the same independent variables as in the binary logistic regressions reported above. In addition, a control variable to account for differences in protest opportunities is employed. The reference category consists of all those respondents who did not join a strike or, respectively, attend a demonstration in 2010 and who also have no previous record of being involved in this type of protest in the previous 10 years. Three distinct groups are compared with that reference group: (1) previous strikers/demonstrators who were not active in 2010; (2) new strikers/demonstrators; and (3) ‘veteran’ strikers and demonstrators active in 2010 with a record of previous involvement.<sup>8</sup>

--- Tables 2 and 3 about here –

Our main attention is focused on the second column, which shows the results for the new strikers and new demonstrators in comparison with non-protesters, but also the comparison between the co-efficients in column 2 and 3, of new and veteran protesters in comparison with non-protesters, should be of interest. Only by comparing the characteristics of new protesters with those of non-protesters can we see what factors are decisive in recruiting activists from the group of non-protesters.

Starting with the effects of ideology, the analysis of strikers shows that both new and veteran strikers involved in the 2010 general strikes are drawn from the supporters of the left-wing parties in comparison with non-strikers. For the recruitment of new strikers, support for KKE and SYRIZA is thus a significant factor. This is something that was missed in our earlier discussion of new and old strikers because both groups include significant number of voters of KKE and SYRIZA which hides the effect of ideology in the direct comparison of the two groups. When contrasted with non-protesters, however,

the multinomial regression clearly shows that electoral support for left-wing parties is a statistically significant predictor of new strike participation.

For demonstrators, the picture is reversed. Ideologically, there is no substantial difference between non-demonstrators and new demonstrators. Veteran demonstrators show a clear left-wing ideological profile but the effect of voting for left-wing parties is in fact negative for novices, although not statistically significant. This is an important result: for the recruitment of new demonstrators, left-wing ideology is not a factor. This confirms Hypothesis H1 for strikers but not for demonstrators. In terms of comparing the relative importance of ideology for new strikers and demonstrators, Hypothesis H6 is rejected as far as comparisons with non-protesters are concerned.

Turning to organizational ties, we find that membership of trade unions and being in full-time employment are important predictors of new strike activity. For demonstrators, also full-time employment is a predictor.<sup>9</sup> The co-efficient for trade union membership is positive but not statistically significant. Again, these results require us to revise the conclusions drawn on the basis of Table 1: new and veteran strikers are indeed not particularly different as far as trade union membership is concerned. But once we compare new strikers with non-strikers, it becomes clear that trade union membership is an important factor for the recruitment of new strikers. In that sense, Hypothesis H2 is confirmed for new strikers, and these results also impressively confirm Hypothesis H6 on the greater reliance of new strikers on established work-placed recruitment pathways.

As far as relative deprivation is concerned, the results of the multinomial regressions confirm that picture of the earlier analysis. Perceived economic deprivations are not independent predictors of either new strikers or new demonstrators, and thus Hypothesis H3 is falsified. However, the perception of the economic development in the coming 12 month has a statistically significant effect on veteran strike activities.

The analysis of the influence of biographical availability produced some exciting results in the direct comparison between new and veteran protesters. Do they hold up once non-protesters are brought into the picture? As far as age is concerned, all co-efficients associated with all forms of protest action, whether past or present, are negative, indicating that younger people are more likely to be involved. However, for new protesters, the effect is only statistically significant for new strikers. All variables in this category have no significant effect on the recruitment of new demonstrators but are important predictors of new strike activity. New strikers are younger, more likely to be female and have a higher level of formal education compared with non-strikers. Thus, Hypotheses H4 is confirmed for strikers except that the direction of the gender variables has the opposite orientation.

Finally, what about the rational choice model of protest behaviour based on the perception of costs and benefits? The perception of a high effectiveness and the low cost of taking part is a statistically significant predictor of all forms of participation, old and new. Consistent with the result of the direct comparison between new and veteran demonstrators, the effectiveness of demonstrations is a more important predictor for veteran rather than novice demonstrators. Rational choice considerations are thus an important factor in the recruitment of new demonstrators. Overall, Hypothesis H5 is thus confirmed.

## **Discussion and Conclusions**

Which perspective receives more support by the evidence on the Greek anti-austerity movement that of new members as more motivated and better placed than veteran protesters to overcome the hurdles towards participation or of ‘experiential’ learners and ‘apprentice’ protesters not that different from the general public? In other words, are first time protesters against austerity measures in Greece more or less typical of the ‘usual suspects’ that ordinarily take part in left-wing, anti-governmental movements? To answer these questions, we followed Verhulst and Walgrave’s (2009) approach of comparing new and old protest participants but also extended it by contrasting both groups to non-protesters.

The results of our analyses suggest that strike activity fits the ‘usual suspects’ pattern fairly well. New demonstrators, on the other hand, are not clearly defined, with only the perception of costs and benefits found to be a statistically significant predictor. On the whole, novice demonstrators are fairly close to non-demonstrators as far as ideology, organizational ties, relative deprivation and biographical availability are concerned. For demonstrators, the picture is thus quite clear: new participants are more like ‘apprentice’ protesters rather than like the ‘usual suspects’. The overall picture thus suggests that new types of people are drawn to anti-austerity protests mainly through participation in demonstrations instead of strikes. This finding also underlines the value of comparing the drivers of participation in these two different forms of protest.

The exception to this pattern concerns the socio-demographic background of new are younger who have higher levels of formal education, in line with our predictions but, against expectations, they are not predominantly male. One interpretation for the high share of women among new strikers is grievance related. For instance, the change in the retirement age for women has been drastic; this may not affect women’s immediate perception of economic fortunes over the next twelve months but could be seen as an economic grievance in the form of a long-term reduction in living standards that is not picked up by the economic measurements in our survey. While further analysis is necessary to confirm these interpretations, these findings underline the need to focus any further research on the social and political impact of the extreme levels of deprivation experienced by the Greek population.

On the basis of the data we could collect, it is difficult to create a reliable measurement of the actual economic impact of the austerity policy on individual respondents. Relative deprivation theory, thus, receives very little support in our study of anti-austerity protest. This may have partly to do with the specific context of the Greek austerity crisis. Economic deprivation is extremely widespread and the perception that the burden of the austerity measures is not distributed fairly is almost universal: 89% of respondents agreed with that statement. This is very different from the postmaterialist movements that Verhulst and Walgrave (2009) analyse, which may explain the contrast in our findings. Another possible interpretation would be that relative deprivation works indirectly, producing emotional reactions, such as anger, which are key predictors of protest participation but this cannot be tested with our data. Taken together, these observations hint that we may need to rethink how we test and assess the impact of relative deprivation theory on protest mobilization.

Rational choice variables perform rather better in our survey. A high perception of the effectiveness and of a low cost of participating in demonstrations is characteristic of all respondents with any experience of taking part, whether old or new. A positive cost-benefit balance of protest also applies to those with a record of previous protest participation but this was obviously not a sufficient reason for this group to take part in protest in 2010. However, rather than regarding the perception of costs and benefits as predictors of protest, assuming that such perceptions were present before the protests took place, our findings appear to make it more likely that these are the result of taking part in demonstrations, and not the precursor of such actions. The validity of rational choice explanations of protest has been challenged on these grounds before, and, ultimately, only a panel survey could provide definite proof of whether cost/benefit considerations before protest action are an important part of the causal sequence leading to actual protest (cf. Finkel 2008).

Perhaps more fundamentally, our analysis suggests that further research should focus not only on comparisons between new and established protesters but also include non-protesters to give a fuller picture as to the way in which new protesters are recruited. Here, surveys with a far larger number of cases, supported by qualitative research, should be able to produce more robust results. Finally, further research also needs to look at protest participation over time. Some of our findings suggest a certain time component; the direction of the causality process, of what is the cause of protest and what the outcome, cannot definitively be identified with a survey at one time point only. These limitations can only be overcome with a panel design.

What are the main implications for the future of the Greek movement, and similar movements that will possibly emerge in other countries? A major part of the 2010 protest wave is clearly the result of the (re-)activization of the ‘usual suspects’ of protesters with experience in this form of action. But the anti-austerity protest movement is able to also recruit new participants from outside the community of left-wing political activists who are introduced into protest politics primarily through participation in demonstrations. The mobilization potential of the movement may thus be wider and include other sections of the population that were not involved in protest before, in particular if there are further escalations of the austerity measures.

Furthermore, the 2010 protest wave may have politicized new sections of the population, such as female strikers, which may have profound implications for Greek politics for decades to come and may set a pattern potentially repeated in other countries facing extreme austerity policies. There is evidence to suggest that this did indeed happen in Greece in the spring and summer of 2011 (Karamichas, 2012). A new generation of protesters, the so-called ‘aganaktismenoi’, demonstrated for weeks in front of the Parliament in Syntagma square, whose profile did not match that of the ‘usual suspects’ and whose participation was facilitated to a larger extent through new social media rather than the traditional mobilization channels. In turn, this underlines the widespread appeal and strength of the anti-austerity movement and the need to study its evolution over time in Greece and beyond.

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Table 1: New and ‘Veteran’ Demonstrators and Strikers Compared\*

	Strikers (1)	Demonstrators (2)
<b>Ideology</b>		
Left-Right position (Left)	-0.455 (.421)	<b>-1.040**</b> (.359)
Voted KKE or SYRIZA in 2009	0.550 (0.523)	<b>-1.934*</b> (0.797)
<b>Organizational Ties</b>		
Member of Trade Union	0.411 (0.557)	-0.755 (0.509)
Member of Voluntary Organization	<b>-1.015*</b> (0.477)	-0.456 (0.432)
In Full-Time Employment	<b>-1.188*</b> (0.480)	0.089 (0.368)
<b>Relative Deprivation</b>		
Personal financial situation - worse	-0.150 (0.282)	-0.042 (0.226)
Economic expectations - worse	-0.187 (0.232)	0.033 (0.191)
<b>Biographical Availability</b>		
Age	-0.023 (0.017)	0.018 (0.011)
Gender (Male)	<b>-1.881***</b> (0.403)	-0.528 (0.344)
Education (University)	<b>1.268**</b> (0.417)	-0.333 (0.371)
<b>Rational Choice</b>		
Joining strikes/demonstrations ‘effective’	-0.259 (0.134)	-0.144 (0.120)
Cost of taking part in demonstrations (low)	-0.238 (0.155)	-0.028 (0.149)
Constant	<b>3.850**</b> (1.382)	0.138 (1.217)
Log pseudolikelihood	-85.389	-110.911
McKelvey and Zavoina’s (Pseudo) $r^2$	0.382	0.335
N	199	222

\*Dependent variable: 0 ‘Veteran’ demonstrators/strikers, 1 ‘New’ demonstrators/strikers; cell entries are binary logistic regression co-efficients; robust standard errors in parentheses; significance levels: \*  $p \leq 0.05$ ; \*\*  $p \leq 0.01$ ; \*\*\*  $p \leq 0.001$ .

Table 2: Determinants of Striking Behaviour (Multinomial Logistic Regression)\*

Reference: Non-Strikers	Previous Strikers (before but not in 2010) (1)	New Strikers (2010) (2)	Veteran Strikers (Previous and 2010) (3)
<b>Control</b>			
Perceived Protest Opportunity	<b>1.614***</b> (0.214)	<b>1.793***</b> (0.309)	<b>2.059***</b> (0.212)
<b>Ideology</b>			
Left-Right position (Left)	0.010 (0.306)	0.040 (0.360)	0.262 (0.247)
Voted KKE or SYRIZA in 2009	0.804 (0.461)	<b>1.438**</b> (0.457)	<b>0.921*</b> (0.393)
<b>Organizational Ties</b>			
Member of Trade Union	<b>1.533***</b> (0.311)	<b>1.571**</b> (0.570)	<b>1.502***</b> (0.322)
Member of Voluntary Organization	<b>0.809**</b> (0.311)	0.125 (0.472)	<b>0.898**</b> (0.292)
In Full-Time Employment	0.377 (0.302)	<b>1.157***</b> (0.359)	<b>1.759***</b> (0.255)
<b>Relative Deprivation</b>			
Personal financial situation - worse	0.046 (0.166)	0.314 (0.232)	0.303 (0.161)
Economic expectations - worse	0.060 (0.127)	0.100 (0.171)	<b>0.323**</b> (0.122)
<b>Biographical Availability</b>			
Age	-0.0004 (0.008)	<b>-0.025*</b> (0.012)	-0.005 (0.007)
Gender (Male)	-0.050 (0.263)	<b>-1.134***</b> (0.351)	0.339 (0.237)
Education (University)	0.139 (0.286)	<b>0.936**</b> (0.331)	-0.155 (0.253)
<b>Rational Choice</b>			
Joining strikes 'effective'	0.146 (0.093)	<b>0.234*</b> (0.115)	<b>0.451***</b> (0.088)
Cost of taking part in demonstrations (low)	0.130 (0.103)	<b>0.282*</b> (0.132)	<b>0.357***</b> (0.096)
Constant	<b>-6.295***</b> (0.933)	<b>-8.207***</b> (1.391)	<b>-10.803***</b> (1.058)
Log pseudolikelihood	-623.831		
Cragg-Uhler (Nagelkerke) (Pseudo) $r^2$	0.459		
N	943		

\* Cell entries are multinomial logistic regression co-efficients; robust standard errors in parentheses; significance levels: \*  $p \leq 0.05$ ; \*\*  $p \leq 0.01$ ; \*\*\*  $p \leq 0.001$ .

Table 3: Determinants of Demonstrating Behaviour (Multinomial Logistic Regression)\*

Reference: Non-Demonstrators	Previous Demonstrators (before but not in 2010) (1)	New Demonstrators 2010 (2)	Veteran Demonstrators (Previous and 2010) (3)
<b>Control</b>			
Perceived Protest Opportunity	0.242 (0.126)	<b>0.771***</b> (0.213)	<b>1.104***</b> (0.183)
<b>Ideology</b>			
Left-Right position (Left)	<b>0.552*</b> (0.233)	0.027 (0.320)	<b>1.053***</b> (0.231)
Voted KKE or SYRIZA in 2009	0.301 (0.405)	-0.973 (0.777)	<b>0.923*</b> (0.357)
<b>Organizational Ties</b>			
Member of Trade Union	<b>1.226***</b> (0.346)	0.736 (0.476)	<b>1.356***</b> (0.355)
Member of Voluntary Organization	-0.025 (0.294)	-0.112 (0.404)	0.315 (0.288)
In Full-Time Employment	<b>0.500*</b> (0.226)	<b>0.617*</b> (0.308)	0.339 (0.250)
<b>Relative Deprivation</b>			
Personal financial situation - worse	0.177 (0.126)	0.026 (0.197)	0.083 (0.145)
Economic expectations - worse	-0.108 (0.100)	0.081 (0.145)	0.138 (0.123)
<b>Biographical Availability</b>			
Age	<b>-0.037***</b> (0.008)	-0.006 (0.009)	<b>-0.023***</b> (0.007)
Gender (Male)	0.271 (0.214)	0.379 (0.296)	<b>0.742***</b> (0.228)
Education (University)	<b>0.701**</b> (0.222)	0.157 (0.305)	0.404 (0.241)
<b>Rational Choice</b>			
Attending Demonstrations 'effective'	<b>0.384***</b> (0.083)	<b>0.535***</b> (0.115)	<b>0.674***</b> (0.086)
Cost of taking part in demonstrations (low)	<b>0.279***</b> (0.087)	<b>0.268*</b> (0.115)	<b>0.246**</b> (0.087)
Constant	<b>-3.293***</b> (0.708)	<b>-6.174***</b> (1.116)	<b>-6.958***</b> (0.932)
Log pseudologlikelihood	-768.782		
Cragg-Uhler (Nagelkerke) (Pseudo) r <sup>2</sup>	0.400		
N	956		

\* Cell entries are multinomial logistic regression co-efficients; robust standard errors in parentheses; significance levels: \*  $p \leq 0.05$ ; \*\*  $p \leq 0.01$ ; \*\*\*  $p \leq 0.001$ .

## APPENDIX: Definition of Variables

### Dependent Variables

#### 1. Participation in Strikes (Table 1)

In protest against the austerity measures...

- a. Have there been any strikes in the town or community where you live?
- b. If so, have you taken part in any of these strikes?

(1) Yes (2) No

[Recoded (0) No, (1) Yes if answer is Yes to a. and b.]

#### 2. Participation in Demonstrations (Table 1)

In protest against the austerity measures...

- c. Have there been any demonstrations in the two or community where you live?
- d. If so, have you taken part in any of these demonstrations?
- e. Did you take part in any demonstrations outside your town or community?

(1) Yes (2) No

[Recoded (0) No, (1) Yes; if answer is Yes to c. and d., or Yes to e.]

#### 3. Types of Striker/Demonstrator/Protester in relation to previous protest participation (Tables 2-3)

##### Previous Participation in Strikes/Demonstrations

Prior to the current economic crisis, did you in the last 10 years ever take part... [If yes, how often?]

- a. In a strike
- b. In a public demonstration

(1) Yes, once; (2) Yes, 2-5 times; (3) Yes, more than 5 times (4) No

[Recoded: (0) No; (1) Yes;

Combined with 2010 protest participation variables to create dependent variables:

##### Table 2

(0) Non-striker; (1) Previous striker but not in 2010; (2) New striker (no previous involvement); (3) Veteran striker (Previous and in 2010)

##### Table 3:

(0) Non-demonstrators; (1) Previous demonstrator but not in 2010; (2) New demonstrator (no previous involvement); (3) Veteran demonstrator (Previous and in 2010)



## Independent Variables

### **Control variable: Perceived Protest Opportunity (Tables 2 and 3)**

In protest against the austerity measures..

a) Have there been strikes in the town or community where you live? (1) No (2) Yes

c) Have there been any demonstrations in the town or community where you live? (1) No (2) Yes

[For Tables 2-3 Recoded as: (0) Neither strikes nor demonstrations in town or community; (1) Either strikes or demonstrations; (2) Both strikes and demonstrations]

### **Ideology**

#### 1. Left-Right position

In politics people sometimes talk of 'left' and 'right'. Where would you place yourself on this 0-10 scale, where 0 means the left and 10 means the right?

0 Left – 10 Right

[Recoded as: (0) 5-10 (1) 0-4]

As item non-response was quite high, an attempt was made to enter a value for the left-right scale for these missing cases on the basis of two attitude questions which have generally been regarded as providing a good approximation of left-right position:

Q. It is the responsibility of the government to reduce the differences in income between people with high income and those with low incomes

Q. Private enterprise is the best way to solve Greece's economic problems

(Scale: (1) Strongly disagree, (2) Disagree, (3) Neither agree nor disagree, (4) Agree, (5) Strongly agree).

Those who take a position of either/or pro-redistribution and anti-private enterprise and do not take an anti-distribution and pro-private enterprise position are coded 1 (left wing), others are coded 0 (centre right); 3 cases with no response on either question were coded as missing.

#### 2. Voting

And which party did you vote for in the last general election of October 2009?

3. KKE

4. SYRIZA

[Recoded: (0) other voters and non-voters (1) KKE and SYRIZA voters]

### **Organizational Ties**

Are you yourself or anyone else in your household a member of any of the following organizations?

(1) Yes, I am (2) Yes, someone else is (3) Yes, both me and someone else are, (4) No

- Trade Union or Labour Organization
- Voluntary organization (e.g. neighbourhood group, churches, cultural groups, non-governmental organization, etc.)

[Recoded: (0) No or someone else is (1) Yes I am and Yes, both me and someone else are]

### **Relative Deprivation**

#### 1. Personal Financial Situation

Compared to a year ago, is your financial situation ... (1) Much worse, (2) A bit worse, (3) About the same, (4) A bit better, (5) Much better?

[Recoded, scale 1 (Much better) to 5 (Much worse)]

#### 2. Economic expectations

How do you think the economy will be in 12 months?

(1) Much worse, (2) A bit worse, (3) About the same, (4) A bit better, (5) Much better

[Recoded, scale 1 (Much better) to 5 (Much worse)]

### **Biographical Availability**

#### 1. Age

In which year were you born?

[Recoded as 2010- year of birth]

#### 2. Gender

What is your gender? 1. Male 2. Female

[Recoded (0) Female (1) Male]

#### 3. Education

What level of education have you completed or are currently studying for? (1) Primary school, (2) Secondary (3 years), (3) Secondary, Lyceum (6 years), (4) Post-secondary trade/vocational school; (5) University, undergraduate, (6) University, postgraduate), (7) None

[Recoded as: (0) None to Post-secondary trade/vocational school, (1) University, undergraduate and postgraduate]

### **Rational Choice**

#### 1. Effectiveness

Many people have protested against the government's austerity measures in recent months. How effective do you think each of these actions are in pressing for change?

a. Attending demonstrations

b. Joining in strikes

(1) Not at all effective, (2) Slightly effective, (3) Somewhat effective, (4) Moderately effective, (5) Extremely effective

#### 2. Cost

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following...

d. Taking part in a demonstration could cause me to be injured or arrested

(1) Strongly disagree, (2) Disagree, (3) Neither agree nor disagree, (4) Agree, (5) Strongly agree  
[Recoded: (1) Strongly agree, (2) Agree, (3) Neither agree nor disagree, (4) Disagree, (5) Strongly disagree]

## ENDNOTES

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<sup>1</sup> In the remainder of the article, references to ‘protesters’ thus relate to both demonstrators and strikers, while participants in street demonstrations are referred to as ‘demonstrators’ and participants in (general) strikes are referred to as ‘strikers’.

<sup>2</sup> The research was funded by [removed for blind review].

<sup>3</sup> This procedure followed the example of Converse and Pierce (1986).

<sup>4</sup> A detailed analysis of this variable showed that residence in rural areas was the main predictor of protest opportunity (detailed results not shown).

<sup>5</sup> In their comparative study, Verhulst and Walgrave (2009) found that the share of first-time demonstrators varied widely from 3% to 55%. Their aggregate-level analysis to explain variation seems to fit quite well the Greek case and helps us make sense of the Greek result. Two contextual factors are important in understanding the mobilization of new recruits. These relate, firstly, to the preceding high general protest activity in Greece (Andronikidou and Kovras 2012), and, secondly, to the characteristics of the anti-austerity movement as concerned with bread-and-butter issues which attract fewer first-timers than so-called ‘new emotional movements’ such as the 2008 riots (Economides and Monastiriotis 2011).

<sup>6</sup> Despite the high importance of the fairness argument in the political discourse, the perception that the burden of the austerity policy is distributed unfairly is so widespread in Greece that this is not a significant predictor of protest behaviour. This variable was thus removed from our analysis.

<sup>7</sup> As far as age is concerned, some more detailed analysis at bivariate level produced some rather unexpected and idiosyncratic results which require further scrutiny. One such finding was that the share of novice demonstrators (but not strikers) was particularly high in the 60+ age category (40%). Among strikers, the rate of novices was quite high in the 18-24 age group (43%) but extremely low (7%) among those aged 45 to 59. Some possible explanations might be based on relative deprivation (e.g. reduced retirement income, deterioration of the health service for the over-60s) and generational patterns of protest culture, but more detailed analyses are required here which go beyond the scope of the paper.

<sup>8</sup> For the analysis of strikers, 718 non-participants are compared with 90 previous (but not current) strikers, 50 new strikers and 159 strikers with a previous striking record. The equivalent figures for demonstrators are 664, 132, 66 and 171.

<sup>9</sup> The role of full-time employment for participation in demonstrators is somewhat unexpected. Given the high level of unemployment that the austerity measures have contributed to, the predictive power of employment as a predictor of participation in demonstrations may indicate that people who have dropped out of the workforce may have lost confidence in their ability to affect political change. As unemployment rose dramatically after 2010, further analysis is required to examine to what extent an increase in economic deprivation had a positive or negative influence on the propensity to take part in anti-austerity protests.