Student protest in France, 1986-1999 : an interpretation using theories of protest and social movements

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STUDENT PROTEST IN FRANCE, 1986-1999: AN INTERPRETATION USING THEORIES OF PROTEST AND SOCIAL MOVEMENTS

Abstract

This thesis explores the nature and significance of student protest in France between 1986 and 1999 by drawing on theories of protest and social movements. The thesis provides a historical account of seven episodes of student protest in upper-secondary and higher education that is based on empirical research, newspaper sources and archival documents. The account of the student protests is then analysed in light of concepts and classifications of protest and social movements, with the aim of identifying an appropriate definition for the protests.

Through mass protest, students halted numerous plans for educational reform and an attempt to reduce the minimum wage for young people. They adopted ad hoc, decentralised styles of organisation that are commonly associated with social movements. It is argued however that the student protests do not wholly conform to most notions of a social movement, which state that movements must pose a fundamental challenge to the established political, social, economic or cultural order. Although the student protests contain an element of social movement activity, the majority of participants were primarily motivated by self-interest rather than any desire for profound transformation.

Through an analysis of the student protests, some ways of enhancing our more general understanding of contemporary protest and social movements are proposed. The findings confirm that a revision of established definitions and categories of protest and social movements is needed. Ways of defining and classifying protest and social movements that were developed in response to the new social movements of the 1960s and 1970s generally fail to account for subsequent shifts in the nature of collective protest and political participation that have occurred in France and elsewhere. A key problem surrounding the definition of the student protests is that they largely fall short of a social movement but cannot be adequately explained within alternative theories of pressure groups. Attention is thus paid to theories that classify recent protest and social movements in new ways and aim to expand upon, revise or replace established paradigms. The thesis suggests the usefulness of a 'protest group' category to form a bridge between social movement and pressure group perspectives.

Finally, the thesis considers whether the 'student condition' determines the nature of the student protests in any way. The student condition refers to some distinguishing traits of students in general which combine youth, transience, exemption from certain social obligations and an ambivalent occupational status. It is proposed that the recent student protests in France are to an extent shaped by the student condition, but do not fundamentally diverge from the nature of the collective protests of other social groups.

List of abbreviations

AES	Administration économique et sociale
ANPE	Agence nationale pour l'emploi
ATTAC	Association pour une taxation des transactions financières pour l'aide aux citoyens et citoyènnes
BEP	Brevet d'études professionnelles
BTS	Brevet de technicien supérieur
CAP	Certificat d'aptitude professionnel
CELF	Cercle Etudiant des Libéraux de France
CFDT	Confédération française démocratique du travail
CFTC	Confédération française des travailleurs chrétiens
CGC	Confédération générale des cadres
CGT	Confédération générale du travail
CIP	Contrat d'Insertion Professionnel
CNPF	Conseil national du patronat français
CNT	Confédération Nationale du Travail
CNVL	Conseil National de la Vie Lycéenne
CPU	Conférence des Présidents d'Université
CRS	Compagnie Républicaine de Sécurité
CSG	Contribution Sociale Généralisée
DEUG	Diplôme d'études universitaires générales
DUT	Diplôme universitaire de technologie
FAGE	Fédération des Associations Générales des Etudiants
FCPE	Fédération des conseils de parents d'élèves
FEN	Fédération de l'Education Nationale
FIDL	Fédération Indépendante et Démocratique Lycéenne
FN	Front national
FNSEA	Fédération nationale des syndicats d'exploitants agricoles
FO	Force Ouvrière
FSU	Fédération syndicale unitaire
GERME	Groupe d'Etudes et de Recherche sur les Mouvements Etudiants
GERMM	Groupe d'études et de recherches sur les mutations du militantisme
GUD	Groupe Union Défense
IEP	Institut d'Etudes Politiques
IUT	Instituts Universitaires de Technologie
JC	Jeunesse Communiste
JCR	Jeunesse Communiste Révolutionnaire
LCR	Ligue communiste révolutionnaire
LO	Lutte Ouvrière
MJS	Mouvement des Jeunes Socialistes
NSM	New Social Movement
PCF	Parti Communiste Français
PCI	Parti Communiste International
POS	Political Opportunity Structure
PS	Parti Socialiste
RMT	Resource Mobilisation Theory
RPR	Rassemblement pour la République
RSPCA	Royal Society for the Protection of Cruelty to Animals
SGEN-CFDT	Syndicat général de l'éducation nationale: confédération française démocratique du travail
SL-UNEF	Syndicat lycéen-Union nationale des étudiants de France
SMIC	Salaire minimum interprofessionnel de croissance
SMO	Social Movement Organisation
SNES	Syndicat national des enseignements du second degré
SNES-Sup	Syndicat national de l'enseignement supérieur
STS	Sections de technicians supérieurs

SUD	Solidaires, Unitaires, Démocratiques
UDC	Union du Centre
UDF	Union pour la Démocratie Française
UEC	Union des étudiants communistes
UNCAL	Union Nationale des Comités d'Action Lycéens
UNEF	Union Nationale des Etudiants de France
UNEF-ID	Union Nationale des Etudiants de France (Indépendante et Démocratique)
UNEF-SE	Union Nationale des Etudiants de France (Solidarité Etudiante)
UNI	Union Nationale Interuniversitaire
UNL	Union Nationale des Lycéens
UNSA	Union nationale des syndicats autonomes
ZEP	Zone d' Education Prioritaire

Chapter 1

Introduction

Student protest in France, 1986-1999: an interpretation using theories of protest and social movements

STUDENT PROTEST IN FRANCE, 1986-1999: AN INTERPRETATION USING THEORIES OF PROTEST AND SOCIAL MOVEMENTS

INTRODUCTION

From the mid-1980s to the late 1990s there were numerous student protests in France. In November-December 1986, students took to the streets to oppose the Devaquet bill, which included measures to introduce greater selection and increase tuition fees in universities. In March 1994, students protested against the Contrat d'Insertion Professionnel (CIP), a scheme dubbed the 'Smic-Jeunes' because of its proposal to reduce the minimum wage for young people. On several occasions, students throughout France protested about poor working conditions, teacher shortages and other issues: there were protests in *lycées*, notably in 1990 and 1998, and protests in universities which coincided with the workers' strikes and demonstrations of November-December 1995.

Some of the largest street demonstrations seen in France since the events of May 1968 have been student protests. Around 800,000 students demonstrated against the Devaquet bill on December 4th 1986, and an estimated half a million *lycée* students took to the streets on October 15th 1998 (*Le Monde*, 5th December 1986, 17th October 1998). The student protests attracted much media coverage, reflecting widespread public interest in them. Opinion polls suggest that public sympathy for the protests was extensive (*Le Monde*, 29th March 1994). Through mass protest, students thwarted numerous plans for reform, often with the backing of trade unions and other associations. For successive governments, the prospect of student unrest ignited fears of a 'snowball effect' and a repetition of the events of May 1968.

Several analysts in France have stressed the importance of studying youth, often referring to young people as a mirror or gauge of society as a whole. According to Annick Percheron, 'Les jeunes constituent un baromètre sensible de l'état de l'opinion et de la société' (1991: 5). Others have argued that by studying young people it is possible to predict how society will change in the future. Danièle Linhart and Anna Malan note that, 's'interésser aux jeunes c'est s'informer sur la façon dont évolue notre société' (1990: 5). Accordingly, with increasing numbers of young people continuing their studies beyond compulsory education, extensive academic research has become available which examines students in France (Erlich, 1997; Duru-Bellat, 1999). Also, research centres have been established which focus solely on the analysis of students and often assist the French public authorities in the formation of policies (L'Observatoire de la Vie Etudiante; Le Centre d'Etudes et de Recherche sur les Qualifications).

Yet, if students have become the source of academic interest in some respects, relatively little attention has been paid to their willingness since the mid-1980s to engage in forms of collective protest. The creation of the French study group Germe[1] in 1996 attests to a certain revival of scholarly interest in student movements. To date however, not enough attention has been paid to

[1] Le Groupe d'Etudes et de Recherche sur les Mouvements Etudiants

the more recent occurrences of student protest, notably those of the 1990s. In the literature on student movements in France, recent protests are overshadowed by an ongoing concern with understanding students' role in May 1968 and the period surrounding those events. The literature concerning the May 1968 movement is voluminous and continues to expand in new directions (see Ross, 2002).

Student protests between 1986 and 1999 are especially neglected within the broader scholarship on recent protest and social movements in France. Protests relating to the workplace have been the focus of much attention, especially the strikes and demonstrations of November-December 1995 (e.g. Fillieule, ed.,1993; Denis, 1996; Leneveu & Vakaloulis, eds., 1998). The protests by groups defending the rights of immigrants, unemployed workers and the homeless that are commonly labeled the 'mouvements des *sans*' have been extensively studied (e.g. Guillaumhou, 1998; Waters, 2002). There is also a growing body of literature on the development of the anti-neo-liberal movement in France (Sommier, 2001). In contrast, student protests have received scant attention. Their treatment by analysts of protest is exemplified in a recent overview of social conflicts in France which claims to analyse 'tous les foyers, mouvements et acteurs de la contestation': this contains sections on student organisations, youth organisations and youth culture, but oddly nothing on student protests (Crettiez & Sommier, 2002).

Much of the work carried out on student protest in France since the mid-1980s focuses on the November-December 1986 protests against the Devaquet bill. Numerous analysts debate the broader historical and political meaning of the protests, which are often portrayed as a watershed in the history of collective protest in France (see Méchet & Rozès, 1987). Various comparisons are also drawn between the 1986 protests and the events of May 1968 (Prendiville, 1987; Duclaud-Williams, 1989). Two personal recollections of the protests are given by activists closely involved: Julien Dray (1987) and David Assouline and Silvia Zappi (1987) provide valuable insights into the organisation of the protests and the part played by student activists. Cécile Chambraud (1988) explores the central role of the student organisation UNEF-ID in November-December 1986. Two administrative reports are available, the National Assembly Aubert Report (1986, no. 850) and the Senate Masson Report (1987, no.270). In addition, Michel Dobry (1990) provides a rare analysis of the protests using conceptual tools drawn from theories of protest and social movements. However, comparatively little attention has been paid to the student protests of the 1990s. The notable exceptions are studies carried out by Alain Borredon (1995), Pierre Bauby and Thierry Gerber (1996) and Christian Le Bart and Pierre Merle (1997), all of which contain empirical information that is used in this thesis. While valuable, these tend to focus on particular protests or aspects of them, and do not by themselves explain the nature and significance of student protests between 1986 and 1999 more generally.

The *lycée* student protests are especially neglected, except by Borredon who focuses on the period between 1986 and 1994. *Lycée* students have been as willing as university students to take to the streets, but the latter have attracted more academic attention. This neglect pertains not only to the period between 1986 and 1999 but the scholarship on student movements in general. Furthermore, the few studies that are available treat the protests of *lycée* students and university

students as separate entities, thereby precluding any recognition of crucial parallels between the two. One finding of this thesis is that there are important connections between the protests of *lycée* students and university students. It is argued that they should not be treated as separate phenomena, not least because on three notable occasions (in 1986, 1994 and 1995) their protests coincided and joined together.

It is useful to consider some explanations for the lack of attention paid to the student protests, notably by scholars of protest and social movements. In fact, the possible reasons why the student protests have been avoided are precisely the reasons why they should be studied. Firstly, the protests do not immediately stand out as catalysts of far-reaching social transformation. This contrasts with the 1960s when, as Laurence Bell points out, student movements were viewed as the matrix for a range of social movements and central to the theoretical analysis of collective action (2001: 183). More recent protests in France may therefore have been a source of disappointment to analysts who seek in students the role of standard-bearers of a social movement or a re-enactment of May 1968. Alain Touraine (1996) for instance expresses his disappointment that the 1995 student protests failed to challenge the existing order or propose any radical alternatives. Yet the very fact that student protesters no longer seemed to be calling into question the established order merits exploration.

The hybrid nature of the student protests might also explain their neglect by protest and social movement scholars. Sidney Tarrow (1997) outlines two types of collective protest in France since 1995: those relating to the workplace, and those with claims centred on social and political rights manifested in the protests of the *sans*. As this thesis illustrates, the features of both seem to be present in recent student protests. On the one hand, student protesters projected an image of themselves as future workers and expressed concerns about their position on the job market. On the other hand, a minority addressed broader social and political issues. While this hybridity is in part what makes the student protests a fascinating object of analysis, it might also explain why they have been overlooked within the different branches of protest and social movement scholarship.

In addition, the 'non-adult' status of student protesters, especially *lycée* students, might deter scholars of protest and social movements. They do not perhaps consider their toolbox of concepts to be adequately equipped to deal with the question of youth and how it might impinge on the nature of the student protests. One might therefore be tempted to situate the student protests outside mainstream protest and social movement scholarship and analyse them within a theoretical framework of youth studies, although this thesis argues that such an approach is unsuitable. While the fact that students are young (among other qualities that are inherent to students) should not be overlooked and throws up some problematic questions about the nature of the protests, it is treated in this thesis as one of several themes that merit investigation and not one that sets student protests apart from the collective protests of other groups.

The fact that the student protests do not lend themselves easily to empirical investigation is a further possible explanation for their neglect. Studying mass protest in general is in many ways more difficult than analysing the details of activism within organisations and political *groupuscules*.

Tracing the phenomenon of student protest over an extended period of time proves particularly challenging, in part due to the constant turnover of the student population. However, the study of all types of mass protest is beset with problems and this is no reason to avoid it altogether. One aim of the thesis (and one of its contributions to knowledge) is to demonstrate that a solid historical account of the student protests can be achieved by drawing on material from four sources: a) newspaper sources in particular, b) available empirical research, c) documents in the form of leaflets and posters, and d) interviews with former participants are combined to produce a description of the actors, content, form and immediate outcomes of the protests[2].

This thesis aims to contribute to a reversal of the neglect of student protests in France between 1986 and 1999 by studying them in light of theories of protest and social movements. Its analytical starting point is the observation that, until now, there has been no convincing attempt to define the student protests as a form of collective action and that this is necessary. Up to now, the student protests have often been labeled a generational phenomenon (Dray, 1987; Joffrin, 1987). They have also been interpreted in relation to the rise of individualism in French society (Ferry & Renaut, 1987). In some cases, scholars have considered whether it is appropriate to define the student protests as a social movement. Some scholars draw extensively on Touraine's concept of a social movement to interpret the student protests (Lapeyronnie, 1993; Borredon, 1995; Touraine, 1996). Others identify the student protests as an integral part of the burgeoning anti-neo-liberal movement in the mid to late 1990s (Bourdieu, 1998; Béroud, et al., 1998). As the thesis explains, available interpretations of the student protests tend to be problematic.

The main research problem to be addressed in the thesis is derived from the broader protest and social movement scholarship. It posits that recent theories of protest and social movements will provide a suitable definition for the student protests. More specifically, the thesis sets out to classify the student protests in relation to a spectrum of phenomena that involve collective protest. To simplify somewhat, at one end of this spectrum are far-reaching types of struggle that aim for fundamental political, social, economic or cultural transformation, exist over a sustained period of time and are commonly defined as social movements. Examples are the peace, women's, civil rights, environmental and anti-neo-liberal movement of recent years. At the other end of the spectrum are protest events of limited durability that tend to take place within a particular profession or social group, and are confined to a specific issue. These tend to be analysed within the literature surrounding pressure groups, although seldom in sufficient depth[3]. Over the last decade or so, such occurrences have been labeled 'protest campaigns', 'single-issue protests' or 'nimby protests' (Coxall, 2001: 136). Examples of this type of protest are the Snowdrop campaign in 1996 to ban handguns in the U.K. and the campaign in 2001 against the construction of a third airport in the Paris region. The central question governing the thesis is therefore whether the student protests comprise a social movement or a type of pressure group.

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[2] Research methods are discussed at greater length in Appendix A.

[3] There is in fact a much broader spectrum of phenomena that pursue their aims through collective protest, although a discussion of these lies outside the scope of this thesis. Tarrow (1998) pertinently uses the expression 'contentious collective action' to denote a wide range of events spanning revolutions (defined as social movements that aim to overthrow state power), war, riots, social movements and protest campaigns.

Analysts of protest and social movements are presently trying to make sense of some important shifts in the nature of collective protest over the last two decades or so. One shift concerns a blurring of the distinction between social movements and certain types of pressure group. Analysts observe on the one hand that the new social movements (NSMs) which emerged from the late 1960s onwards have in certain ways come to resemble pressure groups or 'protest businesses' given the transformation of such organisations as Greenpeace into professional, bureaucratic concerns (Jordon & Maloney, 1997). They remark on the other hand that the confrontational tactics and style of organisation that were once viewed as defining characteristics of the NSMs are increasingly used by established groups and associations outside the 'social movement sector' (Kriesi et al., 1995). In this respect, the thesis proves timely because a number of the broader shifts being analysed are manifested in the student protests. The student protests thus provide a valuable case study for testing the contemporary validity of theories of protest and social movements and, finally, suggesting how these might be improved.

The thesis is structured as follows:

Chapter 2 sets the scene of the thesis by reviewing the literature on youth, students and student protest in France between 1986 and 1999. The chapter places the student protests in context and provides an initial indication of their possible nature. It begins by exploring some distinguishing traits of the 'student condition', drawing on but revising the notion of a student in the UNEF Grenoble Charter as a 'young intellectual worker'. It is suggested that the student condition combines four characteristics: youth, transience, exemption from certain social obligations and an ambivalent occupational status. An important question that this analysis prompts is whether the student condition determines the nature and significance of the student protests in any way.

The chapter then considers how the expansion and diversification of the education system has transformed the student population in France since the mid-1980s. Recent sociological research on students in upper-secondary and higher education emphasises the growing heterogeneity of the student body in terms of social origin, gender, courses of study, institution and geographical location (Galland, et al., 1995; Erlich, 1997; Duru-Bellat, 1999). Accordingly, students' attitudes, experiences and aspirations regarding their education are shown to have become increasingly diverse. However, one finding of recent studies that concerns most students is the extent to which their experiences and goals have become adapted to economic concerns. This is due in part to a devaluation of qualifications in secondary and university education in France that resulted in a decline of employment prospects for school leavers and certain graduates, especially in the first half of the 1990s. This aspect of the literature proves extremely useful for understanding the deeper causes of the student protests, which the thesis reveals to be rooted in anxiety about the social and economic utility of certain qualifications.

Chapter 2 also examines research on the relationship between students and politics in the broadest sense. Available studies explore students' attitudes towards the political system, their partisan attachments, preferred forms of political participation and propensity to engage in collective protest. A key finding here is that the continued decline of traditional forms of student

activism centred on student organisations and political *groupuscules* did not dampen students' proclivity for protest, especially when education-related issues were at stake. This observation leads to a critical review of existing work on the student protests. It is suggested that, although some useful empirical research has been carried out, most interpretations of the student protests are problematic. A very limited number of studies are shown to have interpreted the student protests using theories of protest and social movements and, to date, no appropriate definition of them has been proposed.

Chapter 3 begins the quest of finding a definition for the student protests with an analysis of the theoretical concepts that underpin the thesis. It sets out the principal 'menus of definition' that are available for categorising protest phenomena (Jordon and Richardson, 1987). Collective protest tends to be theorised within two literatures: pressure group perspectives within political science and, more prominently, social movement perspectives that cut across a range of disciplines. The chapter identifies four branches of social movement theory. The first, which developed in the United States from the late 1960s onwards, stresses the importance of resources, organisation and political opportunities in the formation and development of social movements (e.g. McCarthy and Zald, 1973, 1977; Tilly, 1978). The second branch of theory comprises NSM perspectives. These originated mainly in Europe and seek to understand the structural causes of the student, feminist, environmental and other movements that emerged from the late 1960s onwards (e.g. Inglehart, 1977; Offe, 1985). Thirdly, the chapter considers social constructionist perspectives of social movements that developed in the 1980s (e.g. Snow et al., 1986). Fourthly, it identifies recent attempts to combine the insights of different theoretical approaches and overcome the fragmentation that has characterised social movement scholarship (e.g. Tarrow, 1998).

The chapter then considers theories of pressure groups, which tend to focus on organisations with a defined membership that seek to influence the policy process[4]. It identifies the main typologies of pressure groups that are available and looks at how groups try to exercise pressure. Recent theories are mainly concerned with understanding how pressure groups seek to influence decision-makers within political institutions at the local, national and European levels (Grant, 2000: 14). Although most analysts acknowledge the increasing use of collective protest by pressure groups over the last forty years or so (e.g. Grant, 2000; Coxall, 2001), few in fact integrate a detailed analysis of protest into their general theoretical models. In terms of their activities, pressure groups are widely portrayed as concentrating more on lobbying through established channels of political representation than making use of collective protest.

Chapter 3 concludes with an analysis of theories of protest and social movements in France. It explains that, in the 1970s and 1980s, the social movement literature in France was dominated by the work of Touraine and his associates. Since then however, social movement theory has branched out in two directions. On the one hand, French theorists have increasingly sought to understand, apply and revise insights from the broader social movement literature (e.g. Fillieule, 1997). On the other hand, the strikes and demonstrations of November-December 1995 and the

[4] The labels 'interest group' and 'non-governmental organisation' are also among those used, although the thesis adopts the term 'pressure group'.

protests of the *sans* have stimulated a revival of social movement scholarship with a more activist orientation (e.g. Béroud et al., 1998; Bourdieu, 1998). Outside the social movement scholarship, there are analyses which adopt collective protest as the basic unit of analysis (e.g. Favre, ed., 1990). Work has also been carried out on the protests of public sector workers in the period between 1986 and the mid-1990s, which are characterised by the formation of *coordination* structures (e.g. Denis, 1996). Finally, the chapter looks at theoretical perspectives of pressure groups pertaining to France, which are mainly offered by non-French scholars (e.g. Wilson, 1987). These tend to portray state-group relations in France in terms of exceptionalism, on account of pressure groups' frequent use of collective protest compared with other countries.

Chapter 4 provides a historical account of the seven main episodes of student protest between 1986 and 1999 that is based primarily on newspaper sources and available research. The composition of participants is shown to be varied, but consists mainly of students in *lycées*, universities and the technical sector of higher education (the IUTs and STS). On three notable occasions (1986, 1990, March 1998) students in the least prestigious disciplines and geographical locations such as Seine-Saint-Denis triggered mass protests. Most participants protested about student-related issues and were motivated by self-interest: students opposed the Devaquet bill and the CIP because they feared a devaluation of their status as students and future workers; students were also concerned that poor conditions and teacher shortages were jeopardising their chances of passing their exams and securing a decent future. However, other students had different motives for taking to the streets. A minority protested about broader issues such as racism and the neglect of the public services in general. A further minority, consisting mainly of *lycée* students, did not appear to have any urgent motives for taking to the streets.

In terms of organisation, the November-December 1986 protests were characterised by a national *coordination* structure that operated according to the principles of direct democracy. This led numerous analysts such as Borredon (1995) to argue that the student protests reflected a paradigm shift in the political culture. However, the student protests of the 1990s were much more fragmented and localised in nature. This is due in part to rivalries between the main student organisations and political *groupuscules* and, moreover, ordinary protesters' profound mistrust of these. The vast majority of participants favoured short-lived protests and rejected the prospect of a prolonged struggle. They nevertheless succeeded in halting several attempts at policy change and secured a number of agreements for education, often with the backing of trade unions and other associations.

Chapter 5 follows on from the historical account of Chapter 4 and interprets the student protests in light of theories of protest and social movements. Its aims are twofold: firstly, to tackle the question of how the student protests should be defined; and, secondly, in doing so to offer a critique of some of the main concepts and definitions of protest and social movements that are available. The student protests are shown to contain diverse strands. A minority defended ongoing NSM causes such as antiracism. A further minority began to develop an anti-neo-liberal consciousness and can therefore be identified as part of the nascent social movement against neo-liberal modernisation. However, through an analysis in light of concepts proposed by Eyerman and Jamison (1991),

Tarrow (1998) and Klandermans (1997), the chapter shows that a social movement does not in fact lie at the core of the student protests. This is because the vast majority of participants did not explicitly set out to challenge the prevailing order, but strove to maintain the status quo.

Through this analysis, it thus becomes clear that the student protests do not wholly conform to most definitions of a social movement. This prompts the question of whether they are better explained within a theoretical framework of pressure groups although, it is firmly argued, this does not prove to be the case. Given therefore that the student protests 'fall short' of a social movement but do not comprise a pressure group, how can the phenomenon be defined? I reveal that this area of protest and social movement scholarship – the interface between social movement and pressure group phenomena – is relatively underdeveloped, and put forward some suggestions for its further enhancement. I propose that, in order to define the student protests and other related phenomena, we need to rethink the way collective protest is presently classified. I suggest that a 'protest group' category might be useful to form a conceptual bridge between pressure group and social movement perspectives, effectively bringing the two branches of theory together.

Chapter 6 concludes the thesis by reviewing its main findings and suggesting some avenues for future research. It considers what the student protests tell us about the education system in France in the period between 1986 and 1999, as well as the broader political and economic climate. It also reviews the question of the student condition, and evaluates whether any distinguishing characteristics of students in general shaped the nature of their collective protests in any way. Finally, the need for further historical and comparative research on the student protests is underscored.

Chapter 2

Literature Survey

Youth, students and student protest in France, 1986-1999

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE SURVEY

YOUTH, STUDENTS AND STUDENT PROTEST IN FRANCE, 1986 - 1999

This chapter explores some themes that pave the way for an analysis of the student protests and help to make sense of them, drawing on literature surrounding youth and students in France. It also reviews available scholarship on the student protests between 1986 and 1999. The chapter begins by outlining some characteristics of students in general that prompt interesting questions about the protests, drawing on but revising the definition of a student in the UNEF Grenoble Charter as a 'young intellectual worker'. It then looks at how the expansion and diversification of the education system has transformed the student population in France, both in terms of its social composition and the general outlook of students concerning their education. The chapter pays close attention to a shift in the relationship between students and the job market. Studies show that the expansion of post-compulsory education in a period of growing economic insecurity and unemployment has given rise to a devaluation of qualifications in secondary and university education and that, accordingly, students' aspirations and experiences relating to their education have become adapted to economic concerns. Finally, the chapter examines the relationship between students and politics in the broadest sense. This leads to a critical analysis of available work on the student protests.

(i.) The 'student condition'

Students have a number of qualities that distinguish them from other social groups which, it is proposed in this thesis, might influence the nature of their collective protests. Scholars have referred to a 'student condition' (Rootes, 1982), 'student situation' or 'studenthood' (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1979 [1964]). In the Grenoble Charter of 1946, in which UNEF laid the foundations of post-war student unionism in France, a student is defined as a 'jeune travailleur intellectuel', a young intellectual worker. Firstly, the Charter asserts that, because students are young, they possess a 'prévoyance sociale particulière dans les domaines physique, intellectuel et moral'. Secondly, the Charter introduces the notion of students as a specific occupational group with the same legal and official status as workers (in 1948, equal status was partly achieved with the introduction of social security for students, but the idea of a student 'pre-salary' that was implicit in the Charter has never gained ground). Thirdly, the Charter defines students as intellectuals whose mission is to promote the values of justice and liberty (see Fischer, 2000: 52-4). Drawing on this notion of a young intellectual worker, I will examine the present day student condition in some more detail.

Students are usually young. In 1990 for instance, 90 per cent of university students in France were under 30, and 80 per cent were under 25 (Molinari, 1992: 72). It is thus important to consider

students – and therefore student protesters - from the perspective of their youth[1]. A brief summary of the literature on youth in France shows that it is constantly redefined in light of wider historical, political and economic events (Baudelot, 1988: 93)[2]. Edgar Morin (1962) was among the first in the 1960s to announce the emergence of young people in France as a new social actor, arguing that the demographic boom, the expansion of compulsory education and technological innovation had combined to produce a new 'juvenile and adolescent bio-class'. In the wake of the events of May 1968, some sociologists highlighted the pioneering role of youth, and students in particular, in the formation of new social struggles (Touraine, 1968). However, with the steep rise in unemployment from the 1970s onwards, the focus of studies shifted to the increasing social and economic fragility of certain categories of young people (Pialloux, 1979). In this period, some analysts disputed whether youth should be considered as a specific social category at all. Pierre Bourdieu (1980a) questioned the inclusion of young people from disparate backgrounds within the same social group, and Jacques Capdevielle, Hélène Meynaud and René Mouriaux (1991) highlighted the dangers of stigmatising the problems associated with youth.

Arguably, over the last forty years or so, the period of youth has been extended. Some analysts maintain that youth can now span more than a decade and even extend to the age of thirty and beyond (Anatrella, 1991). The transition to adulthood, once automatic and almost instantaneous, has become a period of postponement. Olivier Galland's (1991) research highlights a deferment of the milestones that mark the transition to adulthood, with growing numbers of young people in France continuing their studies beyond compulsory education, living with and being financially dependent upon their parents for longer periods and delaying the formation of enduring relationships. Galland among others also shows that a transformation of the position of young people on the job market has altered the transition to adulthood (1991: 126-161). Young people were among the worst affected by economic recession in the 1980s and 1990s in France, with levels of youth unemployment and job insecurity among the highest in Europe (Fize, 2002: 153). Between 1975 and 1994 for instance, unemployment levels among young people in the 20-24 age group increased fourfold (Meron & Minni, 1995). The expansion of temporary work, training under government initiatives and periods of unemployment led some analysts to argue in the mid-1990s that a new phase within youth itself had emerged between the completion of formal education and the commencement of stable employment (*INSEE-Prémière*: March 1995).

Analysts have interpreted youth in the 1980s and 1990s in different ways. Several studies show that the transition to adulthood continues to be shaped by factors such as social origin and gender (Galland, 1991: 155-161; Duru-Bellat, 1999: 55-68). On the whole however, they stress that youth has become a period of much greater social mobility and flexibility than in the past. Youth is often conceptualised as a phase of intense experimentation, where young people undertake the exciting but arduous task of 'self-assembly' through a process of trial and error (Galland, 1991; Vulbeau,

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[1]Galland defines youth as the intermediate phase in life between adolescence and adulthood (Galland & Cavalli, 1995: 7). As Bauby and Gerber point out, there is no agreement as to what is the age of youth: Insee studies for instance adopt an age bracket of 15 to 24, while Ined adopts an age bracket of 13 to 25 (1996: 14). For the purpose of this thesis, I refer to both students in upper-secondary and higher education as youths.
[2]For a broad historical and sociological background to the concept of youth, see Galland, O (1991) Sociologie de la Jeunesse (Colin).

1995; Galland & Cavalli, 1995). Accordingly, youth is also defined as a more unsettled period than forty years ago. Roulleau-Berger (1993) refers for instance to a 'vast zone of uncertainty'. These analyses imply that young people are unsure of their identity, have yet to 'settle down' and are consequently less mature than adults.

Michel Fize is one of few analysts in France to challenge the view that young people are automatically less mature than adults. He points out for instance that young people in France today are more educated than ever and, with the development of the mass media, are exposed to a much broader range of issues than in the past:

Les gains des jeunes en termes de maturation biologique, physique et mentale sont incontestables. Assurément, les enfants et les adolescents d'aujourd'hui ont plus de capacités réflexives qu'hier (ou plutôt, elles sont acquises plus vite). Ils sont plus instruits, plus informés, ils ont une plus grande ouverture sur le monde, grâce aux médias, notamment. Ils n'ont quasiment plus d'efforts à faire pour découvrir l'univers, c'est l'univers qui vient à eux, chaque jour. (2002: 198)

Fize challenges the assumption that, on reaching adulthood, we automatically attain 'full maturity'. He suggests some ways in which young people have in fact proved themselves to be more reasoned than their elders, comparing the adult-led disasters of the Holocaust and Hiroshima with the lucidity of young people opposed to war, world famine and the neglect of the environment (2002: 197-8). Fize concludes:

Nous ne pouvons plus l'ignorer, l'être humain est en état permanent de maturation: à chaque âge ses degrés, ses formes de maturité. Les adolescents ont des capacités – et même des capacités supérieures à celles des adultes dans certains domaines. (2002: 207)

Fize among others observes however that young people today are treated ambivalently by the older generation. He remarks on the one hand that young people are in certain respects revered. Over the last two decades or so, the older generation has increasingly adopted the cultural codes of young people, emulating the way they think and behave. Analysts of youth in France have thus referred to the emergence to 'adulescence' 'adolescentrisme' or 'jeunisme' (2002: 29). Yet Fize remarks on the other hand that young people continue in many ways to be treated as the subordinates of adults. He claims that in the political, social and economic spheres:

Le jeune est défini par rapport à l'adulte, à partir, toujours, de ses prétendues carences et insuffisances. Il demeure un adulte en moins: moins d'expérience, moins de savoir…Il n'a pas d'existence en soi. (2002: 20-21)

There are thus two conflicting views on youth in France in the 1980s and 1990s: the dominant view is that young people are in a sense 'incomplete' compared with adults, but this is challenged by Fize in particular who views young people as equal or even superior to adults in certain respects.

The scholarship on youth confronts us with a dilemma about the student protests. Just as there are two ways of interpreting youth in France today, there are two ways of understanding the student protests from the perspective of age. If we adopt the dominant view of youth as a phase of experimentation, then we might reason that the student protests were moments when young people tried out new experiences but did not in fact leave any lasting mark on French society. We

might also suppose that, just as young people are subordinate to adults, then student protests (and youth protests more generally) are subordinate to the collective protests of adults. Yet, if we adopt the less prominent view of young people as equal or even in some ways superior to adults, then we might take more notice of their collective protests. We might reason that student protests have special qualities precisely because the actors are young. We might stress that, for the very reason that they are young, students possess foresight and have the capacity to view the world in a new light (the Grenoble Charter portrays students in this way). We may therefore consider student protests differently, depending on whether we believe that young people are subordinate, equal or in some ways superior to adults. Our understanding of the student protests (and our decision to take more or less notice of them) will thus depend to an extent on the stance we adopt on youth.

The scholarship on youth prompts the further question of whether student protesters in upper-secondary and higher education should be identified as different on the basis of age. Valérie Erlich views age as a key aspect of university students' identity. She depicts student life as a gradual process of emancipation, observing that the experiences of younger students are 'juvenile' while students reaching the end of their studies are on the threshold of adulthood (1997: 195-218). Following on from this, we might deduce that, because they are younger still, *lycée* students are yet more juvenile than their counterparts in higher education. However, Erlich states that in fact there is no longer a clear-cut divide between the two:

Le report de l'entrée dans la vie adulte entraîne un glissement progressif et continu des modes de vie estudiantins vers des âges plus jeunes, des pratiques de type adolescent, et de fait inscrit une nouvelle identité de lycéen-étudiant. (1997: 22)

In a similar vein, André Miquel (1989) observes a process of 'secondarisation' within higher education in terms of the way students approach their studies (see Molinari, 1992: 96). Jean-Claude Chamborderon also notices a blurring of the traditional distinction in France between the *lycéen* and *étudiant*, arguing that the sharpest divisions within the student population now tend to cut across the boundary between upper-secondary and higher education (1991: 126). However, there remain some important differences between the *lycéen* and *étudiant* from the perspective of age. Students in higher education generally have greater autonomy from the family and the education system than *lycée* students (see Galland, 1991: 207). Also, as I discuss below, students in higher education tend to be at a more advanced stage in their political socialisation: they have reached the legal age of majority and, unlike most *lycée* students, can participate in the electoral process. The question thus arises as to whether a distinction can be drawn between student protesters in *lycées* and universities because they are at different phases in the transition to adulthood. To sum up, a consideration of the fact that students are young invites some interesting questions about the student protests, which I take up in this thesis.

The Grenoble Charter highlights a second feature of the student condition, which concerns students' status as intellectuals. Traditionally, students have been viewed as intrinsically linked to the intelligentsia and, as such, as part of an elite. Students have been especially associated with the type of politicised intellectual who embraces radical politics and revolutionary ideals – the 'intellectuel engagé'. Twentieth century Marxists describe the student world in terms of a 'sensitive

plate' (Lenin), 'social barometer' (Trotsky) or 'tactical avant-garde' (Mao) which can anticipate, amplify and even catalyse major social conflicts (see Weber, 1988: 107). Students in France regained a place within the wider politically committed intelligentsia from the early 1960s onwards, following their involvement in major social and political upheavals: student activists struggled for the independence of Algeria, opposed American intervention in Vietnam and ignited the events of May 1968. This prompted Touraine to describe the French student body in the late 1960s as a 'milieu préparé à exprimer des conflits et à mener des luttes que les catégories ou des classes sociales plus massives ne sont pas encore assez constituées pour entreprendre' (1968: 55).

Numerous other social movement analysts highlight the role of students in general as key agents of social change. Ron Eyerman and Andrew Jamison (1991) view students as 'movement intellectuals' in the sense that they are producers of new knowledge that forms the foundations of social movements. Claus Offe considers students to be among the social groups with a strong propensity to challenge the boundaries of institutional politics, given their peripheral position in relation to the labour market (1985: 832). Tarrow also identifies students among the actors that appear with regularity in the vanguard of social movements (1998: 144, 156). Bourdieu and Passeron sum up the main reasons why students are viewed as being more likely than other social groups to challenge the dominant arrangements of power. Describing student life as a period of exemption from many social obligations, they comment that not only do most students have time on their hands, their freedom also allows them to take an open stance on issues which other social actors may avoid confronting:

> *Students certainly live and mean to live in a special time and space. Their studenthood momentarily frees them from family life and working life (...) Aside from the constraints imposed by the academic calendar, there are neither dates nor schedules. The student situation enables the temporal frameworks of social life to be broken.* (1979: 29 [1964])

The question arises as to whether student protesters in France between 1986 and 1999 conform to traditional images of students as politically committed intellectuals and social movement actors. Erlich observes that students' special relationship with time and space has essentially remained unchanged: students still tend to have more time for recreational, cultural and intellectual pursuits than people in full-time employment (1997: 152-175). However, my findings below and in Chapter 4 suggest that very few students in France in the 1980s and 1990s took advantage of their unique position to become committed to the types of radical politics that shaped the student protests of the 1960s. Students remained intellectuals in an academic sense, but very few conformed to the particular type of intellectual that is highlighted in the Grenoble Charter.

A third feature of the student condition is students' status as future workers. The Grenoble Charter equates students with workers, defining them as an occupational group. However, this belies the much more complex and ambivalent status of students in terms of their relationship to the workplace. In different ways, analysts have tried to explain this problematic dimension of students' status. Dubet and Martuccelli (1996) for instance describe 'un temps suspendu et sérieux', highlighting the paradox that student life is on the one hand a period of exemption from many social obligations, but on the other hand is also a 'serious' period in which one's future social and

economic status is determined. Students are also conceptualised as 'virtual actors' since they can only act in anticipation of what the future holds (Rayou, 1996; Perrenoud, 1994). As Bourdieu and Passeron famously assert in *The Inheritors*:

> *The student has and can have no other task than to work toward his or her own disappearance qua student (...) Just as everyone agrees, without drawing the same conclusions, that the definition of a student is someone who studies, so it will be readily accepted that to be a student is to prepare oneself for an occupational future. But it is not superfluous to draw out all the implications of this formula. It implies, first of all, that the action of studying is a means to an end which is external to it. It follows that a situation which is defined as provisional and transitional can only derive its seriousness from the occupational situation for which it prepares, or, in other words, that here the present has reality vicariously and proleptically. Therefore, if this logic is followed through, the most rational way of doing the job of a student would be to organize all one's present action with a view to the demands of one's occupational future and to apply all the rational means to attain this explicitly posited end as quickly as possible. The reality is quite different (...) Everything takes place as if students unconsciously strove to conceal from themselves the true nature of their work, by separating their present from their future, the means from the ends that they are supposed to serve.* (1979: 55-6 [1964])

Bourdieu and Passeron portray the student condition as an antechamber to the workplace, but observe that students in the early 1960s did not in fact perceive their situation as such. As I show below however, two decades later many students had realised the 'true nature of their work': studies carried out in the 1980s and 1990s reveal that growing numbers of students came to view education in terms of preparation for an occupational future.

Through an analysis of students as workers, it becomes apparent that the Grenoble Charter overlooks a fourth feature of the student condition, which I define as transience. In its attempt to instate students as an occupational group, the Charter plays down the fact that students do not remain students for long and that, as a result, there is a continual cycle of students entering and leaving the education system. Students are not therefore an occupational group in the same sense as workers. This aspect of the student condition has led some analysts to argue that student protests are also inherently short-lived. Martinelli and Cavalli for instance maintain that, 'The temporary nature of the student status and the consequent rapid turnover in the student population makes for high instability of movements based exclusively on students' (1972: 32). This prompts the question of whether the student protests in France were also characterised by 'high instability' due to the transient nature of the student condition.

To sum up, the definition of a student in the Grenoble Charter is accurate in part but requires some revision and updating. Firstly, the Charter passes over some complex issues relating to students' non-adult status. Secondly, its portrayal of a 'student intellectual' no longer seems to apply to the vast majority of students in France (if it ever did). Thirdly, the Charter oversimplifies students' occupational status, defining students as workers rather than as future workers. Finally, it neglects the transient dimension of the student condition. By way of an alternative definition, I propose therefore that the student condition presently combines four distinctive features: youth, transience, exemption from certain social obligations and an ambivalent occupational status. Following on from this, I propose that aspects of the student condition may influence the nature of the student protests. This is a possibility that I bear in mind throughout the thesis, and review in Chapter 6 in light of my findings.

Finally, it is interesting to note that, although students evidently have features in common, scholars are divided as to whether they comprise a coherent social group. On the one hand, Christian Baudelot et al. affirm that, 'Il existe bel et bien un statut étudiant' (1981: 58). They argue that while the student body in France has grown increasingly diverse, students can still be distinguished from young people who are not students, not least because of their specific legal and occupational status. Furthermore, Galland et al. demonstrate that, when asked to describe their social status, the vast majority of those asked define themselves first and foremost as students (1995: 192-199). On the other hand, some analysts of students in France refute the existence of a coherent group. In the 1960s, Bourdieu and Passeron (1964) argued that the notion of a student status was artificial, viewing class background as much more significant than any 'student consciousness' in shaping students' experiences and outlook. More recently, analysts have denied the existence of a student status for different reasons. Didier Lapeyronnie and Jean-Louis Marie argue for instance that 'massification' in French universities has hastened students' retreat into the private sphere and that, as a result, 'Le statut étudiant ne fait plus sens' (1992: 93). Other analysts observe that the student body as a whole is not bound together by any profound sense of solidarity or collective identity, highlighting the existence of diverse communities or 'micro-groups' within the student population (Molinari, 1992: 102-105; Galland et al., 1995: 109-126). It appears therefore that, when considered as a whole and compared with other social groups, a coherent student status can be identified. When viewed from within however, the heterogeneity of the student population is much more striking. Several studies carried out in the 1980s and 1990s stress that students are from diverse backgrounds, study in varied conditions and have a range of concerns and objectives. These provide a useful starting point for identifying which students took part in the protests and what their possible motives were.

(ii.) The social composition of the student population

The rapid expansion and diversification of the education system has transformed the student population in France. The traditional figure of the 'Inheritors' has not disappeared, but now exists alongside a new, more diverse population of students from lower middle and working class backgrounds. A variety of new courses of study have been created, and the technical sector of upper-secondary and higher education has expanded rapidly, especially in the provinces[3]. The question of democratisation has been central to the analysis of the student population in France since the 1960s, when Bourdieu and Passeron (1964) first asserted that the education system perpetuated the reproduction of inequalities based on social class. Antoine Prost remarks that levels of democratisation can be gauged in two ways: quantitatively, by measuring the rise in student numbers; and qualitatively, through a study of progress made in terms of equality of

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[3] An important development in upper-secondary education has been the introduction of the *baccalauréat professionnel* in 1985, in order to meet the objective of 80 per cent of young people attaining *baccalauréat* level. In higher education, the implementation of the 'Plan 2000 pour les Universités' by the Rocard administration in 1990 resulted in further expansion. In the early 1990s, several new universities and Instituts Universitaires de Technologie (IUTs) were created in provincial towns. For an analysis of policies in upper-secondary and higher education, see for example Firth, K (1994) 'Towards diversity – developments in French secondary education since 1980' Modern & Contemporary France 2-4, pp.383-393, and Toulemonde, B (2003) Le Système Educatif en France (La Documentation Française).

opportunity at various levels of the education system (1986: 11-12). With the rise in student numbers, and young people from all social backgrounds now going on to upper-secondary and higher education, a more democratic system has certainly emerged. While in 1981 34 per cent of young people achieved *baccalauréat* level, by 1996 the proportion had more than doubled to 68 per cent (Duru-Bellat, 1999: 52). By the mid-1990s, almost half of young people (46%) aged between 18 and 22 were in higher education (Galland et al., 1995: 10). However, qualitative progress is more difficult to measure, and the role of social origin and other factors in determining the trajectories of young people through the education system remains much debated.

Empirical studies reveal the persistence of inequalities within the French education system on the basis of social origin. In upper-secondary education, the majority of students in the prestigious scientific 'C' section of the *baccalauréat général* in the early 1990s were of upper and middle class origin. Inversely, a large proportion of students in the technical 'F' (tertiary) and 'G' (industrial) sections, as well as those studying in *lycées professionnels*, were from working class backgrounds (Vasconcellos, 1993; Duru-Bellat, 1999). In 1993, the *baccalauréat général* was restructured with the aim of reducing the dominance of the 'C' section. However, divisions based on social class persisted. In 1995, 54 per cent of students in the new 'S' (scientific) section had parents in professional or management positions, compared with 43 per cent of students in the 'L' (literature) and 'ES' (economics-society) sections, and between 27 and 31 per cent in the technical 'F' and 'G' sections (Duru-Bellat, 1999: 48). Therefore, although most young people in France have gained access to upper-secondary education, the social backgrounds of students in the different *baccalauréat* options continue to vary considerably.

A similar picture emerges in higher education. Erlich observes that in the mid-1990s a disproportionately high percentage of students in *grandes écoles* (and the preparatory schools for these) were from middle and upper class backgrounds. While over half of students in *grandes écoles* were from privileged backgrounds, the proportion of young people of working class origin in some institutions was frequently less than 5 per cent (Erlich, 1997: 57). Michel Euriat and Claude Thélot (1995) show that in the four most prestigious *grandes écoles* (*Ecole polytéchnique, Ecole normale supérieure, ENA* and *HEC*), the proportion of students from working class backgrounds actually decreased between 1950 and 1990, although they attribute this development to a general decline in the number of young people from working class backgrounds in the French population as a whole. They conclude that the *grandes écoles* have generally become more accessible to young people from all backgrounds, but considerably less so than the universities.

Erlich's study of university students shows that over half of students in the faculties of medicine and pharmacy in 1996-1997 were from middle or upper class backgrounds, while arts and humanities students tended to come from more modest backgrounds. Furthermore, in the more advanced stages of higher education the proportion of students from working class backgrounds diminished. For example, 37 per cent of students at postgraduate level in the 1996-1997 academic year were from the most privileged backgrounds compared with up to 10 per cent from working class backgrounds (1997: 53-56). The largest presence of students from working class backgrounds has traditionally been found in the technical sector of higher education (the IUTs and STS). However,

although this has remained the case in the STS, the social make-up of students in IUTs has altered since the mid-1970s. In IUTs, the proportion of students from the most privileged backgrounds increased from 15 to 26 per cent between 1975 and 1994 (Erlich, 1997: 57). The attraction of studies which offer a more structured environment and better job prospects than some university courses seems to have extended beyond the traditionally working class population of students. This may effectively have relegated students from less privileged backgrounds to disciplines that are less prestigious in terms of employment opportunities[4].

The social composition of the student population is much more diverse than forty years ago then, but studies highlight the persistence of inequalities. The French education system has been conceptualised as a 'reversed image of the nation' in terms of its class composition (Prost, 1986; Erlich, 1997: 54). Molinari views the trajectory of students through the French education system as a 'game of chance', where the probability of academic achievement varies according to social origin. He notes that while the vast majority of young people from upper class backgrounds and over half of those from middle class backgrounds were going on to higher education by the early 1990s, this was the case for only 10 per cent of young people of working class origin. Molinari thus asserts that, 'Le peuplement des établissements d'enseignement supérieur s'opère en effet selon des logiques d'inversion, de ségrégation et de dominance de classe' (1992: 54-57). One of the dominant theories of the 1990s asserts that the French education system has been transformed from a place of social reproduction into one where inequalities are actually produced (Bourdieu & Champagne, 1992; Dubet, 1991). It is argued that the culture of the education system replicates the culture of the dominant class, thus producing the relegation of young people from working class backgrounds to the disciplines which offer limited social and economic prospects.

Some analysts emphasise determinants other than social origin to explain the heterogeneity of the French student population. Galland et al. study the diverse cultures of the various disciplines within higher education, arguing that students are both attracted to and influenced by the particular cultural and historical ethos of their chosen discipline (1995: 204-205)[5]. Galland et al. identify two broad categories of students in French universities: on one hand, those in the selective IUTs and to an extent the sciences, who are generally well integrated and enjoy fairly secure employment prospects; on the other hand, students of the 'université de masse' in non-selective disciplines, notably languages and arts subjects, whose career expectations are more modest (1995: 188). Galland et al. concede however that it is difficult to distinguish between the determinants of discipline and social origin, given the extent to which the two overlap (1995: 30).

Galland et al. also suggest that there is a deepening divide between Parisian and provincial students. Since the rapid expansion of higher education and the decentralisation reforms that took effect from the early 1980s onwards, the importance of Paris as the nucleus of French higher education appears to have declined. In 1955, 40 per cent of the student population was based in

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[4] A more detailed analysis of the social composition of students in higher education is found in Merle, P (1996) 'Les transformations socio-démographiques des filières de l'enseignement supérieur de 1985 à 1995. Essai d'interprétation' Population 6, pp.1181-1210.

[5] The different cultures can be further broken down into subjects studied within each discipline. See Le Bart, C., Merle, P (1997) La citoyenneté étudiante (PUF), p.13.

the Paris region, but by the early 1990s the proportion had more than halved (Robert, 1993: 225-228). They show furthermore that the social origins of Parisian students continue to be more 'bourgeois' than in the provinces, where the effects of democratisation have been more marked (1995: 82)[6]. Studies of geographical variations in upper-secondary education reveal more localised disparities. Dubet and Martuccelli (1996) for example highlight a divide between the prestigious *lyceés* situated in affluent town centres and what have become labeled the '*lycées poubelles*' of disadvantaged suburbs. Although the creation of ZEP (urban priority zones) since 1981 has introduced positive discrimination in favour of secondary and upper-secondary establishments in disadvantaged areas, conditions in many of the ZEP have continued to lag behind those in more affluent locations (Plaisance, 1988; Duru-Bellat, 1999)[7].

A final determinant that has historically divided the student population and continues to do so is gender. Several analysts have traced the gradual feminisation of the French education system and affirm the persistence of inequalities (Baudelot & Establet, 1992)[8]. Studies of *lycée* students in the 1990s reveal important differences between the sexes. In many respects, girls have surpassed their male counterparts: they are more likely to obtain a *baccalauréat* qualification and achieve higher pass rates. However, boys continued to dominate the science subjects, notably the prestigious 'C' section (Robert, 1993: 228-229). In 1995, 81 per cent of students in the final year of the 'L' (literature) section were female, compared with 61 per cent in 'ES' (economics-society) and 42 per cent in the 'S' (scientific) section (Duru-Bellat, 1999: 48). While female students outnumber their male counterparts in higher education, gender-based inequalities persist. Whereas male students form a majority in the more prestigious preparatory schools for *grandes écoles*, engineering, mathematics and physics disciplines, women tend to dominate the literary subjects in universities. Erlich also observes that female students are more likely to leave higher education earlier (1997: 49).

(iii.) Students' outlook on education

Several studies attempt to classify students in terms of their experiences, concerns and objectives. Some analysts pay close attention to students whose experiences in the education system can be described as 'negative'. Dubet examines the *nouveaux lycéens* from mainly working class and/or immigrant backgrounds who are in a paradoxical situation. While for these students the opportunity to study for the *baccalauréat* symbolises a rise in social position, many find themselves in the least prestigious disciplines where conditions and prospects are generally poor (1991: 91; 1996: 257-258). Dubet and Martuccelli also focus on a group of students in *lycées professionnels*

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[6]While in several Parisian universities over half of students are of middle and upper class social origin (the most 'bourgeois' being Paris IX - Dauphine with 73% of students from privileged backgrounds), the largest proportion of students from working class backgrounds is found in the provinces. In the late 1980s for instance, the highest percentage of students of working class origin (22%) was found in Besançon University (*Le Monde*, 13th June 1989).

[7] Other studies that highlight geographical particularities are Lapeyronnie, D (1991) 'Villetanteuse la banlieusarde' Dossiers et Documents du Monde (L'explosion scolaire et universitaire) Oct: 192, and Dubet, F (et al.) (1994) Universités et villes (Harmattan).

[8]See also Terrail, J.-P (1992) 'Déstins scolaires de sexe: une perspective historique et quelques arguments' *Population* 3, pp.645-676; Duru-Bellat, M (1991) L'Ecole des filles, Quelle formation pour quels rôles sociaux? (Harmattan).

whose situation is especially precarious. They states that for these young people 'l'expérience scolaire se vide et, pour le dire simplement, les élèves n'ont plus de bonnes raisons de travailler' (1996: 338).

One study of students in higher education provoked controversy in the early 1990s. In *Campus Blues* (1992), Lapeyronnie and Marie evoke the alienation of students lost in the mass of the French university system, stressing the particular difficulties faced by first year students in the non-selective disciplines. Erlich also examines the process of selection and elimination that takes place in the first year, where students who fail in one discipline are relegated to a less prestigious one. She notes that the highest failure and dropout rates in universities are found precisely among the former *nouveaux lycéens*, those students with technical *baccalauréat* diplomas whose experiences in upper-secondary education appear particularly incompatible with the demands of higher education (1997: 71).

Studies show that students in certain disciplines tend to be more critical than others about various aspects of their education. In higher education, a combination of non-selection, weak integration and a lack of opportunities on the job market seem to be conducive to student discontent. In universities, arts and humanities and language students (and to a lesser extent law and economics students) consistently expressed grievances related to inefficient administration, inadequate facilities, a lack of guidance, the absence of a student community and poor job prospects. However, such grievances are ambivalent because the same students frequently expressed satisfaction with their education in general (Erlich, 1997: 118; Galland, et al., 1995: 141, 188). Indeed, not all university students appear to have been profoundly discontented with their education. Galland et al. state that many students are not as discontented as might be expected given the deterioration of their conditions, and finds examples of students in non-selective disciplines such as the sciences who are well integrated (1995: 35, 189). Erlich's study also shows that students generally become more satisfied as they advance to higher levels of the university system (1997: 120-122).

Most studies stress the importance of selection in shaping the experiences and aspirations of students in the 1980s and 1990s. Erlich distinguishes between the experiences of students who have been selected and those who have not[9]. The *grandes écoles*, the preparatory classes for these, the IUTs and STS and other selective establishments are generally considered to offer security in terms of employment prospects. However, Erlich notes that in the 1990s IUT and STS students became more critical about the content of their studies and future job prospects (1997: 118, 125). As another analysis sums up: 'Curieusement, alors que le BTS est un diplôme apprécié sur le marché du travail, les élèves qui le préparent sont les plus préoccupés par leur avenir et ceux qui redoutent le plus le chômage' (*Le Monde*, 8th February 1990).

Dubet and Martuccelli define the selection process at entry to upper-secondary education as a 'rite of exclusion' (1996: 329). As certain students are eliminated from particular disciplines, they are

[9] A more detailed analysis of the distinction between students in selective and non-selective disciplines is found in Le Bart, C., Merle, P (1997) La Citoyenneté Etudiante (PUF).

also permanently eliminated from certain career paths. He states that the weakest students are acutely aware that they have already been excluded from many opportunities, and that to leave education with no qualifications actually translates into a 'negative qualification' on the job market. From this angle, the experiences of students seem almost to be defined by the professional prospects that await them. As Dubet and Martuccelli observe, 'Les élèves se définissent par leurs espérences de carrière, de promotion ou d'insertion professionnelle, associées à leur position dans un système constitué de hiérarchies multiples et affinées' (1996: 241).

The strategies French students adopt have indeed become increasingly determined by the perceived profitability of certain diplomas on the job market (Molinari, 1992: 96). From Régine Boyer et al.'s study of *lycée* students, it emerges that many choose subjects according to their perceived value in terms of professional prospects. Over 80 per cent of students were able to give precise career objectives: their strategies were essentially instrumental and derived from the immediate usefulness of certain subjects in the furthering of professional goals (1991: 113; 164-165). According to Dubet, this instrumentalist approach exemplifies the eclipse of traditional republican values by a principle of utility: the fundamental objective of the education system today is no longer to educate, but to equip young people with diplomas which are useful on the job market (1991: 12,44). On the basis of research carried out in *lycées* and *collèges* in the northern outskirts of Paris, Jean-Yves Rochex also argues that:

> *La valeur reconnue à l'école, à ce qu'on y apprend et aux diplômes qu'elle délivre tend à se réduire à ce que nous appelons leur valeur monétaire, au détriment de leur valeur formative, c'est-à-dire leur valeur 'monnayable' sur le marché du travail ou des filières de formation , au détriment de ce qu'ils permettent de faire pour eux-mêmes* (...) *Tout se passe comme si le sens de l'école n'avait pas grand chose à voir avec ce qu'on y apprend, et se réduisait à la course d'obstacles permettant de passer dans la classe supérieure, de réussir aux examens, d'accéder à tel ou tel métier, ou plutôt à la position sociale qu'il représente parce que la référence au métier fonctionne la plupart du temps de manière imaginaire, en terms de 'bon métier' de 'bon place' sans que ces élèves établissent de relation claire* (...) *Cette opposition entre valeur monétaire et valeur formative se révèle particulièrement meurtrière lorsque la valeur monétaire s'avère être monnaie de singe, ou du moins fortement dévaluée par la menace du chômage, de la déqualification ou de la précarité.* (1991: 16)

Intriguingly, the strategies of many students in higher education appear to be less determined by career aspirations than *lycée* students. Research shows that many students in the selective establishments of higher education elaborate strategies of a professional nature, as well as a proportion of students in the non-selective disciplines whose aim is to enter the teaching profession (Erlich, 1997: 104; Dubet, 1994: 514). However, a majority of arts and humanities students claimed to have selected their discipline purely on the basis of its intellectual content (Galland et al., 1995: 28; Erlich, 1997: 106). Galland et al. highlight the paradox that the same students express concerns about future career prospects and complain about the unsuitability of diplomas to the needs of the job market. Their explanation is that many students develop an 'intellectual' strategy in order to compensate for the lack of social prestige and diminishing employment prospects which they know to be associated with their discipline (1995: 36-37).

A further type of strategy adopted by students involves the accumulation of diplomas. This can take several forms. Certain students remain in education in order to postpone their arrival on the

job market and prolong the relative security of student life. More than three-quarters of IUT students in Erlich's study expressed their intention to enroll on university courses after graduation (1997: 108). Also, a growing number of students appeared to remain in education simply as a means of avoiding unemployment and a decline in social position. Erlich sums up the logic behind this strategy:

On va à la faculté "pour la faculté" et pour obtenir un diplôme au niveau le plus élevé possible sans avoir de projet professionnel, la crise de l'emploi conduisant les étudiants à viser les plus hauts niveaux possibles. (1997: 108)

Many students in studies carried out in the 1980s and 1990s did not appear to have a specific strategy concerning their education, particularly in universities. Almost 40 per cent of students in Erlich's study claimed that their situation was dictated by previous failures or changes of discipline. Students who had accumulated several failures expressed strong convictions that the studies they were pursuing were a 'last chance'. The trajectories of these students through the education system appear to have been a prolonged process of elimination (1997: 104-110).

Finally, having focused on the determinant of academic discipline in shaping the strategies, experiences and aspirations of students in France, it is important to point out that additional factors come into play, especially social origin and gender. Le Bart and Merle's study of students in higher education shows for instance that female students are less optimistic about their chances of passing exams than male students, even though they often achieve better results (1997: 45). Studies of students in upper-secondary education also show that boys tend to be more confident than girls (Boyer et al., 1991). However, female students also tend to have higher expectations of the education system than male students, and are more critical about various aspects of their education. This may be explained by the high proportion of women studying in the least prestigious disciplines (Galland et al., 1995: 39; Erlich, 1997: 117-118). The determinant of social origin also appears to influence students' career aspirations. Students from working class backgrounds are shown to be the most critical about their education, and less likely than their counterparts from more privileged backgrounds to have ambitious career projects or confidence in their professional future (Galland et al., 1995: 47-8; Erlich, 1997: 122-123).

(iv.) The devaluation of qualifications in secondary and university education

The scholarship on students in France shows that unemployment and diminishing career prospects became a key source of anxiety from the mid-1980s onwards, particularly for students in upper-secondary education and non-selective disciplines in universities. In Borredon's study, almost 90 per cent of *lycée* students expressed concerns about prospects (1995: 43) and by the 1990s growing numbers of students in the selective disciplines and institutions of higher education were beginning to express anxiety about their professional future (*Le Monde*, 8th February 1990). It is instructive to establish whether students' anxiety was justified because, as I demonstrate in Chapter 4, concerns about the social and economic utility of qualifications were the main catalyst of the protests.

Studies generally confirm that the expansion of upper-secondary and higher education at a time of economic instability and unemployment has given rise to a devaluation of certain qualifications. Although the devaluation of qualifications was often discussed in the 1970s, empirical studies generally reveal its effects at the time to have been minimal (Baudelot, et al., 1981). It was from the early 1980s onwards that the economic downturn started to have an increasingly adverse impact on employment opportunities for young people with qualifications. A 1986 CEREQ study shows that while graduate job prospects remained buoyant on the whole, pockets of uncertainty were beginning to appear, notably for graduates in the literary disciplines, the human and social sciences, chemistry and some of the newer subjects (*Le Monde*, 21st October 1986). A brief economic upturn and various government initiatives to boost youth recruitment in the late 1980s had a positive but short-lived impact, and INSEE studies between 1991 and 1994 highlight a rapid decline of employment prospects for school leavers and graduates. In 1994, over a third of young people under 25 with no qualifications were unemployed. More significantly, employment prospects for *baccalauréat* holders rapidly diminished. By 1994, as many *baccalauréat* holders as CAP and BEP holders were unemployed (18.4% and 18.6% respectively). Also, unemployment among DEUG, DUT and BTS graduates doubled, peaking in 1994 at almost 12 per cent (Erlich, 1997: 75-76).

Not only was there a rise in unemployment, but young people leaving education also had to adapt to an increasingly flexible job market. Growing numbers of highly educated young people took up posts which had previously been reserved for less qualified candidates. Erlich observes a significant decrease in the proportion of French graduates taking up management posts, with the exception of those with prestigious or postgraduate diplomas (1997: 77-79). According to Galland et al.'s study, students with two year university diplomas in 1992 were twice as likely to become clerical personnel or blue collar workers as the decade before (1995: 18). Furthermore, Duru-Bellat observes that fewer young people from working class backgrounds with the same qualifications as their counterparts from more privileged backgrounds gained access to the more prestigious careers in terms of salaries and social status. Her study also shows that male school leavers and graduates continued to enjoy better prospects than their female counterparts (Duru-Bellat, 1999: 59)[10].

Analysts refer to a cascade effect that has taken place within the French education system over the last two decades or so (Baudelot & Glaude, 1989; Duru-Bellat & Henriot-Van Zanten, 1992). With the *baccalauréat* no longer providing a ticket to stable employment, growing numbers of young people continued to higher education. In turn, this gave rise to a devaluation or 'banalisation' of certain university qualifications on the job market. As Galland et al. state:

Avec la généralisation de l'accès au niveau du baccalauréat, l'arbitrage se fait de plus en plus entre des études supérieures courtes et des études supérieures longues. Sur le plan professionnel, les bacheliers ont manifestement intérêt à poursuivre des études au moins jusqu'au niveu du DEUG, du DUT ou du BTS. (1995: 17)

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[10] Martinelli also examines how factors such as social origin and gender affected graduate job prospects in the early 1990s. See Martinelli, D (1994) 'Diplômes de l'université. Insertion au début des années 1990' Publication CEREQ 100, p.43. For further analyses of graduate employment prospects, see Bauby and Gerber (1996), pp.65-84, Galland (1995), pp.16-19 and Molinari (1992), pp.33-49.

It is nevertheless important to recognise that young people with qualifications continued to have a distinct advantage over school leavers without qualifications in terms of employment prospects. In the 1980s and 1990s *baccalauréat* holders were six times as likely to obtain a management or middle-management position compared with young people with qualifications below *baccalauréat* level or no qualifications (Duru-Bellat, 1999: 65).

(v.) Students, politics and society

An analysis of the relationship between students, politics and society in the 1980s and 1990s allows us to begin to situate the student protests within a broader context and provides some initial clues as to their nature. Unfortunately however, the literature in this area is quite thin. Studies focus primarily on students in higher education and tend to follow one of two approaches. The first attempts to gauge students' political skills and knowledge. It prompts the question of whether, because they are young, students as politically and socially sophisticated as adults. The second approach examines students' attitudes towards politics and society in the 1980s and 1990s. It prompts the question of whether students' political and social outlook complemented or contradicted that of the older generation. In two different ways then, this literature invites further consideration of students from the perspective of their youth.

The issue of students' political skills and knowledge comes to the fore in my analysis of the student protests in Chapters 4 and 6. A frequent criticism levelled at student protesters (especially by ministers) was that they did not adequately understand the various proposals for educational reform that they opposed, the underlying assumption being that their political skills and knowledge were inferior to those of adults. In order to try to establish whether this was the case, it is useful to examine studies that explore students' political skills and knowledge more generally. This proves however to be a poorly researched area of scholarship in France. To my knowledge, only Pierre Favre and Michel Offerlé (2002) have tried to gauge the political skills and knowledge of students[11]. Their findings are by no means representative of the student body as a whole as they are based on newly enrolled law and politics students in higher education. They nevertheless show that while most participants could answer some questions correctly, only a minority was able to give accurate definitions of some political concepts such as 'social democracy' and 'populism' (70 per cent of students did not attempt any definition of these). They also confirm a strong correlation between political competence and social origin, with the highest scores obtained by students whose parents were teachers, managers or other professionals.

Alain Borredon (1995) is one of few analysts to have explored the political skills and knowledge of *lycée* students within the context of his research on *lycée* student protests between 1986 and 1994. One point he argues is that the relationship between *lycée* students and politics is characterised by experimentation:

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[11] Favre and Offerlé's study was carried out in 1999 and is based on over 4000 questionnaires completed by students. In order to gauge their political knowledge, students were given a series of multiple choice questions prompting them to decide whether certain reforms had been implemented between 1981 and 1988, who had been prime minister, and so on. They were also asked to define such terms as 'populisme, cohabitation, jacobinisme, social-démocratie' (2002: 205-6).

Bien que non mature sur tous les plans, le lycéen n'est plus un incapable: il expérimente de nouveaux rôles qui le rendent conscient - au moins partiellement - de ce qu'il devient ou/et de ce qu'il pourrait développer. (1995: 70)

Borredon draws attention to the fact that the relationship between *lycée* students and politics is rather more complex than for students in higher education. *Lycée* students are political novices, more so than their counterparts in higher education. Because of their age, most *lycée* students are excluded from the electoral process and have no connections with the institutions of formal politics. This again invites the question of whether student protesters in *lycées* and universities can be identified as different on the basis of age: do protesters in universities have a more advanced level of political maturity than their younger counterparts in *lycées*? This is a question that I revisit in Chapter 6.

A second approach investigates students' attitudes towards politics and society in the 1980s and 1990s. Some analysts have considered whether students are similar to young people who are not students in terms of their political and social outlook. Anne Muxel refers to students in the context of her research on youth and politics in France. She suggests that students are in many ways similar to 'non students', although they tend to express a greater interest in politics and affirm a stronger willingness to engage in forms of collective action (1996: 76,100). Galland et al. echo Muxel, but make the further observation that students' partisan preferences and electoral behaviour in the 1990s were more moderate than young people in general. Fewer university students supported political parties on the far left than young workers, and student support for the FN was negligible compared with young people as a whole (1995: 148)[12].

Analysts have also compared students with the population in general in terms of their outlook on politics and society, and tend to conclude that students in the 1980s and 1990s did not fundamentally diverge from other social groups in this respect. Le Bart and Merle assert for instance that students in France in the 1990s were not a distinctive social group in terms of their stance towards politics. Their study suggests that students' attitudes towards politics were, like the rest of the population, extremely diverse, with a general trend towards political disaffection (1997: 183). Analysts such as Muxel (1994, 1996) and Bauby and Gerber (1996) observe a number of shifts in the nature of political participation in France which are visible in all age groups but tend to be more pronounced in youth. On the one hand, they highlight a widespread decline in support for the traditional political parties, increasingly volatile electoral behaviour, growing disaffection with the electoral process and the diminished appeal of traditional activism. On the other hand, they suggest that a search is underway for new types of political participation that are characterised by experimentation with forms of direct democracy, an increased willingness to promote or defend single-issue causes centred notably on environmental, antiracist and humanitarian concerns, and a growing trend towards pragmatism in the way that ordinary people respond to political and social problems.

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[12]For further studies of the relationship between youth and politics in the 1980s and 1990s, see notably Galland, O (1984, 1991); Percheron, A., Remond, R (eds.) (1991); Bauby, P., Gerber, T (1996).

A key point to retain here is that students in France in the 1980s and 1990s did not seem to be profoundly at odds with the older generation in terms of their relationship with politics and society. Shifts in the nature of political participation were perhaps more conspicuous among young people, but by no means exclusive to them. This strikes a contrast with images of youth and students in France in the 1960s as being profoundly at odds with the values and modes of behaviour of the older generation, which led several analysts to explain youthful and student unrest during that period in terms of intergenerational conflict (see Joffrin, 1988). As Bauby and Gerber point out, there has been a weakening of the generation gap over the last few decades:

L'hypothèse du "fossé des générations", largement utilisée dans les années 1960 pour expliquer les modes de constitution de l'identité des jeunes générations par rapport aux anciennes, ne semble plus opérationnelle aujourd'hui. (1996: 130)

Research carried out by Galland et al. (1995) and Le Bart and Merle (1997) permits a more detailed analysis of students' outlook on politics and society in the 1980s and 1990s. Initially, their findings suggest that students are less disillusioned with politics than might be expected: most were willing to state a partisan preference and more than half expressed an interest in politics. Furthermore, a majority of students (82%) in Galland et al.'s study claimed to be on the electoral register and to have voted in the 1992 regional elections (1995: 131). The authors acknowledge that this supposedly high level of electoral participation is somewhat suspicious given the consistently low turnouts for regional elections (1995: 133). The results also appear unreliable because a study carried out in 1990 suggests that around a fifth of first and second year students in higher education were not in fact registered to vote (see Molinari, 1992: 116). Galland et al. and Le Bart and Merle thus concede that there are discrepancies between students' assertions on the one hand and their actual political behaviour on the other (Le Bart & Merle, 1997: 170).

A closer examination of the research shows that students' political attitudes and behaviour are in fact diverse. For example, levels of interest in politics are shown to vary significantly within the different disciplines of higher education. In Le Bart and Merle's study, more social science students (38%) stated that they had little or no interest in politics than law students (22%) and IEP students (3%) (1997: 240). In Galland's study, a majority of law and economics students (70%) expressed an interest in politics, compared with around half of humanities students and 40 per cent of students in IUTs, physical education and science subjects (1995: 132). Levels of interest in politics are also shown to vary according to gender, more so than the determinant of social origin: fewer female students expressed an interest in politics than their male counterparts (47% and 61% respectively) (Galland et al., 1995: 132).

Students' partisan preferences are furthermore shown to be varied. In Galland et al.'s study, arts and humanities students were more likely to support the moderate left, while law and economics students were more attached to the moderate right. Students whose parents were clerical or manual workers were also more likely to express an affinity with the parties of the left. More than a fifth of students claimed to support the ecology parties, with the strongest support among arts and humanities and science students. Students in IUTs were the least likely to express a partisan preference (1995: 138-142). Female students were more likely to support the socialist and ecology

parties than their male counterparts. This contrasts with Bourdieu and Passeron's study forty years previously that showed female students to be more strongly attached to the parties of the right (Galland et al., 1995: 144,158). Furthermore, Galland et al. confirm that very few students supported the parties of the far left (around 3%) and the FN on the far right (around 1%) (1995: 148).

While most students were willing to express a partisan preference, they were reticent about joining a political party. Less than 15 per cent of students in Galland et al.'s study stated that they were willing to join a political party, and just over 20 per cent that they were prepared to join a trade union (however, the proportion increased to 33 per cent among humanities students) (1995: 136). These findings also contrast with those of Bourdieu and Passeron in 1964 when a majority of students expressed a willingness to join a political party or a trade union (Galland et al., 1995: 158-160). By the mid-1990s, many more students appeared willing to join associations for the defence of the environment (64%) and human rights (60%) than the traditional political parties and trade unions (Galland et al., 1995: 136).

Students' disaffection with the traditional parties and trade unions extends to the student organisations and political *groupuscules*[13]. Robbi Morder (1989) estimates that at the time of the November-December 1986 protests there were around a thousand student activists on the left and far left in universities, where there had been roughly four thousand a decade before. Membership of student organisations is presently estimated at between 1 and 2 per cent of the student population in higher education, and turnouts for student elections are consistently low at around 5 per cent (Fischer, 2000: 504; Crettiez & Sommier, 2002: 194). In upper-secondary education, the main student organisation FIDL claimed in 1994 to have around a thousand members (Borredon, 1995: 134). SOS-Racisme was in fact the only organisation to have extensive credibility among students (especially *lyceé* students) in the 1980s and 1990s. Furthermore, studies show that students were more willing to join clubs and associations of a non-political nature than the traditional student organisations and political *groupuscules* (see Erlich, 1997: 162; Fischer, 2000: 504-5).

For the majority of students, the student organisations and political *groupuscules* had very limited appeal. In Le Bart and Merle's study which was carried out soon after the 1994 anti-CIP protests, over 90 per cent of students claimed to have no opinion about or affinity with any of the established organisations (1997: 137). This leads the authors to assert that:

La faiblesse du sentiment de proximité syndicale surprend, d'autant plus que l'enquête a été effectuée juste après les mouvements de protestation du printemps 94 contre le CIP. La mobilisation étudiante et les discours syndicaux développés pendant ces moments d'action collective ne semblent pas avoir eu d'effets sur l'inclination syndicale des étudiants. Ainsi, une partie non négligeable des étudiants d'AES a été greviste, mais on ne trouve guère trace de cette singularité dans leurs réponses. Une telle remarque semble valider l'hypothèse de mouvements sociaux étudiants relativement autonomes à l'égard des organisations syndicales, meme si celles-ci peuvent être présentes et actives pendant les mouvements de protestation. (1997: 137)

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[13] The main student organisations and political *groupuscules* are outlined in Appendix B.

Participants in Le Bart and Merle's study cited a number of reasons why they mistrusted or were indifferent towards the student organisations: the intimate ties that they perceived between student organisations and political parties; their unappealing discourse; a lack of contact between ordinary students and organisation representatives; a failure to represent ordinary students' interests; and a lack of decision-making power concerning educational issues (1997: 139-145). Le Bart and Merle's research also suggests that:

Les termes les plus usuels du discours syndical – limiter la sélection, organiser la solidarité étudiante, garantir le libre accès à l'université – renvoient à des conceptions relativement peu choisies par l'ensemble des étudiants. (1997: 146)

In a multiple choice question, less than 5 per cent of students agreed that the main mission of student organisations should be to oppose selection, and less than 20 per cent agreed that it should be to defend the principle of equal access to universities. Also, only one in ten students agreed that student organisations should be primarily concerned with the coordination of collective protests. When asked what they did expect of the student organisations, over a third of students stated that their mission should be to facilitate students' studies and improve working conditions. These findings lead Le Bart and Merle to ask whether, 'Dans ces déclarations étudiantes, les organisations syndicales ne sont-elles pas perçues d'abord comme au service d'un consommateur ou d'un usager?' (1997: 146-7).

From the above findings, it thus comes as little surprise that most students in the 1980s and 1990s did not believe in the prospect of radical social, political or economic transformation. In Galland et al.'s study, less than 10 per cent of students claimed to advocate any type of radical change. A majority of students claimed to be in favour of reforms but were not very specific about the types of reform that they supported (1995: 150). As I have discussed above, growing numbers of students in the 1980s and 1990s were concerned about the economic crisis and the rise in unemployment. However, studies suggest that most students did not call into question economic policies. When asked in Galland et al.'s study to list the causes of high unemployment, more students (47%) mentioned a lack of training and/or experience on the part of job seekers than the global economic crisis (35%) (1995: 244). Similarly, in Borredon's study few *lyceé* students seemed to perceive any causal link between high levels of unemployment in France and economic policies, and only 12 per cent claimed to be opposed to a market-led economic model (1995: 40-3). Muxel among others observes that the inability of successive governments in the 1980s and 1990s to solve the economic crisis had a profound effect on the general outlook of young people:

L'impuissance des pouvoirs publics, quelle que soit leur orientation politique, face à ce qui est de plus en plus imposé comme une fatalité, n'est pas sans conséquence sur la façon dont les jeunes peuvent concevoir l'utilité de la politique. L'acceptation du libéralisme économique et de l'économie de marché, dans le contexte de la mondialisation, ne leur permet pas d'envisager une alternative économique ou politique. (1996: 106)

Although the majority of students in France in the 1980s and 1990s did not seem to question the established order, they were nevertheless willing to take part in collective protest. In Galland et al.'s study, most students affirmed a willingness to participate in a demonstration (77%) or resort to strike action (67%) to promote or defend a particular cause. Two thirds of students (67%) also

stated that they were willing to join an association (1995: 137). Moreover, most (86%) stated that they were prepared to protest about educational and student-related issues (1995: 44-5). Le Bart and Merle try to establish which educational issues were most likely to galvanise students into action. Their findings show that many students were willing to protest against a rise in tuition fees, especially first year students in the non-selective disciplines (70%). Also, up to 80 per cent of students stated that they were willing to protest over poor working conditions. Furthermore, a majority of students stated that they were prepared to protest against the introduction of a *numerus clausus* (well over 80 per cent of AES students, but less than half of students in the selective IEP). This result is surprising given that, as I have shown above, most students appeared to agree with selection in principle. Le Bart and Merle attribute this apparent paradox to the possibility that students were prepared to accept selection if they deemed it to be carried out fairly:

Il reste que dans l'esprit des étudiants le passage au numerus clausus contituerait une modification injuste: le fait de décréter à priori, comme dans le cas d'un concours, le nombre des reçus les heurte massivement. Si la sélection est légitime, elle doit être réalisée avec circonspection. On serait tenté d'aller plus loin et de considérer que les étudiants vivraient douloureusement l'explicitation crue de la concurrence qui les oppose les uns aux autres. Ils savent cette concurrence réelle et objective, ils n'ont pas envie pour autant de la voir officialisée. Le climat d'euphémisation qui règne de fait à l'université, et qui fait de la sélection un sujet tabou, leur convient assez. (1997: 215)

Finally, Le Bart and Merle's research shows that students in the non-selective AES discipline were more willing to engage in protest than politics and law students. The authors thus draw the conclusion that, because AES students in their study showed the least interest in politics:

On ne peut guère penser la mobilisation par seule référence à la politisation. Il semble plus judicieux de s'intérroger sur les motifs de mécontentement effectivement perceptibles parmi les étudiants. (1997: 213)

The literature exploring the relationship between students, politics and society in France thus provides an initial indication of the nature of the student protests. It suggests that students in the 1980s and 1990s were not profoundly out of step with the population in general in terms of their outlook on politics and society, which reduces the likelihood that the student protests took the form of intergenerational conflict. The literature also highlights shifts in the nature of political participation that might be identified in the student protests. It shows on the one hand that students had grown increasingly disillusioned with the mainstream political parties, trade unions and especially the student organisations and political *groupuscules.* It also suggests that the vast majority of students no longer believed in the possibility of radical transformation. It shows on the other hand that many students had come to favour a pragmatic, 'non-partisan' style of politics that was centred on specific concerns. This is reflected in the popularity of SOS-Racisme in the 1980s and 1990s that adopted this style of politics. Finally, the literature shows that students' disillusionment with traditional styles of politics did not dampen their propensity for collective protest, notably when educational issues were at stake.

(vi.) Literature relating to student protest in France, 1986-1999

A survey of the literature relating to the student protests reveals two main areas of neglect. The first is of an empirical nature and concerns the lack of any systematic account of the student protests between 1986 and 1999, although some valuable empirical research has been carried out. The second area of neglect concerns the way the student protests have been interpreted: very few studies introduce theories of protest and social movements to understand the student protests, with the result that no convincing definition of them is available.

There are several sources of empirical information about the November-December 1986 protests. These include two first-hand accounts of the protests by activists who were closely involved. Julien Dray (1987) was a student activist in the 1970s, a lecturer at Paris XIII University (Villetaneuse) and a founder of a minority faction within UNEF-ID called Questions Socialistes. David Assouline and Sylvia Zappi (1987) were student activists on the far left and elected representatives of the national *coordination* structure in November-December 1986. Dray on the one hand and Assouline and Zappi on the other provide insightful day-to-day accounts of the protests that focus on the role of student activists. These are however based on personal recollection and do not offer an insight into the protests from the perspective of 'ordinary' students who took part. Furthermore, as I demonstrate below in the case of Dray, they are a valuable source of empirical information but offer problematic interpretations of the student protests.

A senatorial inquiry provides the most comprehensive account of the 1986 protests. The Senate Masson Report (1987) draws on numerous sources of empirical information to investigate the background to the Devaquet bill and its content. It also examines the role played by student organisations in the protests. This includes an analysis of the national *coordination* structure and its origins, which are traced to Trotskyist activists and the student protests of the early 1970s. The Report investigates which students took part in demonstrations and estimates turnouts for protest events (1987: 23). It studies students' motives for taking part, suggesting that concerns about prospects and the diminishing utility of diplomas were paramount (1987: 39). The role of the mass media, the responses of ministers, trade unions and other 'non-student' actors are also investigated. The Report attempts through an analysis of eye-witness accounts, media reports and police records to understand events leading to violent clashes between police and protesters on December 4th and the circumstances surrounding the death of a student protester at the hands of a motorcycle police brigade. Finally, it analyses events leading up to the prime minister's declaration of the withdrawal of the bill on December 10th.

A collection of articles in a special edition of the *Raison Présente* journal is a further source of empirical information about the 1986 protests. These adopt an ethnomethodological perspective and focus primarily on the protests in Paris VIII University (in Saint Denis). They analyse participants' motives and the various incentives and barriers to participation they confronted. Rémi Hess (1987) for instance examines motives for joining the protests through a study of journals completed by his students. Patrick Boumard (1987) provides an analysis of the student protests in Paris VIII which is based on participant observation during protest events and recordings of

students' debates and discussions. He also carried out some interviews with *lycée* students who took part.

Alain Borredon has carried out the only empirically-based study which focuses exclusively on the participation of *lycée* students in the 1986 protests. His research was conducted in a *lycée polyvalent* in Limoges and combines quantitative methods of investigation (based on a questionnaire) with qualitative research (consisting of interviews with participants and observations of *coordination* meetings) (1995: 207-8). Borredon is also, to my knowledge, the only analyst to have followed up his study of the 1986 protests with research on subsequent episodes of student protest although, as I suggest below, his work is perhaps more noteworthy for its empirical findings than its overall interpretation of the phenomenon.

Student protests in the 1990s have not been adequately researched. Borredon's longitudinal study concludes with the *lycée* student protests of March 1994. Research on the *lycée* student protests of November-December 1995, March 1998, October 1998 and October 1999 is virtually non-existent. Some research was however carried out on student protests in universities within the context of broader studies. Le Bart and Merle (1997) completed a study of students in three institutions in Rennes at the time of the anti-CIP protests, which is based on interviews and questionnaires. They try to understand students' motives for joining or opposing the protests, but unfortunately do not explore other dimensions of them. Finally, Bauby and Gerber (1996) analyse student protests in France between 1990 and 1995 within the context of a study on youth. Their research is based primarily on press sources but also includes some interviews with participants.

Some valuable empirical research is available then, but there are a number of gaps in the literature. Firstly, not enough research has been carried out on the student protests of the 1990s. Secondly, the possible links between the protests of *lycée* students on the one hand and university students on the other have been virtually ignored. Thirdly, there has been no attempt to bring together existing research to produce a systematic account of the actors, content, form and outcomes of student protests in France between 1986 and 1999. One objective of this thesis is therefore to try to provide a detailed account of the student protests by supplementing existing research with further information found notably in the French national press. Oddly, no attempt has been made up to now to methodically use the wealth of material relating to the student protests that is found in newspapers.

Interpretations of the student protests tend to fall into three broad frameworks: the first considers the protests from the perspective of individualism; the second views them as a generational phenomenon; and the third explores their status as a social movement. Before surveying these however, it is useful to briefly highlight some general problems with the way that the student protests have been analysed. Firstly, there are numerous analyses of the 1986 protests but subsequent episodes of student protest have received comparatively little attention. Several interesting comparisons were drawn between the 1986 protests and the events of May 1968 (e.g. Duclaud-Williams, 1989). However, with the notable exception of Borredon (1995), few comparisons have been made between the 1986 protests and the student protests of the 1990s. A

second problem with the existing literature is that several analysts mention the student protests but within the context of broader studies of students (e.g. Dubet, 1991; Erlich, 1997) and youth (e.g. Bauby & Gerber, 1996; Fize, 2002) in France. These are often insightful, but do not treat the student protests as a phenomenon that is worthy of attention in itself. A third problem is that certain interpretations of the student protests do not appear to be based on solid empirical evidence and offer a selective presentation of events (e.g. Ferry & Renaut, 1987).

Luc Ferry and Alain Renaut (1987) view the November-December 1986 student protests as evidence of the rise of individualism in French society in the 1980s, which was presaged by the events of May 1968. Their overall argument is that the development of new strains of individualism has generated new types of collective protest. They maintain that the 1986 protests were essentially individualistic, liberal and legalistic in nature. Ferry and Renaut are not alone in maintaining that protesters were motivated by individual concerns and failed to acknowledge broader inequalities in French society (see Finkielkraut, 1987), but they go a step further by placing the theme of individualism at the centre of analysis. They assert that student protesters' motives were essentially 'corporatist' and challenge the view (discussed below) that the student protests signified a break with the 'narcissistic individualism' that was seen to pervade the early 1980s:

Contrairement aux analyses qui dominèrent ces dernières semaines dans la presse, le mouvement de décembre 1986 ne rompt nullement avec les années 80 (...) *il creuse d'advantage encore ce qu'il y avait d'égocentrique dans le début des années 80: ce mouvement, c'est le moins qu'on puisse dire, n'a guère réfléchi sur les inégalités réelles, il s'est contenté de viser la préservation de droits acquis, oubliant que de toute façon, pour l'immense majorité des jeunes d'une même classe d'age, l'accès à l'Université est barré.* (1987: 71-2)

In a more optimistic light however, Ferry and Renaut go on to emphasise the legalistic (or civic) and democratic character of the protests that, they claim, makes up for their corporatist dimension. They emphasise the apparent belief in direct democracy and respect for minority views that characterised the national *coordination* structure. They also point out that, unlike in May 1968, students demonstrated outside the National Assembly because, as one protester asserted, 'L'important, c'est de respecter la Constitution qui parle de liberté et d'égalité' (1987: 73). On the basis of this evidence, Ferry and Renaut draw the conclusion that the protests reflect a growing attachement to formal rights and a revival of liberal values as conceived by liberal thinkers at the dawn of the French Revolution, in other words, the emergence of a new type of individualism in French society to counterbalance the narcissistic strain. They therefore conclude that the student protests represent:

une revalorisation des droits de l'Homme tels que les avaient conçus les libéraux à l'aube de la Révolution française. C'est même, plus généralement (...) un extraordinaire réinvestissement des valeurs libérales que témoignent la société française dans son ensemble et le mouvement étudiant en particulier. (1987: 111)

There are some problems with Ferry and Renaut's interpretation of the student protests. Most importantly, they do not try to reconcile the two apparently conflicting dimensions of the student protests: how could it be that students were egotistical and individualistic in terms of their motives and yet promoted equality and direct democracy in their forms of organisation? Furthermore, they offer a highly selective view of events on the ground, assuming for instance that all students acted

purely out of self-interest (which does not explain the wave of sympathy demonstrations following the death of Malik Oussekine) and that all decision-making channels operated according to the principles of direct democracy (the views of *lycée* students were not in fact represented within a national structure). Finally, Ferry and Renaut's conception of the student protests in terms of individualism – as a 'movement of individuals' – is problematic because it precludes any explanation of how individuals come to act collectively.

A second type of interpretation views the 1986 protests as a generational phenomenon. For Dray (1987), the protests signified the emergence of an 'SOS generation' inspired by the antiracist movement. In a similar light, Laurent Joffrin (1987) views the student protests as evidence of the appearance of a 'moral generation' profoundly attached to the values of equality, solidarity and democracy. Joffrin grandly asserts that the 1986 protests were the first mass movement of post-modern society and a turning point in the history of social conflicts in France. He argues that the values of the new moral generation were manifested in the national *coordination* structure and its rejection of centralised and hierarchical forms of organisation:

Ce qui vient de naître dans le drame d'une crise nationale, c'est plutôt un grand lobby de la démocratie, un lobby informel, diffus, invisible par temps calme, constitué de ces centaines de millieurs de jeunes dont la conscience s'est formée dans le mouvement. (1987: 161)

There are some weaknesses in Dray and Joffrin's interpretations of the student protests. Firstly, neither offers a systematic definition of a generation. In sociology, a generation is commonly defined as a period of time (often estimated at around thirty years) during which the attitudes and behaviour of a particular age group are shaped by historical circumstances and events[14]. It is unclear however what Dray and Joffrin mean when they refer to a generation. Secondly, they both portray student protesters as a homogeneous group and assume that they all acted out of moral concerns (this diametrically opposes Ferry and Renaut's view that students were motivated by self-interest). Thirdly, they attribute the qualities they see in student protesters to the student population in general. Student participation in the 1986 protests was massive (estimated at around a third of the student population) but non-protesters were in fact more numerous (see Dobry, 1990: 359). Finally, Dray and Joffrin conflate students with young people in general. They take student protesters' apparent attachment to equality and solidarity to mean that all young people adhered to such values, but provide little evidence to back up such a claim.

The main problems with Dray and Joffrin's interpretations stem from some more general drawbacks with a generational concept of protest and social movements. On the one hand, a generational model is useful for explaining broad shifts in the nature of collective protest over time. Ronald Inglehart (1977) for instance convincingly argued that the late 1960s and early 1970s in several European countries and the United States was a period of transition from one generation to another, from the 'material society' of the generation that grew up during World War II towards the 'post-material society' of the generation that grew up in the period of unprecedented economic

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[14] This concept of a generation is inspired notably by the work of Karl Mannheim (1952). The usefulness of a generational interpretation of student protest (which focuses on the period surrounding the events of May 1968) is discussed at greater length in a special edition of L'Homme et la Société (Générations et mémoire) 1994, 1-2.

prosperity that followed. According to Inglehart, shifts in the nature of collective protest in this period – the decline of traditional workers' struggles and the advent of the NSMs – could be explained by the transition from one generation to another. On the other hand, the main flaw with a generational approach (that I have identified in Dray and Joffrin's analyses) is that it tends to overlook the internal complexity of generations, which are by no means homogeneous entities. There are indeed factors apart from generation such as race, social class and gender that can explain the nature of protest and social movements.

Finally, the notion of a generation is problematic for understanding student protest because, given the constant renewal of the student population, it is difficult to see where one 'student generation' begins and another ends. Joffrin refers to three generations of students in a period of less than a decade: the 'bof génération' of young entrepreneurs in the early 1980s, the moral generation of the mid-1980s and the 'seconde jeunesse du corporatisme' of the early 1990s (1987, 1992). Joffrin argues that in the decade between the early 1980s and 1990s the student population went through a series of profound transformations and, by the early 1990s, was criticising students' apparent reversion from moral to corporatist concerns:

Très vite les préoccupations individuelles – le chômage, les études, l'insertion dans une société dure et fermée – annulaient toute velléïté de mouvement collectif. Aujourd'hui, le milieu étudiant a regressé de plusieurs décennies. (1992: 186-7)

As I demonstrate in Chapter 4, there is little evidence to suggest that student protests between 1986 and 1999 went through such a dramatic change.

Several analyses situate the student protests within a theoretical framework of social movements. These tend to follow one of two approaches: the first draws on Alain Touraine's concept of a social movement, which derives from the NSM school of thought; the second views the student protests as a social movement (or a component of a broader social movement) confronting the neo-liberal order. The study of social movements in France was until recently dominated by Touraine's theory and, accordingly, several analysts draw on his insights to interpret the student protests. As I explain in Chapter 3, Touraine (1977, 1981a) views social movements as the driving force of social transformation: they comprise a class struggle between power holders and their opponents for the control of social change, and are the principle means by which society acts upon itself. According to Touraine, a true social movement is purely social and turns away from the state: it does not aim to control state power or alter political programmes, but revitalises civil society by means of its own alternatives (1997: 127).

Touraine himself considers whether student protests between 1986 and 1998 merit his definition of a social movement. He argues that the 1986 protests were not a fully-fledged social movement but reflected a profound shift in the political culture. This shift entailed a 'deconstruction' of the myths and constraints of political and social systems on the one hand, and a growing desire among ordinary people to define their own social and cultural norms and practices on the other (*Le Monde*, 30th December 1986). A decade later, Touraine (1996) interprets the October-December 1995 student protests as a 'non-movement' that perpetuated an outdated republican ideology. Most

recently however, Touraine (1999) defines the October 1998 *lycée* student protests as a fully-fledged social movement triggered by responsible social actors asserting their cultural rights. In this thesis, I call into question Touraine's concept of a social movement, as well as his different interpretations of the student protests.

Analysts who draw on Touraine's theory to interpret the student protests generally argue that they do not comprise a social movement. For instance, Dubet (1991) and Dubet and Martuccelli (1996) use the Tourainean concept of social movement to analyse *lycée* student protests. They argue that the protests were not a social movement, but rather 'explosions' of mass discontent. Dubet and Martuccelli trace the origins of the 1986 and 1990 protests to fears of social exclusion, stating that *lycée* students took to the streets to defend their qualifications and assert the right to remain in the education system (1996: 263). They are however critical of students' inability to view their problems from a broader social perspective and consider any alternatives to the status quo:

Ce sont des mobilisations sans critique du système. Elles ne mettent en cause ni la culture, ni la forme scolaire, elles réagissent plus à une anticipation du chômage qu'à une expérience scolaire proprement dite. Les élèves situés dans les filières générales et techniques les moins prestigieuses défendant leur position par crainte de déchoir encore, tandis que les élèves des formations d'élite, celle qui se constituait en intelligentsia, fournissant les armes de l'idéologie gauchiste de la première moitié des années soixante-dix, n'est plus concernée et n'est plus une intelligentsia. (1996: 262-3)

The failure of the student protests to fulfil Touraine's criteria for a social movement leads to disappointment on their part. Having concluded that the student protests were not a social movement, the analysts appear to dismiss them as unworthy of much attention. Furthermore, their attempts to define the student protests as a phenomenon that 'falls short' of a social movement are problematic because, instead of seeking an alternative definition within the theoretical literature associated with collective protest, they choose to invent their own. By defining the student protests in terms of 'mass explosions' (Dubet, 1991), 'participative movements' (Lapeyronnie, 1993) and 'non movements' (Touraine, 1996), the Tourainean scholars entirely disconnect the phenomenon from the broader literature surrounding protest and social movements.

Alain Borredon also draws on Touraine's notion of a social movement to analyse *lycée* student protests between 1986 and 1994. His analysis of the student protests in fact has several merits. As I have noted, only Borredon has carried out a longitudinal, empirically-based study of the student protests. Furthermore, when trying to understand the student protests, he addresses the fact that the participants were young. However, Borredon's reading of the protests from a Tourainean perspective is problematic, and goes through some perplexing shifts. Borredon's analysis starts with the assertion that:

Ils sont un 'mouvement social', non pas vraiment, à première vue au sens d'Alain Touraine et l'Ecole actionnaliste, mais en ce qu'une couche sociale a produit une organisation, des critiques et des actions visant à obtenir le maintien d'un statu quo protecteur, sans attaque statutaire dépréciative, ou une amélioration substantielle de leur condition sociale. (1995: 8)

In his introduction, Borredon thus suggests that the student protests were not a social movement in any Tourainean sense, but a movement of a different kind that aimed to preserve the status quo.

Such a notion is in fact diametrically opposed to Touraine's view of a social movement as a catalyst of far-reaching change. In addition, Borredon refers interchangeably to a social movement in the singular ('le mouvement social') and social movements in the plural. In his introduction he asserts, 'Ces lycéens adolescents ont, l'espace de trois mouvements sociaux, fait la prevue qu'ils étaient devenus de nouveaux acteurs sociaux dans la société française' (1995: 8). By way of conclusion however, Borredon suggests that the student protests were not in fact a social movement but, because the actors were young, they presaged new types of social movements emerging in French society. He asserts, 'La jeunesse (...) a commencé à déssiner les contours de mouvements sociaux d'une autre nature' (1995: 198). Borredon's overall reading of the student protests is thus confusing, and it is ultimately unclear whether he views the phenomenon as a social movement, a series of social movements or the precursor of new types of social movements.

Some analysts remain within a theoretical framework of social movements, but interpret the student protests as a struggle against neo-liberal ideology and practice. According to Bourdieu for instance, the 1986 protests were a backlash against the logic of competition within the education system, growing injustices in the workplace and the failure of elites to find a solution to the economic crisis. He asserts:

Voilà que surgissent des mouvements vifs, intélligents, drôles et profondément sérieux qui bousculent l'idéologie de la fin des idéologies (...) *Je crois que tout découle du refus fondamental d'être de la chair à patrons. Et du refus de la morale qu'implique l'instauration du règne du concours* (...) *Les étudiants disent qu'ils n'ont pas de vraie place dans une société qui n'est pas capable de penser l'avenir.* (*Libération*, 4th December 1986)

A decade later, Bourdieu situates the October-December 1995 student protests squarely within the context of a broader social movement against the neo-liberal order. In a speech during the 1995 strikes and demonstrations, he connects the student protests to the protests of other social groups that were taking place:

Cheminots, postiers, enseignants, employés des services publics, étudiants, et tant d'autres, activement ou passivement engagés dans le mouvement, ont posé (...) *des problèmes tout à fait fondamentaux, trop importants pour être laissés à des technocrates aussi suffisants qu'insuffisants.* (1998: 32)

In *Contre-feux* (1998), Bourdieu goes on to make a number of short remarks about students, who are depicted as victims of 'l'abaissement de la chose publique' alongside undocumented immigrants, unemployed workers and other public sector workers. He also highlights the increasing 'précarisation' of opportunities for young people, who are the first to experience the damaging consequences of neo-liberal policies (1998: 10, 42). Bourdieu thus connects the student protests to what he views as a broader struggle against the neo-liberal order.

Sophie Béroud, Michel Vakaloulis and René Mouriaux (1998) also view collective protests in France in the 1990s as a struggle against neo-liberal modernisation, but part company with Bourdieu by adopting a neo-Marxist perspective. According to Béroud et al., numerous collective protests in France since the November-December 1995 strikes and demonstrations were united in a broad struggle against neo-liberal modernisation. They posit that the distinctive features of a mass movement - 'les linéaments d'un mouvement d'ensemble' – had emerged:

Dès lors, le "mouvement social" s'est installé durablement dans le paysage politique et n'a eu de cesse de donner des preuves de sa capacité de rebondir, de se métamorphoser, d'exprimer un changement dans la manière d'envisager l'avenir (...) L'apport du mouvement social acquièrt une importance décisive pour le renouveau politique et le changement social. (1998: 127, 206)

Béroud et al. portray student protests in the 1990s as a component of this burgeoning social movement. They briefly refer to the anti-CIP protests, which are portrayed as a prelude to the strikes and demonstrations of November-December 1995 (1998: 161). They also refer to the student and teachers' protests of March 1998 in Seine-Saint-Denis as evidence of the ongoing struggle between capital and labour (1998: 176-9). Bourdieu on the one hand and Béroud et al. on the other invite some interesting reflections about the student protests that I take up further in Chapter 5. They prompt the question of whether the student protests can be adequately understood as part of the burgeoning anti-neo-liberal movement. Also, their stance towards the object of study (that I define later in this thesis as 'academivist' in orientation) prompts some interesting questions relating to social movement theory.

A very limited number of analyses break with Tourainean and anti neo-liberal perspectives and draw on concepts from the broader protest and social movement literature to try to understand the student protests. Michel Dobry (1990) provides one of the most original analyses of the 1986 student protests which is inspired by American sociologists such as David Snow et al. (1986) who adopt a social constructionist perspective. Dobry views the student protests as a struggle among the various actors involved for the control of its meaning. This implies that a single meaning cannot be ascribed to the protests, that they were characterised by several competing objectives rather than a single, coherent goal. Dobry argues furthermore that collective protest is the product of a series of strategic calculations on the part of individual actors that is centred on expectations of success, rather than the existence of common grievances or shared values (1990: 367). The central question governing Dobry's approach is therefore how individuals with diverse motives came to engage in collective protest. As Dobry puts it:

Toute appellation, toute désignation est un piège (...). *Dans toute classification, toute labellisation, d'une mobilisation, il y a, il est vrai, nécessairement une imputation de significations* (...) *nous avons tous la tentation – mais certains plus que d'autres – d'assigner à ce type de mobilisation une signification, un sens unitaire, homogène, synthétique. Mais lorsque l'on fait cela, on a toute chance de passer à côté des choses extrêmement importantes, on a toute chance d'oublier que tout mouvement social de ce type, tout mouvement social un peu ample, est fait de moblisations de gens qui n'ont pas de projet commun, pas d'objectif stratégique commun, pas de motivation, ni meme d'intérêt commun; ils n'ont pas nécessairement les mêmes espoirs, n'ont pas les mêmes visions du monde et d' eux-mêmes* (...) *Alors, faire ce que font certains commentateurs – parfois des universitaires, des gens qui devraient être sérieux – en attribuant un sens unitaire et homogène à la mobilisation, c'est réaliser un travail proprement idéologique* (...) *Ce travail est sollicité par le fonctionnement des médias, ceux-ci addressant aux intellectuels une demande de sens. D'autre part, cela répond aussi probablement à un travers proprement philosophant, l'exigence d'assigner un sens à l'histoire, à l'événement.* (*Politix*, 1, 1988: 35)

Dobry's analysis of the 1986 student protests has three main advantages. Firstly, it acknowledges that there are factors apart from grievances and values which can explain the emergence of collective protest, such as expectations of success and incentives and barriers to participation (although Dobry's view that shared values and grievances are unimportant in explaining collective protest is highly questionable, as I show in Chapter 5). Secondly, Dobry emphasises that collective

protests are seldom homogeneous entities and tend to be characterised by diverse actors and motivations. Thirdly, it draws our attention to the problem that analysts such as Béroud et al. and Touraine do indeed present a selective view of reality and pass over the complexity of the student protests in order to attribute a single meaning to them. It is however difficult to accept Dobry's view that any attempt to label the student protests consists of a 'trap'. The problem with Dobry's argument is that, when criticising the way certain analysts define the student protests, he altogether dismisses the merits of trying to label and classify them. Yet, Dobry ultimately traps himself by calling the student protests a social movement. He unintentionally reveals that it is impossible to think or communicate one's views about a phenomenon without giving it a name.

From a different perspective, Jean-Michel Denis (1996) connects the November-December 1986 protests to the various public sector workers' protests that occurred in the period between 1986 and 1993, arguing that they represent a new phase in the development of social movements in France. This phase, he argues, is characterised by the prevalence of protests that adopt loosely structured, decentralised modes of organisation and pursue mainly short-term, sectional interests. Denis raises the question of whether the student protests can be adequately understood as a type of *coordination*, which I give further consideration in Chapter 5.

It is Brendan Prendiville (1987) who comes closest to studying the student protests in the way that I propose, although his analysis is brief, focuses solely on the 1986 protests and fails to recognise the student condition. His central aim is 'to ask, and begin to answer the question: was this a social movement in the making, or not?' (1987: 19). The key advantage of Prendiville's approach is that it sets out four basic criteria that the student protests must fulfil if they are to be called a social movement, which are group consciousness, participation, constitutive ideas and continuity (1987: 20). Prendiville's analysis appears furthermore to be free of any preconceived ideas concerning the student protests, and does not assume from the outset that they were or were not a social movement. Following an analysis of the student protests, Prendiville suggests that the protests were not a fully-fledged social movement: they fulfilled the first three criteria, but did not have a sustained existence over time. This leads him to ask whether the student protests might then be more appropriately defined as a pressure group. Prendiville arrives at what I consider to be the crux of a problem surrounding our understanding of the student protests, which turns out to be central to this thesis: if the student protests were not a social movement, then what alternative definitions are available for them within the broader scholarship relating to collective protest? Prendiville himself does not tackle the question head-on, but it is one that I deal with in the chapters that follow.

The main aim of this thesis is then to show that the most appropriate way of understanding the student protests is to try to define them as a form of collective protest. The central question governing the thesis – which is derived from the theoretical literature related to collective protest - is whether the student protests can be usefully understood as a social movement or a type of pressure group. A survey of available work reveals that interpretations of the student protests which draw on theories of protest and social movements are for the most part problematic. As I

confirm in the following chapters, neither Tourainean nor anti-neo liberal perspectives adequately explain the student protests. Furthermore, available interpretations of the student protests tend to understate or overstate their complexity. On the one hand, analysts such as Joffrin portray the student protests as a coherent, homogeneous entity and, in doing so, pass over the 'messiness' of real events. On the other hand, Dobry in particular views the student protests as so heterogeneous that they altogether defy definition. One goal of this thesis is to show that both views require some rethinking: the student protests are not so complex as to resist definition; yet, neither are they so coherent as to make their definition straightforward.

The contribution to knowledge of this thesis is thus fourfold. Chapter 3 breaks new ground by setting out the 'menus of definition' that are available for defining the student protests within the theoretical literature on collective protest. Chapter 4 attempts for the first time a systematic historical account of the student protests between 1986 and 1999. This builds upon existing research in order to try to identify the actors, content, form and immediate outcomes of the protests. Chapter 5 analyses the account of the student protests in light of concepts and definitions of protest and social movements, with the aim of finding a suitable definition for them. This prompts some suggestions as to how our theoretical understanding of protest and social movements might be further enhanced. Finally, Chapter 6 suggests some avenues for future research and, in light of the findings, reviews the question of the student condition and its possible influence on the nature of the protests.

Chapter 3

An analysis of theories of protest and social movements

CHAPTER 3

AN ANALYSIS OF THEORIES OF PROTEST AND SOCIAL MOVEMENTS

This chapter provides an analysis of the theoretical concepts that underpin the thesis, setting out the principal menus of definition that are available for interpreting the student protests. Collective protest tends to be analysed within two broad areas of scholarship: social movement studies on the one hand, which offer the most extensive research that cuts across a range of disciplines; and pressure group perspectives on the other that tend to fall within political science. The chapter starts by examining theories of social movements and then looks at how pressure group theories interpret collective protest. This is followed by an investigation of theories of protest and social movements relating to France. The central question that will be addressed (in Chapter 5) is whether the student protests can be adequately defined as a social movement or are better understood as a type of pressure group.

(i.) The main branches of social movement theory

The theoretical literature surrounding social movements is extensive and continues to develop in new directions. It is not therefore my intention to try to explore every conception of a social movement that is available, but to identify some of the most prominent theories. Firstly, I offer a brief overview of the four main branches of social movement theory that have emerged over the last forty years or so. Secondly, I enter into a more detailed analysis of the theories that will be applied to the student protests in Chapter 5.

An analysis of the literature shows that there is no agreement as to what constitutes a social movement, nor any agreement about how social movements should be theorised. Among the reasons for this lack of consensus are: the location of social movement theory at the intersection of several academic disciplines; the different political and intellectual cultures in the United States and Western Europe where the major theoretical works on social movements have emerged; and the heterogeneity and rapidly shifting nature of the object of study itself. To begin to establish whether the student protests are a social movement then, it is necessary to recognise the different conceptions of a social movement that are available[1]. The following four branches of social movement theory can be identified:-

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[1] This chapter omits an analysis of earlier theories. On the one hand, there were variations of the traditional Marxist conception of a social movement. Tarrow offers an overview of the historical influence of Marxism in shaping subsequent theoretical debates about social movements (1998: 10-13). On the other hand, social movements and other collective phenomena were the focus of what can be broadly termed 'breakdown' theories. These include early theories of crowd psychology (e.g. Le Bon, 1895), collective behaviour (e.g. Turner & Killian, 1957; Smelser, 1962), mass society (e.g. Kornhauser, 1959) and relative deprivation (Gurr, 1971). Although highly diverse, these offer a social psychological approach to social movements. To oversimplify somewhat, they understand social movements in terms of individual grievances and frustration caused by rapid structural change. Some theories emphasise the 'irrationality' of individuals who act outside the available channels of pluralist democracies.

(1) The first branch of theory developed in the United States from the early 1960s onwards and views social movements from the perspectives of rationality, resources and organisation, and political opportunities. The main approaches are based on the premise that participants in social movements are rational actors, in the sense that they weigh up the costs and benefits of involvement. They also presuppose that, since grievances are always present in a given society, it is the process by which grievances translate into social movements that merits investigation (rather than the structural origins of discontent). Mancur Olson's (1965) rational action theory was an important development that gave rise to new strands of social movement research. Olson's basic argument is that the motivation to participate in collective action is based upon a rational calculation by individuals of the costs and benefits of commitment. Some analysts have sinced challenged his individual cost-benefit model by stressing the expressive nature of participation in social movements. Hirschman (1982) for instance makes the point that what some might construe as 'costs' (sacrificing time and money to a particular struggle) may be perceived as 'benefits' by those taking part, introducing the notion of activism as its own reward.

In the 1970s, a group of scholars in the U.S. went on to develop Resource Mobilisation (RM) theory. This remains within a theoretical framework of rational action, but argues that it is the availability of resources and the existence of pre-existing groups and organisations that determines the emergence and development of social movements. McCarthy and Zald (1973, 1977) were among the first to examine social movements from an organisational-entrepreneurial perspective that draws on insights from micro-economics, organisational sociology and political science. To a great extent, this perspective reflects the peculiarities of the American political system. Social movements amount to 'social movement organisations' (SMOs) that compete with each other for resources such as money, time, commitment and expertise in order to mount claims to political authorities. While there is no consensus about what constitutes a resource, it is generally agreed that these can be both tangible (money, facilities and so on) and intangible or 'human' (time, commitment and expertise for instance) in nature. McCarthy and Zald also focus on movement organisation and leadership. They assert that SMOs have become highly professionalised and are made up of small transitory teams of paid staff and a core of social movement entrepreneurs. The latter pursue professional movement careers, moving from one SMO to another (1977: 1227).

A further group of theorists began to view social movements in terms of contentious political struggles between authorities and aggrieved groups. A pioneer of the political perspective was Charles Tilly (1978) who argues that the emergence and trajectory of social movements are shaped by the opportunities and constraints afforded by the political system. It is important to note that some proponents of a political approach adopt the key unit of analysis of collective action or contentious politics, rather than social movements per se. This is because they view collective action as taking numerous forms - riots, strikes, war, revolution, social movements and so on - which are intrinsically linked (Morris & Herring, 1987: 165-6). The earlier political perspectives have however been largely superseded by more sophisticated theories of the political dimension of contentious collective action, which I explore in detail below (e.g. Tarrow, 1998).

(2) While American scholars tried to understand how social movements emerge and evolve, Europeans were more interested in their structural origins and the transformations they generated. The 'new social movement' (NSM) approach was both a response to what Europeans saw as inadequacies in existing theoretical perspectives, and to the appearance from the late 1960s onwards of the student, feminist, environmentalist and other movements. While there are different strands of theory, they are essentially concerned with pinpointing the relative newness of the NSMs in relation to earlier social movements. Proponents broadly agree that the NSMs can be traced to a number of changes in capitalist society that generated new types of grievances and demands (e.g. Touraine, 1981a; Habermas, 1987). They observe that the NSMs are fundamentally different from the 'old' labour movement in terms of their support base, which is drawn from the new middle class as well as the younger generation born after the Second World War (e.g. Inglehart, 1977). Theorists also place emphasis upon the informal and participatory types of organisation found in the NSMs (e.g. Offe, 1985). I will examine the NSM theories in more detail below, as I apply their insights to the student protests in Chapter 5.

(3) From the 1980s onwards, theorists placed greater emphasis upon the social, cultural and ideological aspects of social movements. This shift was prompted by changes in the nature of social movements in the 1980s. Following the collapse of communism, social movement theorists had to respond to the emergence of (often violent) movements centred on religious fundamentalism, neo-Nazism and ultra-nationalism whose ideologies were in many ways antithetical to that of the NSMs. These movements could not be adequately explained within American theories which tended to overlook the role of grievances, ideology and culture. Yet neither did they match theoretical descriptions of NSMs, which tended to assume such phenomena to be progressive for society and focused on the movements of mainly white, middle class Americans and Western Europeans. The intellectual atmosphere of the late 1980s and 1990s also impacted on social movement theory. Influenced by concepts such as deconstructionism, postmodernism and the end of metanarratives, theorists began to focus more closely on the social constructionist, interactive and discursive dimensions of social movements (Garner & Tenuto, 1997: 35-47).

Scholars did not entirely discard earlier American and European theories, but tried to revise or build upon their different insights. Concepts such as 'frame alignment and transformation' (Snow et al., 1986), 'packages of idea elements' (Gamson, 1988) and 'consensus mobilisation' (Klandermans, 1988, 1997) were formulated. In different ways, proponents view movements as struggles over meaning and are concerned with understanding how those meanings - the ideas, values, beliefs and identities that define movements - are socially constructed and reconstructed[2]. Their starting point is not 'what makes aggrieved people protest', as in the earlier American theories which tend to take grievances and motives for granted, but rather the anteceding issue of 'what makes people aggrieved' (Klandermans, 1997: 203-4). By attempting to understand the processes that generate the meaning of a social movement, this branch of theory goes beyond a purely descriptive analysis of grievances, identity, ideology and values that characterises many NSM approaches. It is

[2]This aspect of social movements was considered in earlier studies (Piven & Cloward, 1977; McAdam, 1982) but rarely treated systematically.

acknowledged that, even within the same movement, individuals and groups can interpret the same issues or events in different ways. As McAdam puts it, this type of approach takes into account 'the enormous variability in the subjective meanings people attach to their objective situations' (1982: 34).

(4) Since the late 1980s, the fragmentation that has characterised the social movement literature has started to give way to a process of 'theoretical conciliation' or 'transatlantic cross-fertilization' (Kriesi et al., 1995: 239). In different ways, scholars have attempted to combine the insights of earlier schools of thought to produce more sophisticated theoretical understandings of social movements. Eyerman and Jamison (1991) offer a theoretical framework of social movements that aims to reduce the polarisation of the social movement literature. Kriesi et al. (1995) integrate insights from NSM perspectives and political perspectives, offering a 'political opportunities structure' (POS) theory of social movements. Tarrow (1998) places the political context at the centre of analysis but combines the insights of several theoretical approaches. Klandermans (1997) promotes a social psychology of collective action that aims to complement rather than compete with other perspectives within the social movement literature. Finally, Diani (1992a,b) proposes a theory of social movements based on conceptions of collective identity and social networks. In Chapter 5, I make extensive use of these theories to interpret the student protests.

Four branches of social movement theory can then be identified. To oversimplify somewhat, earlier American theories examine social movements from the perspective of rationality, resources and organisation, and political opportunities; NSM theories originating mainly in Europe seek to understand the structural roots of social movements and their relationship with historical change; a third branch of theory views social movements as processes of meaning construction and places emphasis upon their cultural, symbolic and ideological dimensions; and, most recently, attempts have been made to combine the insights of existing schools of thought.

For the purpose of this thesis, I have selected two branches of theory for an analysis in light of the student protests. In Chapter 5, I view the student protests through the lenses of NSM theories. I show that, when applied to the student protests, the contemporary relevance of the NSM paradigm is called into question. I also study the student protests in light of the more recent theories proposed by, among others, Klandermans (1997) and Tarrow (1998), and argue that that these offer the most useful conceptions of a social movement. Prior to putting these theories to use, a more detailed understanding of them is required:-

(ii.) <u>NSM theories</u>

As I have stated above, there are different strands of NSM theory. However, they all identify crucial differences between the 'new' movements of feminism, environmentalism and so on, and the 'old' labour movement. Scholars trace the origins of the NSMs to structural shifts that took place in the post-war period, although beyond this their assertions are varied. Touraine (1981a) (see below under French theories) argues that a new type of social movement was produced by the shift from industrialism to a 'post-industrial' society. In a similar vein, Habermas (1987) views the NSMs as a reaction to the 'inner colonisation' of civil society imposed by the expansion of the

welfare state and capitalist economy. Among other theories are those which tie the NSMs to the increased prosperity of the post-war generation that, freed from socio-economic deprivation, sought to satisfy 'higher', post-material needs (Inglehart, 1977, 1990)[3].

Theorists observe that the NSMs differ from earlier movements in terms of their support base. Neo-Marxists and others influenced by Marxism in the 1960s had to overcome the challenge of explaining why protest was taking place on university campuses and not in the factories, and some argued that students and other minority groups had replaced the declining industrial working class as the motor of radical transformation[4]. Marcuse (1968) for instance claimed that, although advanced capitalism had delivered economic stability, the relatively better-off in society continued to be exploited through the creation of false needs that generated consumerism. According to Marcuse, students were among the most likely revolutionaries in the face of such exploitation (see Scott, 1990: 55-60). Neo-Marxists have continued to argue that the core of the class struggle against capitalism has shifted from the workplace to urban communities, educational institutions and other sites of domination, although they do not all conclude that the NSMs have turned out to be agents of positive transformations (see Castells, 1983,1997).

By the mid-1970s however, increasing doubt was being cast upon the usefulness of Marxist-inspired theories in explaining the NSMs. A key factor that paved the way for a theoretical shift was the growing body of empirical information on the NSMs which suggests that their support base was largely drawn from the the new middle class[5]. As Byrne neatly puts it, the new middle class 'derives it occupation, status and power from its *knowledge*' (1997: 52). A distinction can be made between new middle class professionals who control organisations (the managers and technocrats) and professionals employed in the service sector (the social and cultural specialists or humanists working for instance in education and the caring professions). It is the latter, humanistic subgroup of the new middle class, which is highly represented in the NSMs (1995: xix).

There are competing theories as to why this subgroup of the new middle class became involved in NSMs. Parkin (1968) asserts that the humanists within the new middle class are prominent in the NSMs because they experience 'status inconsistency': they are well educated and knowledgeable but do not enjoy a very prominent economic status (see Byrne, 1997: 52-54). Offe (1985) argues that the new middle class is prominent because it has the knowledge and intellectual skills to perceive and act upon problems (pollution, nuclear weapons, persistent inequalities and so on) in advanced capitalist democracies.

Some theorists altogether reject class interpretations of the NSMs. Developing a thesis of 'post-material society', Inglehart (1977) views the NSMs as a generational phenomenon, thereby emphasising the fact that many participants were young. On the basis of a study carried out in several European countries and the United States in the early 1970s, he found the aspirations of

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[3]Other theories of the structural conditions that gave rise to the NSMs are outlined by Klandermans, Tarrow and Kriesi (1988: 7-9).

[4] The May 1968 movement in France was exceptional in this respect given the massive participation of workers as well as students.

[5] It is important to note that there is no agreement within the social movement literature about what constitutes a social class.

the generation born after World War II to be of a non-material character, whereas the older generation that had experienced deprivation and instability continued to have economic and material concerns. Inglehart attributes this contrast to the younger age group's socialisation during a period of unprecedented economic prosperity. Following Maslow's (1970) hierarchy of needs, Inglehart maintains that, once members of a society satisfy their basic needs (food, water, shelter), they progress to have 'higher order' or nonmaterial aspirations such as equality, freedom, happiness, social recognition and participation, all of which form the bedrock of the NSMs. In later work, Inglehart (1990) argues that the post-war generation's nonmaterial values did not disappear with the advent of economic recession because the values that people acquire in their formative years tend to persist over time[6].

According to some theorists, status rather than social class determines the nature of the NSMs, although the two are often conflated. 'Status politics' interpretations of NSMs tend to focus on the social and occupational standing of participants and sympathisers, that is, those determinants other than social class which can shape interests and identities such as age, gender, sexual preference and lifestyle priorities. Giddens (1991) views the NSMs as a counter-reaction against the negative consequences of late modernity that has played a pivotal role in bringing lifestyle issues to the fore. Pakulski observes that 'status politics' theories such as Turner's (1988) connect the NSMs to postmodern society, class dealignment and class decomposition which have loosened the traditional connections between social movements and socio-economic structures (see Maheu, 1995: 69-71). However, as some commentators such as Pakulski observe, the universal rather than group-specific claims articulated within many NSMs tend to limit the scope for theories based on status (see Maheu, 1995).

Some scholars develop theories based on civil society, which emphasise the universal and libertarian character of many NSM goals. They tend to highlight the non-class or inter-class character of the NSMs. Offe argues that while class can determine who becomes involved in NSMs, their action is 'the politics of a class but not on behalf of a class' since its demands are 'highly class-unspecific, dispersed, and either "universalistic" in nature or highly concentrated in particular groups' (1985: 833). According to Offe, three types of actor are prevalent in the NSMs: the 'new middle class'; the 'old middle class' (farmers, shop owners and so on); and what he terms as 'decommodified' or 'peripheral' groups whose situation is not directly tied to the labour market and who have little time constraints. Such groups include high school and university students, middle class housewives, retired people, and unemployed or marginally employed youths (1985: 835).

The civil society theories are strongly influenced by Habermas's argument that NSMs exist outside the realm of the state and oppose the 'inner-colonisation of the life-world'[7]. The NSMs are viewed as striving to create autonomous spaces within civil society and to promote alternative lifestyles that are not dictated by the welfare state and capitalist economy (1987: 391-7). This is evident in Offe's assertion that:

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[6] Several commentators such as Byrne have found flaws in Inglehart's thesis, not least its failure to explain why so many people raised after World War II remained resolutely materialistic in their outlook (1997: 55).
[7] Crossley provides an illuminating critique of Habermas's approach to social movements (2002b: 8-15).

The politics of new social movements (...) *seek to politicize the institutions of civil society in ways that are not constrained by the channels of representative-bureaucratic political institutions, and thereby to reconstitute a civil society that is no longer dependent upon ever more regulation, control and intervention.* (1985: 820)

Melucci similarly asserts that the NSMs fight for the 'reappropriation of time, of space, and of relationships in the individual's daily experience' (1989: 219).

Finally, many theorists contrast the formal, hierarchical structures of the 'old' movements with the informal and participatory types of organisation found in the NSMs. Gerlach and Hine refer to 'decentralised, segmented and reticulated groups' (1970: 34-55), and Offe asserts that, 'The mode by which multitudes of individuals become collective actors is highly informal, ad hoc, discontinuous, context-sensitive and egalitarian' (1985: 829). Many view the adoption of such modes of organisation as an expression of anti-authoritarianism and a desire for autonomy from the conventional political arena. Movement aims are thus often seen as primarily social and cultural in nature, advocating a 'new way of life' rather than seeking inclusion in the political process (see Scott, 1990: 16-35). The non-negotiable nature of NSM demands, which do not easily translate into conventional political objectives and are viewed by participants as too crucial for arbitration, is also frequently highlighted (Offe, 1985: 830-1).

Numerous criticisms have been advanced about the NSM theories. The validity of a clear-cut distinction between NSMs and earlier social movements has been challenged. Scott remarks that some NSMs such as feminism and antiracism represent a continuation of earlier causes (1990: 13). Others stress that the new and old movements have in fact followed similar trajectories: as the labour movement in advanced capitalist countries became a part of conventional politics, it is argued that so too have many of the NSMs evolved into pragmatic, reformist organisations (Tarrow, 1998; Tarrow & Meyer, 1998). Furthermore, the assumption that NSM aims are exclusively social and cultural in nature and turn away from the state has been challenged. Scott argues that personal, lifestyle issues are political 'not merely in the sense that power relations are embedded in personal ones, but also in the sense that demands for personal autonomy, freedom, etc., are political in nature' (1990: 23). He views the NSMs not as a retreat from the political sphere but as an extension of politics to cover a wider range of concerns and social relations (1990: 24). Similar to Scott, Byrne highlights contrasts within movements, showing that they combine reformist and radical ideologies, formal and informal styles of organisation, and conventional and unconventional tactics (1997: 160). My own analysis in Chapter 5 also pinpoints some problems with the original NSM theories, and calls into question their contemporary usefulness.

(iii.) Recent perspectives on social movements: towards theoretical conciliation

Below, I study five theories of social movements that, in different ways, combine and build upon the insights of existing schools of thought. In Chapter 5, I make use of these theories to interpret the student protests. To recapitulate, Eyerman and Jamison (1991) offer a reading of social movements centred on the concept of 'cognitive praxis'. Kriesi et al. (1995) provide a theory of social movements which attempts to combine NSM and POS perspectives. Tarrow (1998) places the political context at the centre of analysis but brings together the insights of several theoretical

approaches. Klandermans (1997) promotes a social psychology of protest that aims to complement rather than compete with other perspectives of social movements. Finally, Diani (1992a,b) conceives of social movements in terms of collective identity and social networks.

A cognitive approach to social movements

According to Eyerman and Jamison (1991), social movements are carriers of new thoughts and ideas and, as a result, are one key source of social change. Social movements consist of:

a socially constructive force... a fundamental determinant of human knowledge. It is from, among other places, the cognitive praxis of social movements that science and ideology - as well as everyday knowledge - develops new perspectives. (1991: 48-9)

Cognitive praxis is the central concept of Eyerman and Jamison's theory. This provides a framework for explaining the process by which movements articulate an identity, which amounts in the authors' terms to the content of the actors' consciousness. They argue that, 'A social movement *is* its cognitive praxis' (1991: 54). Cognitive praxis is defined as a process of 'learning by doing' that takes place on several levels. Firstly, it occurs in the interpersonal interactions between activists within a movement who plan future actions and reflect on past ones. Secondly, cognitive praxis takes place in the interactions between movements and their opponents in the public sphere. Thirdly, it occurs in the interactions between different social movements. Eyerman and Jamison observe for instance that there is competition and interplay between 'new' and 'old' social movements. Newcomers are viewed as engaging in a process of reinventing tradition and reformulating the interests and issues of former movements (1991: 57-9).

Eyerman and Jamison outline three dimensions of cognitive praxis (based on Habermas's theory of 'knowledge interest') that take place in social movements. These are defined as cosmological, technical (or practical) and organisational types of cognitive praxis. The cosmological dimension refers to the worldview assumptions or the 'theory' associated with a particular movement and largely taken for granted by activists. The technical dimension consists of a movement's 'practice' or 'what the movement talks about' and its specific objects of critique. Movements also have an organisational dimension that, in the case of the NSMs, takes the form of participatory types of decision-making. According to Eyerman and Jamison, the three dimensions combine to form a social movement's identity and historical meaning (1991: 68-78).

Eyerman and Jamison assert that the key actors of social movements are different types of 'movement intellectuals' who carry out the work of cognitive praxis. The authors define movement intellectuals as 'those individuals who through their activities articulate the knowledge interests and cognitive identity of social movements' (1991: 98). Furthermore, they assert that 'all activists are, in some sense, "movement intellectuals"' and posit that most if not all movements emerge as a result of some kind of intellectual activity (1991: 94). One of the unique contributions of Eyerman and Jamison's theory is its engagement with the question of where the underlying ideas that fuel social movements come from in the first place, in answer to which they propose that social movements emerge to a great extent out of the activities of 'established intellectuals' both in academia and popular writing (1991: 102). In Chapter 5, I draw on Eyerman and Jamison's notion

of 'established intellectuals' to try to understand the role of French scholars such as Bourdieu (1998) and Béroud et al. (1998) (see below) in the nascent anti-neo-liberal movement. Eyerman and Jamison observe however that established intellectuals cannot by themselves create a social movement, and that it falls upon movement activists or 'non-established intellectuals' (such as students) to create a public space for a movement to take shape. In Chapter 5, I consider whether any groups of student protesters in France between 1986 and 1999 took on such a role.

As movements grow in size and complexity, the profile of movement intellectuals is, finally, seen to shift and become professionalised. In order to engage in political, legal and scientific debates and communicate with the mass media, organisations increasingly employ individuals with specific expertise who may not be connected to the movement in any way, examples being consultants, public relations experts, media spokespeople and so on (1991: 106). Thus, not only do intellectuals generate social movements, social movements are also seen to generate new intellectual roles. The authors note that, as movements develop over time, tensions can emerge between the different types of intellectual involved.

Eyerman and Jamison situate social movements in a historically defined political and cultural context. They argue that movements are shaped by the historical context in which they emerge, and also shape the historical context itself through their cognitive praxis (1991: 62). The authors analyse this context by situating social movements within a historical framework of modernity. They argue that the 'old' movements of the late nineteenth century - the labour movement, early feminism, the cooperative movement and so on – are fundamentally different from the NSMs because of the different structural conditions in which they emerged (in this respect, their theory is rooted in a NSM perspective). The 'old' movements, which endorsed a project of modernity, were a motor of the transition from a traditional to a modern society. These gave rise to trade unions and political parties, the expansion of the state and its greater intervention into society, and the extension of formal education to broader sections of the population. Such developments in turn gave rise to new social identities (relating to workers, students, family members, citizens, consumers), as well as increasing specialisation and professionalisation that complicated the social hierarchy and blurred traditional class boundaries. Gradually, the 'old' movements' politics became routinised and institutionalized, and created the structural conditions in which the 'new' movements emerged (1991: 150-3). A key point that Eyerman and Jamison make is that the new movements take the old movements as the 'Other', as the agent responsible for the institutions and values that they oppose:

> *New social movements emerge in a new postmodern context in which the central values of the project of modernity as conceived and realized through the active participation of old social movements are challenged. The ideal of progress, intervention into society and nature through science and technology, mediated through an expansive state have now become the Other.* (1991: 154)

Eyerman and Jamison also examine the complex and varied ways that the mass media influences the knowledge production of social movements. They assert that the mass media have altered the very nature of social movements, which is one of the reasons why they make a distinction between 'new' and 'old' movements (1991: 139). They observe that much of the transfer of ideas and

communication between movement intellectuals and the general public now takes place through the mass media. Movement activists have developed strategies for communication via the mass media, and the mass media have established routines in dealing with movements. Thus, the new 'movement intellectuals' such as public relations experts and media spokespeople have come to play an increasingly prominent role in social movements. Eyerman and Jamison conclude that such experts are 'those who act as intermediaries between the movement and its Other, translating the aspects of a movement's newly articulated worldview into programs from which specific demands can be turned into negotiable items in arenas of the established political culture' (1991: 102). Eyerman and Jamison point out that, in order to be effective in the mass media, movements tend to simplify and tone down their messages. They have developed media-conscious strategies and forms of organisation (1991: 139-40). However, while movements use the mass media, the mass media can also make use of movements, for instance by selecting particular activists for media prominence who are depicted as representing the entire movement. Once a movement enters media discourse, movement organisations may lose control over the message they wish to convey.

Finally, Eyerman and Jamison stress that social movements are transient, changeable entities. Similar to other theorists that I discuss below, Eyerman and Jamison understand social movements in terms of a cyclical process with historical periods of heightened activity. According to their approach, this cycle takes the form of a creative learning process that begins as interpersonal interests and transforms into inter-organisational concerns. They argue that a social movement cannot be identified by a single organisation or protest campaign, but rather:

> *It is more like a cognitive territory, a new conceptual space that is filled by a dynamic interaction between different groups and organisations. It is through tensions between different organisations over defining and acting in that conceptual space that the (temporary) identity of a social movement is formed.* (1991: 55)

According to the authors, once the knowledge created by a movement becomes formalised within the established political and scientific cultures and is 'transferred' to more established forums such as the mass media, academia, the marketplace and the national and international organisations created or reinvented to serve the movement, the social movement itself ceases to exist (1991: 60, 92).

Theories that emphasise the political context of social movements

Eyerman and Jamison's theory starts with the assertion that social movements generate new knowledge, that is, new ideas and practices that constitute one source of historical transformation. Tarrow (1998) and, notably, Kriesi, Koopmans, Duyvendak and Giugni (1995) start with the assertion that social movements are shaped by the political context in which they emerge and develop. As I show below, Kriesi et al. go as far as to argue that almost all aspects of social movements are more or less shaped by conventional politics (1995: xii, xiii). Tarrow however refrains from explaining social movements entirely in terms of political opportunities and constraints, and provides a much broader conceptual framework that incorporates the insights of other branches of social movement theory (1998: 3).

In a comparative study of NSMs in four Western European countries (including France), Kriesi et al. offer a POS model for the explanation of social movements in general[8]. They are primarily concerned with understanding the *mobilisation* of social movements which, they argue, is 'closely linked to conventional politics in the parliamentary and extraparliamentary arenas of a given country' (1995: xii). More than trying to identify the common characteristics of social movements (in terms of their content, form and tactics), they are concerned with explaining why the same social movement can take on a dramatically different appearance in different national settings.

The essential point that I wish to retain about Kriesi et al.'s theory is the extent to which it conceives of all aspects of (most) social movements to be determined by the political context, down to the nature of the grievances and claims they advance. The authors identify four components of the POS that influence the emergence of social movements, the responses of political authorities to them and, to a great extent, the features of movements themselves in terms of their strategies, levels of participation and outcomes. The first component of the POS comprises what the authors call 'national cleavage structures'. These refer to the traditional societal cleavages based on social class, religion, urban-rural divides and centre-periphery struggles that conditioned the appearance and development of the NSMs in different countries. According to the authors' findings, the salience of traditional conflicts seriously limited the political space in which the NSMs emerged from the late 1960s onwards. Thus in France, low levels of NSM activity compared with Germany, Switzerland and the Netherlands are attributed in part to the persistence of traditional struggles between the new and old left (1995: 25).

The second component of the POS is the formal, institutional structure of political systems: the parliamentary, administrative and direct-democratic arenas (1995: 33). These determine to a large extent 'the openness of access to the state, as well as the capacity of social movements to act' (1995: 27). France is categorised as a 'strong' state with a powerful executive, high degree of centralisation, two-ballot electoral system, strong public administration and a lack of established channels enabling challengers to put issues onto the political agenda, all of which provide few opportunities for social movements to emerge (1995: 33). Kriesi et al. concede however that political authorities may respond differently to social movements depending on the policy domain that they are trying to influence and its priority on the conventional political agenda. Their argument is that, 'With regard to high-profile policy domains, challengers face a rather closed political system' (1995: 95-110)[9].

The third component of the POS consists of the informal strategies pursued by political authorities in response to social movements. Kriesi et al. define such strategies as 'the procedures that members of the political system employ when they are dealing with challengers' (1995: 33). They maintain that such concepts as 'political culture', 'civic culture' or 'national mood' are excessively vague in explaining the long tradition of informal procedures that have emerged in each country, and attempt to understand these in a more concrete way (1995: 33). They argue that informal

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[8]The study focuses on movements in France, Germany, Switzerland and the Netherlands that occurred between 1975 and 1989, and is based on empirical data found in national newspapers.

[9] The study makes a distinction between high-profile and low-profile policy domains, that refer to the hierarchy of political issues defined by political authorities and allies. The profile of a policy domain is determined by, among other factors, the amount of material resources it involves and its electoral relevance (1995: 96-7).

procedures can either be exclusive (repressive, confrontational, polarising) or integrative (facilitative, cooperative, assimilative) (1995: 34). France is represented as a state which adopts 'selective exclusion': it excludes movements from the conventional political process, but parties in power may cooperate with movements if it is beneficial to them (1995: 36).

Finally, the POS model takes into account short-term openings in the political structure, which are defined as alliance structures. These are the less stable elements of the political system which create opportunities for social movements and are to do with 'the opening up of access to participation, shifts in ruling alignments, the availability of influential allies, and cleavages within and among elites' (1995: 53). Kriesi et al. look specifically at how the configuration of power on the left and its presence or absence in government impinged on the emergence of the NSMs in the 1970s and 1980s. Their findings show that the success of the NSMs was intimately linked to the support they received from organisations on the left (1995: 53). In this respect again, France is described as a deviant case since the left in government in the early 1980s actively opposed certain movements (the peace movement against cruise missiles) but exploited others (notably the antiracist movement) for its own political ends (1995: 76-8).

Working within this conceptual framework, Kriesi et al. offer an explanation of the motivation to participate in social movements (which I view in light of the student protests in Chapter 5). On the one hand, they try to rectify the failure of 'structural' theories to explain how aspects of the social structure translate into collective action. On the other hand, they try to move beyond rational action theories that do not attempt to explain the structural origins of social movements. Kriesi et al. try to link structure to action by focusing on what they call 'concrete opportunities' (1995: 38). Their argument is that the motivation of individuals and groups to participate in collective action derives essentially from the perception of concrete political opportunities to act. In other words, political opportunities are viewed as translating into perceived costs and benefits at the individual level (1995: 38). According to Kriesi et al., it is essentially the formal and informal aspects of the political setting (the second and third components of the POS model) that determine a movement's concrete opportunities, and impinge on challengers' expectations of success and the strategies they adopt (1995: 37-40).

Kriesi et al. thus offer a different reading of motivation than social constructionist theories that view movements as responses to perceived grievances. Kriesi et al. do not call into question the value of such theories, but argue that the social construction of the meanings attributed to issues and events is in fact quite secondary to political opportunities in explaining the mobilisation of collective action, given that the political context ultimately 'determines the potency of framing efforts' (1995: 162). They assert that, 'Social movements are sometimes victorious in their efforts to frame situations as problematic, but only when they operate in a political context that offers them the opportunity to do so' (1995: 164). Kriesi et al. even suggest that political opportunities determine to a great extent whether an issue or situation is perceived as a grievance, stating that they have 'ample evidence of the influence of opportunities on the perceptions and definition of events as grievances' (1995: 163). According to their theory then, the nature of most social movements is largely determined by political opportunities and constraints.

Tarrow (1998) also stresses the importance of the political context, but offers a much broader theoretical framework that pays close attention to the ideas, values and identities that form the basis of social movements. He adopts 'contentious collective action' as the basic unit of analysis because, 'The irreducible act that lies at the base of all social movements, protests and revolutions is contentious collective action' (1995: 3)[10]. One of the main advantages of Tarrow's approach for the purpose of the thesis is that (as becomes clear in Chapter 5) it gives a very clear idea of what exactly makes a social movement different from other types of contentious collective action. As I elaborate below, social movements are distinguished from other forms of contentious collective action given their status as:

> *Sequences of contentious politics that are based on underlying social networks and resonant collective action frames, which develop the capacity to maintain sustained challenges against powerful opponents.* (1998: 2)

Tarrow's analytical framework is divided into two main parts. Firstly, he identifies four components of contentious collective action which form the basis of social movements: political opportunities and constraints; repertoires of contention; collective solidarity, identity and framing; and mobilising structures. Tarrow agrees with Kriesi et al. that social movements arise in response to changing political opportunities and constraints. However, he draws back from explaining all aspects of social movements in terms of political opportunity structures. According to Tarrow, political opportunities are not the only resource that social movements rely upon. It is a combination of opportunities and constraints with 'the cultural, organisational, and practical resources that are the foundations for social movements' (1998: 141).

Tarrow's attention to both the political and non-political dimensions of contentious collective action is evident in the three additional components of his theoretical framework. The second focuses on the tactics used by actors to achieve their goals, that is, their chosen 'repertoires of contention' that can be violent, disruptive or conventional. While drawing on Tilly's model of repertoires of contention, Tarrow stresses the frequently overlooked fact that the tactics all movements use are to an extent 'public performances with emotional and cultural content' (1998: 93). Furthermore, he stresses the fact that the repertoires of contention adopted by modern social movements are multiform: they combine disruptive tactics with, more often, conventional forms of action such as demonstrations and strikes which have in the course of the twentieth century become a part of conventional politics (1998: 104).

The third component of Tarrow's framework stresses the importance of 'common purposes, collective identities and identifiable challenges'. From social constructionist theories, Tarrow borrows the concepts of 'framing', 'meaning construction' and 'consensus mobilisation' to emphasise the cultural and symbolic dimensions of contentious collective action. He states for instance that an important role of social movement organisers consists of defining and interpreting grievances and claims in a way that broadens participation, inventing new cultural and symbolic meanings out of existing ones (1998: 107). Tarrow points out however that the framing efforts of

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[10] He elaborates, 'Contention is not limited to social movements, though it is their most characteristic way of interacting with other actors. Interest groups sometimes engage in direct challenges, as do political parties, voluntary associations and ordinary citizens who have nothing in common but a temporary coincidence of claims against others' (1998: 5).

social movements compete with other movements, with media agents, and with the state for supremacy. He also notes that ordinary people have their own interpretations of events that may be dramatically different from those proposed by social movements, and it is therefore the role of organisers to persuade people to change their way of thinking (1998: 110-111). Finally, Tarrow stresses the importance of solidarity and collective identity in the emergence and development of social movements, which he understands as the 'participants' recognition of their common interests that translates the potential for a movement into action' (1998: 6). He states that collective action frames form the basis of collective identity, observing that the most powerful social movements 'tap deep-rooted feelings of solidarity or identity' (1998: 6). Movements are seen to frame existing identities in a new way or generate new identities around common purposes and challenges.

Tarrow's fourth component focuses on 'how people come together', that is, the various ties that bind movements together and also connect them with other movements. Similar to Diani (1992a/b) (see below), Tarrow stresses that there is no single model of movement organisation. Following Michel's 'Iron Law of Oligarchy' (1962) he remarks, on the one hand, that highly organised, hierarchical and institutionalised movements tend to displace their original aims and lose their capacity for disruption while, on the other hand, movements with no centralised organisation are prone to factionalism and lack continuity. Tarrow notes that technological and social changes from the 1960s onwards gave rise to new types of movement organisation. Drawing on Gerlach and Hine (1970), Tarrow observes the emergence of movements that lack single leadership, do not have card-holding membership, are made up of local groups and build upon web-like connections of personal relationships and social networks. He observes that, concomitantly, there have been important shifts in modes of participation away from permanent commitment towards 'mass support for brief and often exhilarating performances' (1998: 133). Tarrow argues that, while such developments have led analysts such as Ion (1997) to remark a decline of 'social capital', where social movements are concerned there has been less a decline than a relative shift in the nature of organisation and participation (1998: 133).

Tarrow on the one hand and Kriesi et al. on the other develop a fairly similar theoretical understanding of the interactive and dynamic aspects of social movements once they have been set in motion. They highlight the wave-like (Kriesi et al.) or cyclical (Tarrow) nature of social movements as they occur over a sustained period of time. Tarrow defines a cycle of contention as a 'phase of heightened conflict across the social system' (1998: 142). Similarly, Kriesi et al. state that, 'Protests tend to be strongly clustered in large waves that wash over a country and sometimes even have a worldwide character' (1995: 112). Within the remit of this study, it is not possible to discuss all of the aspects of protest waves that these authors deal with. However, they draw attention to the processes of diffusion that characterise social movements, which proves extremely helpful for making sense of the student protests in Chapter 5.

In brief, theories of diffusion explore how information and opinions spread through populations. According to one definition within sociology, diffusion is 'the process by which an innovation (any new idea, activity or technology) spreads through a population' (Michaelson, 1993: 217). In relation to social movements, diffusion can involve the spread of movement content (goals, themes, ideas,

slogans and so on), modes of organisation, repertoires of contention, or all of these combined. A vital element of diffusion also involves the likely consequences of collective action: the success of one movement galvanises other groups into action (Kriesi et al., 1995: 185-6).

Tarrow and Kriesi et al. highlight different types and processes of diffusion that combine to generate a protest wave, although they concede that this is a relatively underdeveloped area of theory. Kriesi et al. focus on how diffusion occurs within the same movement (intra-movement diffusion). Tarrow considers how contention spreads between movements (inter-movement diffusion). Kriesi et al. also outline two processes by which diffusion takes place: direct diffusion, when information is transferred between movement organisations; and indirect diffusion, when information is filtered through the mass media (1995: 185). Both groups of authors are particularly interested in the cross-national diffusion of protest, that is to say why and how certain protest waves have occurred almost simultaneously in different countries. Kriesi et al. highlight two possible interpretations of international protests, the first implying the presence of a 'transnational theme or stimulus that provokes an almost simultaneous reaction by social movements in different countries'; the second seeing movements as the result of diffusion processes (1995: 205). In Chapter 5, I draw on the insights of Tarrow and Kriesi et al. to identify a process of diffusion in the student protests. I suggest the relevance of a closer investigation of diffusion processes that take place *between* different types of contentious collective action (in addition to the types of diffusion that occur within the sphere of social movements).

A social psychology of protest

Klandermans (1997) offers a theory of social movements that is inspired by social psychology but draws on, notably, POS and social constructionist perspectives. One of Klandermans' main propositions is that different sets of theories are needed to explain social movements at the different (individual, organisational and structural) levels on which they occur. Essentially, Klandermans conceives of social movements as Tarrow does (1997: 2). However, he looks at the phenomenon from a fresh angle to explore the 'social psychological principles and dynamics of movement participation' (1997: 3). Klandermans offers numerous, insightful analyses of the nature of social movements and, within the remit of this study, it is not possible to discuss them all. I will therefore focus on his concept of a collective action frame, which I apply to the student protests in Chapter 5.

Klandermans investigates the (hitherto neglected) dynamics of movement participation at the individual level. He identifies three stages that determine participation in social movements: the creation of a mobilisation potential through the construction and reconstruction of collective beliefs; the transformation of discontent into collective action; and sustained participation and disengagement (1997: 15-16). One of Klandermans' central assertions is that it is the generation of collective action frames that determines the potential for a social movement to emerge. Individuals are viewed as constructing and reconstructing collective beliefs through the generation of a collective action frame. Klandermans explains that, 'A mobilisation potential consists of people who share certain values and beliefs, in other words, who are sympathetic to a given collective action frame' (1997: 16).

Following Gamson (1992: 70), Klandermans defines a collective action frame as a 'set of action oriented beliefs and meanings that inspire and legitimate social movement activities and campaigns' (1997: 17). He also borrows and adapts Gamson's distinction between three components that make up a collective action frame: a sense of injustice; an element of identity; and a factor of agency. Firstly, Klandermans posits that a sense of injustice can arise in three possible situations: when people come to believe that the inequality they are subject to is illegitimate (illegitimate inequality); when people have 'suddenly imposed grievances' following an unexpected event (the concept is borrowed from Walsh [1988]); and when people come to believe that their moral principles have been violated in some way (violated principles) (1997: 39-40). Secondly, Klandermans states that the generation of a collective action frame requires an element of identity or consciousness. Klandermans notes that social psychological research has repeatedly shown that very little is needed for collective identity - what he terms as the appearance of ingroup-outgroup dynamics - to develop. Collective identities are seen to become politically relevant when an oppositional consciousness, an 'us and them' situation emerges (1997: 41). Thirdly, Klandermans observes that a collective action frame requires a factor of agency. This consists of 'the belief that one can alter conditions or policies through collective action' (1997: 19).

The novelty of Klandermans' framing concept is that it investigates both 'the *construction* of "pools" of collective beliefs', and the *appropriation* of beliefs from those pools by individuals' (1997: 44). In other words, Klandermans makes a distinction between the social construction of collective action frames on the one hand, and their appropriation by individuals on the other.

According to Klandermans, the social construction of collective action frames takes place at three different levels and stages: through public discourse; through persuasive communication (or consensus mobilisation efforts) by social movement organisations; and during episodes of collective action in the form of consciousness raising. To explain the social construction of collective action frames in public discourse, Klandermans draws on Gamson (1992). Public discourse involves everyone in a society or a particular section of society, and is shaped by themes and counter-themes that produce competing definitions of reality. Klandermans defines public discourse as 'the interface of media discourse and interpersonal interactions' (1997: 45). He explains:

> *While the mass media plays an important role in framing social issues and relates them to the themes and counter-themes of public discourse, the actual formation of collective action frames takes place in exchange within the groups and categories with which individuals identify. Such groups may be small, composed of people whom one encounters in daily life (colleagues, friends, neighbours), or large generic categories (e.g. whites, workers, farmers, Europeans, union members).* (1997: 47)

Klandermans stresses that media discourse is far from neutral: the mass media do not simply transmit reality but transform it and, as a result, can encourage or restrict the construction of a collective action frame. As studies by Van Zoonen (1992) and Kielbowicz and Scherer (1986) have illustrated, 'the mass media selects and interprets available information according to principles that define news value' (Klandermans, 1997: 47).

Collective action frames do not only arise out of public discourse. They are also generated by social movement organisations through persuasive communication. Unlike public discourse, persuasive communication - which Klandermans also defines as consensus mobilisation - involves deliberate attempts on the part of social movement organisations to persuade individuals to take their side. A large part of this work consists of convincing potential sympathisers that their message is credible (1997: 48-9). Consensus can be mobilised through an array of methods employed by movement organisations: slogans; posters; pamphlets; mass media; public fora; demonstrations; dramatic events; concerts, door-to-door canvassing and so on (1997: 50). Klandermans emphasises that the social construction of collective action frames does not end once individuals become active in a social movement. Collective action frames are continuously constructed and reconstructed as movements occur, altering the perceptions of participants as well as pulling in sympathetic spectators. Klandermans refers to this process as consciousness raising that takes place during episodes of collective action (1997: 51).

Klandermans stresses that, once collective action frames are generated, they can be appropriated, transformed or rejected by individuals. As I show in Chapter 5, his framing concept thus allows for the fact that, because of their different personal dispositions and experiences, individuals can respond in varied ways to the same issues or events. To understand how individuals respond to collective action frames, Klandermans draws extensively on the social cognition literature. He states: 'Adherence to a collective action frame can be conceived of as the outcome of social and political information processing' (1997: 59). In order to explain this process, Klandermans borrows the metaphor of knowledge 'bins' from Wyer and Ottati (1993). The way individuals process new social and political information (that they receive through public discourse, persuasive communication or consciousness raising during episodes of collective action) is seen to depend on their existing knowledge (1993: 57). According to the 'bin' metaphor, individuals store information about people, objects and events in knowledge bins, each with a header summarising the key features of its content. Any new information an individual receives is categorised or linked to existing 'bins', 'In other words, information is interpreted against the background of what we know already' (1993: 57). Crucially, new information received by individuals tends to be stored in the knowledge 'bin' that they retrieve first from the memory: the meaning an individual attributes to a person, object or event depends on the content of that bin. The bin metaphor can explain some peculiarities about the way individuals process social and political information. It explains for instance why individuals may have strong opinions on an issue but little factual knowledge, given that information processing stops once it is stored in a particular knowledge bin (1993: 58). In addition, the social cognition literature recognises that people do not always process information but rely on what are termed as 'peripheral cues'. In the case of a collective action frame, peripheral cues can consist of the credibility of information sources, the narrative in which it is couched or the attractiveness of material produced by an organisation (1993: 59, 62).

Klandermans adds that, for various reasons, people do not process social and political information in the same way. The appropriation of a collective action frame depends on whether the themes and counter-themes that shape public discourse resonate with an individual's beliefs and attitudes (this is determined by the content of their knowledge bins). Frame appropriation is also conditioned

by individual dispositions with regard to cognition (thoughtfulness), involvement (the proximity of an issue) and knowledge (a combination of factual knowledge, interest in and exposure to information in a given domain) (1997: 61-2). In brief, individuals with a greater need for cognition, a close involvement with an issue and a substantial knowledge base about that issue is more likely to have consistent beliefs and attitudes. Inversely, individuals with low cognition, involvement and knowledge are more likely to rely on peripheral cues. Finally, Klandermans stresses that interpersonal interaction plays a central role in the appropriation of collective action frames. Drawing on Gamson (1992) he observes that people use diverse sources of information (newspaper accounts, novels, movies, personal experiences, gossip, common sense and so on) when discussing issues and, on the basis of such discussions, forming individual opinions about them.

A network approach to social movements

The final example of a recent approach that I will discuss is Mario Diani's theory, which is built around an understanding of social movements as social networks that form the basis for the existence of a collective identity. According to Diani:

A social movement is a network of informal interactions between a plurality of individuals, groups and / or organisations, engaged in a political or cultural conflict, on the basis of a shared collective identity. (1992a: 13)

Whereas Klandermans and Tarrow (among others) view the existence of a collective identity as one component of social movements, Diani places it, along with social networks, at the centre of analysis. To begin with, Diani stresses (appropriately in my view) that we should understand social movements in terms of networks and not organisations. He asserts that social movement actors are highly diverse, and range from single organisations to loosely structured, grass-roots groups to organised bureaucracies (1992b: 107). Diani (1992b) seeks to understand the networks of interaction that take place between individuals, informal groups and more formal organisations. He highlights the existence of different types of exchanges and linkages at the inter-organisational and inter-personal levels, as well as networks that connect social movement actors with sympathisers. According to Diani, it is a shared collective identity that connects the different social movement actors with each other. Whereas Klandermans understands collective identity as an oppositional consciousness (that is, the identification of an 'us and them'), Diani understands it in a much broader sense which encompasses shared ideas and beliefs, solidarity and a sense of belongingness (1992b: 111).

It is instructive to note that Diani also conceptualises social movements as internally diverse, with constantly shifting boundaries. He states that:

Speaking in terms of collective identity does not mean to imply that social movement actors are homogeneous. Rather, movement identity must be conceived of as the outcome of a constant tension between diverging orientations (...) *The boundaries of a movement will be affected by, and will change according to, the shifts in tension between different orientations. At times, disagreements can be so deep as to prevent the development of a shared belief system and, therefore, of a collective identity.* (1992b: 112)

A second important aspect of Diani's work is its attention to the question of how social movement theories can be applied to real events on the ground. One of Diani's main objectives is to delineate the boundaries of social movements, and he adopts collective identity as a major criterion for boundary definition (1992b: 108). He explains:

> *Collective identity is the major criterion for differentiating a social movement from other actors who share at least part of the movement's belief system. For the purpose of identifying the boundaries of a movement, the self-definitions given by actors may not be sufficient, however. Social identity consists of two components, self-definition and external definition (Melucci, 1982). In order to be considered part of a given movement, actors need to be perceived as such by other members, as well as by external actors.* (1992b: 112)

Diani's argument is therefore that, to be considered part of a social movement, actors have to a.) define themselves as a part of it and b.) be defined by others (e.g. allies and adversaries) as such. Drawing on social network theory (e.g. Knoke and Kuklinski, 1982), Diani observes that there are essentially two ways of identifying and delineating a social movement. On the one hand, *realist* criteria can be adopted, which is essentially what Diani refers to when he recommends that the self-definition of the actor and external definition (i.e. collective identity) be used to confirm the existence of a social movement. If we adopt realist criteria to interpret the student protests, then students can be viewed as taking part in a social movement if they say they are, and if other actors (for example within the same movement) also identify them as such. On the other hand, Diani points out that *nominalist* criteria can also be adopted to identify and delineate social movements. In a nominalist perspective, it is the researcher who decides what attributes actors need to have to be considered part of a social movement (1992b: 113-4). If we adopt nominalist criteria to interpret the student protests, then the researcher's constructs are used to determine the existence of a social movement. Diani recommends a combination of both realist and nominalist criteria for the delineation of social movements, arguing that, 'What is and what is not a social movement is as much a matter of subjective perception as of objective criteria' (1992b: 107). I reflect further upon Diani's criteria for boundary delineation when bringing together social movement theory and the practice of the student protests in Chapter 5.

(ii.) Theories of pressure groups

It proves much easier to delineate theories of pressure groups, given that they are situated almost exclusively within political science and focus mainly on established organisations that seek to influence the policy process. Coxall for instance states that, 'A pressure group is any organisation that aims to influence public policy by seeking to persuade decision-makers by lobbying rather than by standing for election and holding office' (2001: 3). Coxall's analytical starting point is that pressure groups are different from political parties in that they focus on specific issues and aim to shape the policy process by other means than electoral politics. His definition also specifies that pressure groups' main activity consists of lobbying decision-makers (as opposed to staging collective protests). Wyn Grant's (2000) definition is similar, but stresses that pressure groups aim to shape public policy by exerting an influence upon the different institutions that make up the political system at the local, national and European levels:

A pressure group is an organization which seeks as one of its functions to influence the formulation of public policy, public policy representing a set of authoritative decisions taken by the executive, the legislature, and the judiciary, and by local government and the European Union. (2000: 14)

Pressure groups are nevertheless diverse in nature, and different typologies are proposed within the recent literature[11]. One of the most common typologies distinguishes between 'insider' and 'outsider' groups, and emphasises the fact that the relationship between pressure groups and the state can be varied. Insider groups on the one hand enjoy a close, routinised relationship with government. They are regarded as legitimate by decision-makers, and are consulted on a regular basis. As Coxall sums up, groups enjoy insider status on the condition that they keep to 'the rules of the game'. This involves providing governments with accurate, well-researched information, being prepared not to openly criticise government if a policy decision is going against them and being prepared to compromise (2001: 4-6). Being an insider group thus requires adherence to certain patterns of behaviour, which are set by decision-makers. Outsider groups on the other hand do not have a consultative relationship with government, for one of two reasons. There are groups that desire inclusion in the policy process, but are unable to gain recognition and are excluded by decision makers. This may be because their objectives are incompatible with those of decision-makers, or because they do not have the skills or know how required to gain insider status. There are furthermore groups that are commonly defined as 'outsiders by choice' because they want to remain autonomous from the state. These have also been defined as 'ideological outsiders' because, as Grant observes, one way of looking at outsider groups is to understand them as 'protest groups which have objectives that are outside the mainstream of political opinion' (2000: 19). Garner stresses that:

It is important to distinguish between those activities that reflect a reluctant outsider status and those that reflect a suspicion of normal decision-making channels. In the latter category we can further distinguish between those that remain outsiders because they are aware of the dangers of being 'captured' by government and those that seek to bypass the public policy route entirely. (1996: 83, cited in Grant, 2000: 22)

Despite highlighting the existence of outsider groups, most scholars assume that the vast majority of pressure groups desire and work towards insider status. According to Grant for instance, 'In the longer run, most groups tend to veer towards an insider strategy, because of the potential gains it offers' (2000: 20). He cites Greenpeace as an example of a pressure group that was previously an 'outsider' that focused solely on direct action but now increasingly cooperates with government to achieve its objectives.

Some analysts have proposed modifications of the original insider-outsider typology. May and Nugent (1982) for instance propose the label 'thresholder groups' to denote groups which oscillate between insider and outsider status. More recently, Page (1998) has argued that pressure groups can pursue outsider strategies (which feature direct action) without jeopardising their insider status in relation to the state. On the whole though, much of pressure group theory is cast in the

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[11] Some examples of pressure groups in the U.K. today, which are cited by Grant (2000: 6), are the Automobile Association, the Animal Liberation Front, the British Medical Association, Child Poverty Action Group, National Farmers Union, Age Concern, the Consumers' Association, the National Federation of Women's Institutes, Friends of the Earth, Mind, Disability Income group, Civil Liberties and the Society for the Protection of the Unborn Child.

assumption that groups naturally veer towards insider status and adopt conventional lobbying activities. The bulk of pressure group analysis focuses on insider groups and their interaction with the different institutions of the state and, following on from this, the underlying assumption guiding much of the theory seems to be that pressure groups almost always have to comply with the state's objectives and practices to achieve their goals.

A second typology within the pressure group literature distinguishes between cause groups and sectional groups. This overlaps to an extent with the insider-outsider typology, but draws attention to the fact that pressure groups pursue varied interests. Sectional groups represent the interests of a particular social and economic group and have 'closed' memberships. They are also commonly called 'interest groups' because they exist primarily to protect members' self-interests, examples being trade unions, professional groups and employers' associations. (Coxall, 2001: 4; Baggott, 1995: 14). Cause groups on the other hand exist to further the interests of others (or the public interest) as defined by the group. They are also commonly labeled 'promotional groups' or 'attitude groups', examples being Greenpeace, Amnesty International and the RSPCA (Coxall, 2001: 4; Baggott, 1995: 14). Anyone can join a cause group, and members are united by shared attitudes and values (Coxall, 2001: 5). The assumption guiding this distinction is that members of sectional groups are self-interested, while members of cause groups are altruistic and seek to improve society as a whole. However, as Baggott points out, members of cause groups can also be motivated by self-interest given that, 'After all, they provide material and non-material benefits to their staff and senior members, including jobs, salaries and status' (1995: 16).

A third typology that is found within the pressure group literature concerns primary and secondary groups. This highlights the fact that some groups have a solely political purpose while others only engage in 'pressure politics' from time to time (Grant, 2000: 16). The primary / secondary distinction refers to the prevalence of service provision compared with the political action pursued by groups. Some groups offer extensive services to entice members (e.g. insurance), and service provision takes precedence over political action. These groups may only pursue political action occasionally. As Baggott points out, there are numerous organisations that act as pressure groups from time to time, such as businesses, voluntary organisations and community groups (1995: 1). Other groups have an essentially political function and are mainly involved in pressure activities, although even these may offer some services to members. To sum up:

There is a distinction then between primary groups whose sole purpose is to engage in political lobbying and secondary groups which are not primarily political but which may also adopt political standpoints or make political representations. (Coxall, 2001: 8)

Pressure groups are shown to exercise influence mainly through their lobbying activities at local, national and EU levels of government. Grant for instance states that, in the U.K. at least:

It must be stressed that the bulk of pressure group activity is very undramatic and routine, and is invisible to the public eye. It involves a series of detailed discussions with civil servants, MPs or peers about the content and implementation of legislation. (2000: 61)

Through negotiation and cooperation with decision-makers then, pressure groups influence the formation, implementation and enforcement of policies. Analysts also observe that pressure group

activities have become increasingly professionalised. One aspect of this professionalisation is the emergence of commercial lobbyism, that is, lobbying consultancy firms which act as intermediaries between pressure group clients and government (Coxall, 2001: 78).

While the bulk of pressure group analysis is taken up with exploring the nature and effectiveness of lobbying, some attention is paid to certain pressure groups' deployment of direct action and the mass media. To varying degrees, Baggott (1995), Grant (2000) and Coxall (2001), for instance, highlight the fact that certain pressure groups make use of direct action. However, an important point to retain is that they offer mainly descriptive analyses of collective protest, which do not on the whole square easily with their general theoretical models of pressure groups. The analysis of collective protest is central to most social movement theories, but in the pressure group literature it becomes a secondary theme. For different reasons, the theme of collective protest tends to be 'added on' to pressure group theories rather than forming an integral part of them. Baggott (1995) for instance does not pay much attention to pressure groups' use of direct action, and his brief analysis in fact draws attention to the illegality, ineffectiveness and infrequency of direct action in advanced democracies. He suggests that the effectiveness of direct action is limited, stating that, 'Most observers agree that a close and harmonious relationship with government is advantageous in terms of achieving influence over policy' (1995: 1000). Baggott maintains that public campaigns which combine media coverage and direct action are rarely effective and are mainly used by groups with limited direct influence within the political system. He adds that direct action is rarely effective on its own, and must be combined with more conventional lobbying activities to bring about desired results (1995: 177). Furthermore, Baggott observes that demonstrations can backfire if poorly attended or badly organised, and goes as far as to assert that:

When undertaking these forms of direct action, a group takes matters into its own hands rather than relying on established methods of decision-making to resolve the problem. Such actions are often illegal, such as the activities of radical groups within the animal rights movement, which include bombing campaigns and breaking into laboratories. (1995: 181)

Baggott's analysis (perhaps incorrectly) implies that violent, illegal types of action are more prevalent in advanced democracies than peaceful and legal forms of direct action such as mass demonstrations. Furthermore, Baggott argues that while participation in pressure groups as a whole is increasing:

The growth of protest may have been overstated (...) *Despite the rising profile of protest campaigns over the last couple of decades, there appears to have been no dramatic upsurge in the tendency to undertake protest among the general population as some predicted.* (1995: 172)

In playing down the prominence and effectiveness of direct action, Baggott's analysis is at odds with those of, among others, Grant (2000) and Coxall (2001). These analysts describe cause groups that frequently use direct action as a 'growth area' and observe their proliferation over the last forty years or so. Grant for instance remarks:

the development of a considerable number of new cause groups, particularly in the areas of the environment and animal protection (...) *many of these new cause groups were less respectful of established procedures and more reliant on forms of direct action.* (2000: 3)

Grant goes on to assert that, 'Indeed, it is possible to talk of a new "protest culture" (Brass & Koziell, 1997: 7) that cuts across a number of issue areas including animal rights, roads and civil liberties' (2000: 139). Yet, even though Grant views collective protest in a more positive light than Baggott, he concedes that the 'direct effectiveness of such protest has been limited' although 'there may be substantial indirect effects' (2000: 145). Grant highlights the positive and negative implications of the rise of direct action for democracy. On the one hand, he points out that groups can promote and defend specific issues without having to think about their broader social or economic effects (2000: 147). He states that the result of direct action can be 'a kind of lifestyle politics which trivializes important political issues (...) politics becomes another form of consumption , rather than participation in a political dialogue' (2000: 148). On the other hand, he remarks that direct action allows people to have a voice in a political system which often does not adequately represent their concerns. Direct action at the local level also enables people to have a tangible impact on their own lives (2000: 148; 194-198).

One of the main merits of Grant's theory is that it makes an attempt to situate pressure groups in relation to social movements, although such attempts within the general literature appear to be rare. This contrasts, notably, with pressure group analysts such as Jordon and Maloney (1997) who question the usefulness of the social movement concept. Grant's reference to social movements also contrasts with analysts such as Baggott (1995) who, at least in their scholarship, ignore the social movement concept. According to Grant:

For analysts of pressure groups (...) the literature on social movements is important because it reminds us that pressure groups are only one, and not event the most important means, by which people secure social change. (2000: 10)

Grant justly asserts that many pressure groups spring from broad social movements. Taking feminism as an example, he states that many of the movement's goals are related as much to bringing about individual changes in perception and the conduct of women's everyday life as political action (2000: 10-11). In Grant's view then, social movements amount to much more than organisations. His view of a social movement, although only briefly outlined, is in fact close to the one that I promote in Chapter 5.

Coxall also observes 'the rapid development of cause groups, especially in the context of new social movements' and the expansion of 'popular participation and protest through new social movements' (2001: 18). What is evident in his theory is the fact that he also refers to the NSMs and, unlike many of his contemporaries, draws on the insights of NSM theories to explain the phenomenon, albeit briefly. According to Coxall:

New social movements are radical groups which challenge the existing social and political order on behalf of excluded sections of the population or currently ignored issues. They are often more loosely structured than traditional groups and aim to shift the political agenda and change policies by long-term campaigns aimed at changing public awareness. (2001: 28)

Of the analysts I have identified, Coxall pays the most attention to collective protest, even though it is a secondary theme in his work. However, while I do not wish to be overly critical of his contribution, there appear to be two main problems with his analysis. Firstly, Coxall is not very consistent in his delineation of pressure groups in relation to social movements. At times, he

equates the NSMs with cause groups, that is, a particular type of loosely-structured pressure group with a radical orientation (groups such as Earth First! and Friends of the Earth in the 1980s spring to mind). At others, he refers to social movements *and* cause groups as if they are separate entities (2001: 117, 133). Secondly, Coxall usefully highlights the emergence of a variety of campaigns in the U.K. in the 1990s that were short-lived in nature, focused on specific issues and made extensive use of collective protest. He cites as examples the anti-poll tax protests, anti-roads protests, the Snowdrop campaign to band hand guns and demonstrations by farmers against supermarkets (2001: 112-113; 119). However, he rather confusingly refers to these protests in a variety of ways. Among the labels he adopts are: outsider campaigning groups; single-issue campaigns and protests; nimby protest; fire-brigade campaigns; direct action protest; protest movements; and single-issue pressure groups (2001: 110-139). This is in itself confusing, but what is more confusing in Coxall's work is its ambiguity as to whether these protests are evidence of social movements, pressure group activity or both phenomena at work. What Coxall's analysis unintentionally highlights is the fact that a variety of protests that have occurred in the U.K. in the 1990s prove extremely difficult to situate within existing theoretical perspectives of pressure groups on the one hand and the social movement literature on the other. This thesis confronts the same problem when it tries to define the student protests in France.

To sum up, most theories of pressure groups observe the rise of cause groups and nimby groups that have made extensive use of collective protest over the last thirty years or so, at least in the U.K. On the whole however, they give priority to the analysis of 'insider' groups that pursue their goals mainly through lobbying and interact closely with government. Collective protest is generally treated as a secondary theme within pressure group perspectives. Of the scholars that I have studied, Coxall in particular pays attention to the theme of protest, but his contribution is in certain ways problematic. There is furthermore much confusion in the literature concerning the relationship between pressure groups and social movements. Finally, Coxall draws our attention to a variety of protests in the U.K. in the 1990s that do not in fact square easily with prevailing definitions of a pressure group in terms of an 'organisation that aims to influence public policy by seeking to persuade decision-makers by lobbying' (2001: 3).

(iii.) Recent theoretical perspectives in France

It is instructive to look separately at the theoretical literature relating to France, given its development along somewhat different lines to the broader scholarship. Firstly, I explore social movement theory, which was in the 1970s and 1980s highly influenced by Alain Touraine. I go on to identify two shifts in the nature of social movement theory in France that have occurred since the early 1990s. On the one hand, French scholars such as Fillieule (1997) have started to apply and revise insights from the broader theoretical scholarship pertaining to social movements. On the other hand, the strikes and demonstrations of November-December 1995 and the protests of the *sans* have revitalised what I call academivist perspectives of social movements (Béroud et al., 1998; Bourdieu, 1998). Secondly, I consider theories concerning collective protest in general in France. Some theorists have adopted collective protest as the basic unit of analysis, rather than social movements (e.g. Favre, ed., 1990). Others (e.g. Denis, 1996) have focused on the emergence of the *coordination* structures that have been a feature of numerous protests in France

since 1986, including the student protests. Thirdly, I look at pressure group theories relating to France which, until recently, were mainly offered by non-French scholars (e.g. Wilson, 1987).

Social movement theory

The social movement literature in France was until the early 1990s dominated by the work of Touraine and his associates, and other research was mostly carried out by non-French scholars (e.g. Cerny, ed., 1982; Tilly, 1986). While some shifts in Touraine's thinking can be observed, his basic understanding of social movements has remained the same and epitomises the NSM school of thought. The concept of post-industrial society forms the backdrop to Touraine's theory of social movements. Touraine (1971) views social conflicts since the 1960s as a product of the shift from industrial to post-industrial society, which he also refers to as 'programmed' or 'information' society. He argues that in industrial society, which was based upon the economic production of material goods, the main social conflicts that took place were between industrial capitalists and the working class. According to Touraine however, the advent of a new post-industrial society – characterised by a decline of traditional industry, the creation of the welfare state and the growth of the knowledge and service sectors – has displaced the labour movement and generated new social actors, forms of social domination and sites of conflict.

Touraine conceives of the actors of NSMs in terms of a social class. However, he breaks away from traditional Marxism by rejecting the notion of social class as a structural category determined by contradictions in the capitalist system, to argue that the transition from industrial to post-industrial society has profoundly altered the nature of class relations. For Touraine, a social group only merits the existence of a social class when it comes to recognise its own interests and acts upon them, 'There can be no class without class consciousness' (1981a: 68). As Scott explains, Touraine abandons the conventional Marxist distinction between a 'class-in-itself' and a 'class-for-itself' (1990: 60). What he nevertheless retains from Marxism is the notion that social transformation continues to derive from a central struggle between two class adversaries:

> *The principal opposition between these two great classes or groups of classes does not result from the fact that one possesses wealth or property and the other does not. It comes about because the dominant classes dispose of knowledge and control information.* (1971: 61)

Touraine introduces the concept of 'historicity' to convey the idea that society produces and reproduces itself. He places considerable emphasis upon social agency, stressing that people make their own history. He defines historicity as, 'Action exerted by society, on the basis of its own activity, on its cultural and social practices' (1977: 461). Social movements are viewed as the principle means by which society acts upon itself and brings about social transformation. In Touraine's theory therefore, 'A social movement is the organised collective behaviour of a class actor struggling against his class adversary for the social control of historicity in a concrete community' (1981a: 77).

Touraine posits that, in order to warrant the definition of a social movement, a collective action must fulfill three criteria. It must define a) a class actor, b) a class adversary and c) a 'stake' or principle of totality (1981a: 81). As I have stated, Touraine maintains that, 'In a given societal type there is only *one* central couple of conflicting social movements' (1985: 773). In post-industrial

society, this struggle is centred on the division between 'technocrats' (class adversaries) who control knowledge and information and their opponents (class actors) in the various sites of power where knowledge and information are reproduced, such as universities. According to Touraine, the stake of a social movement is the social control of historicity, that is, 'the overall system of meaning which sets dominant rules in a given society' (1985: 81). In other words, the stake of a social movement consists of wresting the control of common cultural values in a society away from the dominant social class.

At the heart of Touraine's theory is a distinction between civil society and the state. As he explains in one of his earlier analyses, 'The principal objection of modern social movements is more the control of change than the struggle against profit' (1971: 61; 73-4). Touraine also stresses that, 'The greater a society's historicity, the greater is its *heterogeneity*' (1977: 235). Social movements are seen to go hand in hand with a vibrant and diverse civil society and the active involvement of citizens in public life. A true social movement is viewed as purely social and turns away from the state: it does not aim to control state power or alter political programmes, but revitalises civil society by means of its own alternatives (1997: 127). According to Touraine:

The action of social movements is not fundamentally directed towards the state and cannot be identified with political action for the conquest of power. It is a class action, directed against a truly social adversary. There may be convergence or alliance, but never unification between a social movement and an action for the transformation of state power. (1977: 80)

The purely social basis of social movements and their autonomy from the state leaves no space in Touraine's theory for an analysis of the political context in which social movements emerge and evolve. Conflicts that are directed towards the state are viewed as separate from social movements and defined as 'historical movements'. These are viewed as connected to processes of historical change: they are essentially political conflicts that aim to transform capitalism and/or the state and control modernisation (1985: 777; 2002: 91). As Touraine explains:

A social movement is not the creator of a more modern or advanced society than the one against which it is fighting within a given cultural and historical field, it is defending another society. The idea of superseding must be replaced by the search for an alternative, and this runs counter to the evolutionist ideas with governed the social thinking of the last century. (1977: 80)

As numerous analysts have pointed out, there are several difficulties with Touraine's theory. Scott observes for instance that there is an unresolved tension between Touraine's attachment to social agency and the periodisation of the NSMs in a structurally determined post-industrial society (1990: 69). In Chapter 5 also, I argue that social movements are seldom entities which are entirely autonomous from the state.

Although Tourainean perspectives have remained prominent in France (as I have shown, there are several Tourainean interpretations of the student protests), in the 1990s social movement theory developed in two new directions. The first development consists of attempts on the part of French analysts to understand, apply and revise insights from the broader social movement scholarship. Several overviews of the general literature have become available for the first time in French (Fillieule & Péchu, 1993; Neveu, 1996; Lafargue, 1998). Also, scholars within the study group

GERMM[12] have made notable progress in bringing the French social movement scholarship closer to that of other countries, in terms of both empirical and theoretical research. One example of such an approach is Dobry's (1990) interpretation of the 1986 student protests which, as I have discussed in Chapter 2, draws on the social constructionist theories of Snow et al. (1986), among others.

Of the French scholars, perhaps Olivier Fillieule has gone the furthest in applying and revising theoretical insights from the broader social movement scholarship[13]. Fillieule proposes a theoretical model that combines (and modifies) insights from POS and social constructionist perspectives, situating 'social movement organisations' at the centre of analysis. He underscores the importance of the political environment in determining the nature of social movements but recommends some modifications to Kriesi et al.'s (1995) theory in particular. Fillieule criticises Kriesi et al. for treating political opportunities as static and objective, and bases his own theoretical model on the notion that political opportunities are in fact continually constructed, perceived and interpreted through interaction with adversaries (1997: 56). Fillieule thus understands political opportunities as socially constructed and reconstructed, 'comme une série continue de relations actualisées dans les rapports des groupes aux contextes d'action.' (1997: 53). Fillieule is also one of the first analysts to place emphasis upon the interactions between the police and challenging groups as a component of the POS (1997: 246-7).

A further aspect of Fillieule's theory that merits attention is its rejection of the term 'social movement'. Fillieule maintains that, because the term has connotative associations with the workers' movement in France (*le mouvement ouvrier*), it is more appropriate to adopt 'social movement organisations' as the basic unit of analysis. Fillieule uses the expression 'organisation' in two ways: firstly, to refer to a type of organisation; and, secondly, in a more dynamic sense to refer to the strategies organisations adopt when confronting adversaries (1997: 34)[14]. According to Fillieule then, social movements amount to social movement organisations:

Nous entendrons donc par enterprise de mouvement social toute organisation, ou groupe d'organisations, mettant en oeuvre des stratégies d'action composées de séries d'intéractions avec des cibles et qui comporte, de manière privilégiée, le recours à l'action protestataire. (1997: 37)

For me, Fillieule's definition of a social movement is problematic. Having recommended that POS theories pay closer attention to individual actors and their perceptions of the political environment, Fillieule goes on to argue that organisations should in fact form the basic unit of analysis. A further point that I develop in Chapter 5 is that Fillieule's theory does not give a very clear idea of how exactly social movement organisations differ from other entities (such as pressure groups) that also confront opponents and resort frequently to collective protest.

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[12] Le Groupe d'Etudes et de Recherche sur les Mutations du Militantisme

[13] Fillieule has also pioneered new methods of empirical research into French protest and social movements, and provides some illuminating empirical findings concerning recent protests in France (see Fillieule, 1997; Favre, Fillieule & Mayer, 1997). However, I focus on the theoretical aspect of his work.

[14] He explains: 'Le terme 'entreprise de mouvement social' permet de qualifier deux ordres de réalité: un type d'organisation, d'une part (organisation se destinant à la production de biens et de services (...) D'autre part, dans une acceptation dynamique, la mise en oeuvre d'un dessein, d'un plan, d'un project, en même temps d'une action par laquelle on défie quelqu'un ou quelque chose' (1997: 34).

The second development relating to social movement scholarship in France concerns a revival of what I call academivist (that is, a combination of academic and activist) approaches[15]. As the distinction between academic and academivist approaches is seldom explicitly made within the social movement literature, it merits brief elucidation here. Academics claim on the one hand to adopt an impartial stance towards their object of study and base their analyses on empirically observable criteria. Academivists on the other hand try to understand society in order to change it. They generally offer a vision of how society can be improved and the role social movements can play in the realisation of such a society. They ultimately hope that social movements will be inspired by their ideas, and may also be actively involved in them. Therefore, broadly two types of theory can be identified in terms of the relationship between the social movement analyst and his or her object of study, although oddly the distinction between them has seldom been explored in much detail.

In this thesis, I identify the work of Bourdieu (1998) on the one hand, and Béroud, Mouriaux and Vakaloulis (1998) on the other hand as examples of academivism[16]. In different ways, they go beyond attempting to describe and make sense of social conflicts in France in the 1990s (including the main student protests), and adopt an involved stance towards them. To start with an analysis of Béroud et al. (1998), these authors draw on Tarrow's (1998) definition to propose that a social movement consists of, 'La dynamique propre d'un groupe social porteur de revendications importantes, durables et conflictuelles' (1998: 57). Oddly however, they make a clean break with Tarrow by adopting a neo-Marxist perspective. In *Le Mouvement Social en France* (1998), Béroud et al. outline the classical Marxist conception of social struggle, which forms the basis of their theory. For these authors, a social movement is an expression of class struggle that stems from the central contradiction between capital and labour. They claim that, 'Tout mouvement social en sa spécificité même, ne peut être compris sans que soit pris en compte la centralité de l'opposition capital/travail au sein des sociétés capitalistes contemporaines' (1998: 58).

Béroud et al. aim to show how various protests in France in the 1990s are derived from this contradiction, thereby emphasising the links that bind different conflicts together. They assert, 'Il convient de penser l'unité du mouvement social, expression contemporaine de la lutte des classes, au-delà des expressions locales, régionales et nationales' (1998: 60-1). Their approach thus consists of seeking out the 'unity of the social movement', which they refer to in the singular. Accordingly, Béroud et al. argue that social conflicts in France since the mid-1990s (the November-December 1995 strikes and demonstrations, the protests of the *sans,* and student protests) form a nascent social movement against capitalism in its latest, neo-liberal phase (1998: 51). Historically, they view the November-December 1995 protests as representing the first major victory in the battle against the neo-liberal order, and the various protests that occurred subsequently as a continuation of the same struggle (1998: 126-7; 176-9).

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[15] The expression 'academivist' is borrowed from Gordon, ed. (2003), and is used in a rare collection of articles which explore the position of analysts who are both scholars of and activists in social movements. An academivist approach is defined as 'academic research by activists about activism'. It is unclear whether the authors are the inventors of this expression (2003: 10).

[16] Other examples of academivism in France in this period are Le Goff & Caillé (1996) and Aguiton & Bensaïd (1997). Within the scope of this thesis I do not examine the broader contemporary academivist literature, although the work of Starr (2000) and Hertz (2001) on the anti-neo-liberal movement can be cited as examples.

Béroud et al. distinguish between social movements and two other types of collective action, which they label reactive protests and opinion movements (1998: 58). The authors maintain that a social movement has its own dynamic that tends towards autonomy, although it is not exactly clear what they mean by this. A social movement is structurally determined by the social context in which it emerges. It must combine immediate demands with a long-term project, fostering the emergence of collective identity and solidarity. They argue that while a social movement has a continuous existence over time, it does not follow a linear trajectory but is characterised by what are termed as 'des spires, ponctués par des pics de protestation' (1998: 61). They reject the concept of protest cycles promoted by Tarrow (1998) and others on the basis that it detracts from the idea of progression. Finally, Béroud et al. argue that the social movement must be analysed on a European level given that the mechanisms of capitalist exploitation have transcended national boundaries (1998: 61).

Their overall analytical approach consists of two stages. Firstly, Béroud et al. underscore the importance of understanding the broader socio-political context that has generated recent social conflicts. They argue that the various damaging consequences of neo-liberal modernisation in the workplace, in broader society and in the political system have created the conditions for a mass movement to emerge. Béroud et al. observe for instance that plans for reform unveiled by the Chirac government in the autumn of 1995, and the accompanying political discourse ruling out any alternative other than economic austerity, represented a turning point for large numbers of French people who had already endured more than two decades of unemployment and rationalisation in the workplace (1998: 60) [17]. Secondly, Béroud et al. stress the importance of analysing the political, social, symbolic and historical dimensions of conflicts themselves. For instance, they employ the notion of 'mass cognitive mobilisation' to understand the symbolic dimensions of conflicts and their struggles over interpretations of situations and events. The November-December 1995 protests are thus understood as challenging the dominant neo-liberal discourse of political elites, as well as their policies (1998: 117-122).

Pierre Bourdieu also interprets recent protests in France in terms of society's revolt against neo-liberal modernisation. However, he parts company with Béroud et al. by arguing that the only credible alternative to neo-liberal modernisation is a rapid restoration of the social republic and the centrality of the French state. This stance invited criticism from both Tourainean and neo-Marxist analysts, notably for its apparent regressiveness. Perhaps more than any other French scholar in the 1990s, Bourdieu was depicted in the mass media as the leading expert on social movements. Chemin Ariane for instance asserted that, 'Pierre Bourdieu devient la principale référence intellectuelle de ceux qui, à gauche de la gauche, se réclament du "mouvement social"' (*Le Monde,* 8th May 1998). Yet, it is important to note that, despite his close association with social movements, at no point in his career did Bourdieu actually pay a great deal of theoretical attention to the phenomenon itself.

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[17] The plans included a freeze in public sector wages, plans to reform the social security system (pension reforms, increased hospital charges and so on) and a radical rationalisation of the French rail system, with the overall objective of reducing the state budgetary deficit in order to meet the criteria for European Economic and Monetary Union.

Reflecting upon why this was the case, Béroud et al. suggest that Bourdieu's sociological method centred on concepts such as 'habitus' and 'field' does not naturally lend to the study of social movements (1998: 50), although in recent years some scholars have tried to apply or adapt aspects of Bourdieu's general theory to an analysis of social movements (see Eder, 1993; Jasper, 1997; Crossley, 2002 a,b). Bourdieu himself does apply some of his general theoretical concepts to recent social conflicts in France. While I do not wish to enter into the details of Bourdieu's generally theory here, it is clear that it has a political vocation and is designed as a means of unveiling the strategies of domination which are seen to form the basis of social inequality. The concept of domination is prevalent in Bourdieu's various criticisms of neo-liberalism. In *Contre-Feux* for instance, he refers to a 'mode de domination d'un type nouveau' in the form of 'flexploitation' in the workplace (1998: 99), as well as 'des habitus précarisés' (1998: 112). The importance of symbolic capital in the struggle against neo-liberalism is also central to Bourdieu's analyses of social movements. He refers for example to:

la lutte proprement symbolique contre le travail incessant des "penseurs" neo-libéraux pour discréditer et disqualifier l'héritage des mots, de traditions et de représentations associés aux conquêtes historiques des mouvements sociaux du passé et du present. (1998: 118)

However, Bourdieu does not offer a theoretical framework for understanding social movements per se, and two particular problems in fact characterise his analyses. Firstly, Bourdieu does not to my knowledge provide a definition of a social movement. Secondly, resulting from the first problem, Bourdieu's usage of the term 'social movement' is varied. At times, he refers to diverse 'mouvements sociaux' and at others to 'le mouvement social' in the singular. As Bourdieu does not propose a theoretical framework, one can only attempt to work out his overall understanding of social movements by exploring his analyses of recent social conflicts.

In the 1990s, Bourdieu often depicted social movements in terms of a conflict between what he called the 'petite noblesse d' Etat' on the one hand, and the 'grande noblesse d'Etat' on the other. In 1992 for instance, he asserted that, 'Nombre de mouvements sociaux auxquels nous assistons (et assisterons) expriment la révolte de la petite noblesse d' Etat contre la grande noblesse d'Etat' (*Le Monde* 14th January 1992; see also *Contre-feux*, 1998: 9-17). According to Bourdieu, the 'grande noblesse d'Etat' comprises the former students of the Ecole nationale d'administration employed in the ministry of Finance, the public and private banks and ministerial cabinets, while the 'petite noblesse d'Etat' consists of various public servants such as teachers, low-rank magistrates and social workers (1998: 9). The 'grande noblesse d'Etat' is viewed as responsible for what Bourdieu sums up as 'l'abaissement de la chose publique', which amounts to the neglect of the welfare system and the encouragement of private enterprise and private interests. He argues that the revolt of the 'petite noblesse d'Etat' goes beyond a dispute over salaries and reflects a more profound sense of disillusionment (1998: 11). Bourdieu again referred to the 'noblesse d'Etat' in a speech to rail workers in December 1995, which he described as a 'mouvement profond' (1998: 30):

Cette noblesse d'Etat (...) *qui prêche le déperissement de l'Etat et le règne sans partage du marché et du consommateur, substitut commercial du citoyen, a fait main basse sur l'Etat; elle a fait du bien public, un bien privé, de la chose publique, de la République, sa chose. Ce qui est en jeu, aujourd'hui, c'est la reconquête de la démocratie contre la technocratie.* (1998: 30-1)

During the *Etats généraux du mouvement social* in 1996, Bourdieu more ambitiously claimed, 'Le mouvement social de décembre 1995 a été un mouvement sans précédent (...) il a apporté un véritable projet de société' (1998: 58). In the late 1990s, he also promoted the emergence of a social movement on a European and global level against neo-liberal modernisation, advocating the creation of a 'European social State' (Bourdieu et al., 1998). He asserted:

L'association [Raisons d'Agir] considère qu'il n' y aura pas d'Europe sociale, et plus largement d'instauration à l'échelle mondiale de véritables normes sociales (en matière de conditions de travail, de rémunérations, de protection social...) sans un "mouvement social européen", et plus largement une nouvelle "internationale. (cited in Bonnewitz, 2002: 19)

Bourdieu thus employs the term 'social movement' in several ways, without clearly stipulating what a social movement is. At times, he depicts a social movement as a single event - the 'November-December 1995 movement' for instance. At others, he uses the term social movement in the singular to describe a phenomenon that exists over a considerable period of time, transcends national boundaries and brings together various sections of society in a common struggle. Overall, Bourdieu's writings investigate the mechanisms of social domination which, if acted upon by dominated groups, may lie at the heart of social movements. However, it is impossible not to remark the lack of any extensive theoretical work on social movements per se in his work.

Finally, the academivist orientations of Béroud et al. on the one hand and Bourdieu on the other hand can be observed. Béroud et al. are clearly supportive of various conflicts in France since the mid-1990s and, in their work, convey a sense of expectancy about their future development. They assert for instance that the protests comprise a 'work in progress', and predict that an alternative project against neo-liberalism will take shape in the act of mass mobilisation:

L'alternative au capitalisme néo-libérale demeure largement terra incognita. Mais les acteurs de la mobilisation collective prennent conscience, inégalememt et contradictoirement, qu'il faut la construire "tous ensemble" (...) *Dès lors, le "mouvement social" s'est installé durablement dans le paysage politique et n'a eu de cesse de donner des preuves de sa capacité de rebondir, de se métamorphoser, d'exprimer un changement dans la manière d'envisager l'avenir* (...) *L'apport du mouvement social acquiert une importance décisive pour le renouveau politique et pour le changement social.* (1998: 106, 127, 206)

Bourdieu (1998) is also typically academivist in that he is both a scholar of and activist within social movements. This is evident in his assertion that, 'Ce à quoi nous pourrions rêver, nous chercheurs, c'est qu'une part de nos recherches puisse être utile au mouvement social au lieu de se perdre' (1998: 65). During the November-December 1995 protests, Bourdieu launched a petition in support of protesters and announced in a speech to striking rail workers, 'Je suis ici pour dire notre soutien à tous ceux qui luttent depuis trois semaines contre la destruction d'une civilisation' (1998: 30). In the wake of the 1995 protests, Bourdieu and his associates also went on to form an association (Raisons d'Agir) and a publishing house (Liber-Raisons d'Agir) with the aim of counteracting the domination of neo-liberal discourse. In 1998, Bourdieu published an article criticising the socialist administration and calling for the creation of a new radical Left force, 'Une gauche de gauche' (*Le Monde*, 8th April 1998). Bourdieu's personal involvement in a number of protests since the November-December 1995 strikes has in fact been the object of much controversy. One the one hand, Bourdieu was acclaimed for reviving the flagging status of the

'intellectuel engagé' (*Le Monde*, 26th June 1998). On the other hand, he was accused of resorting to 'sociological terrorism' (Verdès-Leroux, 1998).

Theories of protest, coordinations and pressure groups in France

Certain theorists in France adopt collective protest as the basic unit of analysis, rather than social movements. Pierre Favre is one of the main scholars of protest in France, and has edited an important collection of research entitled *La Manifestation* (1990). Filllieule (1997)'s empirical research is also largely based on street demonstrations in France and offers some stimulating analyses of these, although (oddly perhaps) he adopts a theoretical framework of social movements. While extremely valuable for understanding the nature and dynamics of protest in contemporary France, this branch of literature does not in fact help to answer the key question governing this thesis. This is because, as Favre himself observes, collective protest is used by different groups with different objectives:

> *On constate que sous le terme unique de "manifestation" se rangent des phénomènes profondément différents, qui n'ont presque rien en commun sinon le fait du défilé collectif aux fins d'obtenir un effet politique.* (1990: 30)

Given that the thesis is trying to determine what type of phenomenon the student protests represent and define them as a form of contentious collective action, the usefulness of situating them within a general framework of protest is therefore extremely limited.

More relevant to this thesis is a branch of literature that examines the emergence of collective protests from 1986 onwards that make use of *coordination* structures. In relation to the student protests, the essential question that this literature invites is whether they can be adequately understood as a type of *coordination*. As Jean-Michel Denis (1996) has extensively studied the *coordination* phenomenon, I will focus on his work. His key proposition is that various public sector workers' protests between 1986 and 1989 (and also the 1986 student protests) have features in common that make them a relatively new phenomenon in French society[18]. Through an investigation of those features, Denis produces a useful theoretical description of a *coordination*.

He traces the emergence of the *coordinations* to a reaction against the neglect of the public sector in France from the early 1980s onwards, due to the pursuit of neo-liberal policies (1996: 54). He also stresses that the appearance of the *coordinations* stems notably from a refusal of the institutionalisation and bureaucratisation of the trade unions, deemed by public sector workers and students to have become inefficient and undemocratic (1996: 30-33). Denis identifies the principle actors of *coordinations* as women and young people, those groups with the lowest salaries who are often employed on a temporary basis within the public sector (1996: 54). He also identifies the main grievances and demands that spurred the protests in terms of an 'expression catégorielle', that is, based on sectional, short-term interests rather than promoting the general interest. Most importantly, Denis identifies the main features of the *coordination* mode of organisation, which he

[18] The work of Denis is based on an empirical study of the protests of students, rail workers, nurses, tax office employees, primary school teachers and Air France employees that took place between 1986 and 1999 and adopted variations of the *coordination* structure.

views as embodying a desire for efficiency and democracy (1996: 81-88), and summarises the main organisational traits of a *coordination*:

Une coordination est une structure fédérative unitaire, composée de délégués, politiques et non-politiques, syndicaux et non-syndicaux, mandatés par l'ensemble des grévistes: elle fonctionne sur le modèle de la démocratie directe - élection et révocabilité des délégués - ; elle est le porte-parole d'un groupe ou d'une catégorie sociale qu'elle encadre et unifie. (1996: 21)

Coordinations thus operate (at least in principle) on the basis of direct democracy and are designed to guarantee the active involvement of ordinary participants throughout the duration of a protest or campaign.

Denis usefully delineates the *coordination* phenomenon, the features of which prove to be strikingly similar to the student protests that I investigate in Chapter 4. His work is thus important for this thesis as it indicates that the student protests are by no means an isolated phenomenon, and are comparable to other protests that took place in the same period. However, one aspect of Denis's analysis that I question in Chapter 5 is his portrayal of the *coordinations* as a new phase in the development of social movements. He states that the various public sector and student protests between 1986 and 1999 signify 'l'expression d'une transformation et d'une évolution tant de la nature que de la forme des mouvements sociaux' (1996: 15). Denis is not alone in identifying the *coordinations* as a recent episode in the history of social movements in France, as it is a view shared by Béroud et al. (1998), among others, although I do not find much support for it in this thesis. As I explain in Chapter 5, the analysis of the *coordination* phenomenon in France has in fact taken place rather awkwardly in between the social movement literature on the one hand, and pressure and interest group perspectives on the other.

As for the pressure group literature, until recently pressure groups did not receive much theoretical attention in France and tended to be studied by non-French scholars (e.g. Wilson, 1987)[19]. However, this neglect has since been reversed to an extent. In the last decade, Barthélemy (2000) for instance has analysed pressure groups within the context of a broader study of voluntary associations in France. Pressure groups are also studied within an investigation of political participation in the broadest sense, which is edited by Pascal Perrineau (1994): Abélès considers the extent to which lobbying activities in France have shifted to the European level, while Viard looks at the relationship between pressure groups and local authorities. There are several analyses of transformations in the nature of activism (*le militantisme*) with the advent of, notably, greater individualisation within French society (e.g. Ion, 1997; Ysmal, 1994)[20]. This branch of literature helps us to understand the reasons why individuals join pressure groups, the nature of individual commitment to them, the historical evolution of activism, and so on. Furthermore, Offerlé (1998) offers a sociological perspective of interest groups in France. Hence, there are a number of (scattered) analyses which help us to understand pressure groups in contemporary France, but which are not in fact carried out under the heading of pressure groups per se.

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[19] The main theoretical analyses of pressure groups up to the mid-1980s were carried out by Lavau (1957), Meynaud (1958; 1962) and Basso (1983).

[20] There is also a useful collection of articles around the theme of militancy within different associations such as SOS-Racisme, the Human Rights League (LHR) and ecology groups, in a special edition of Revue Française de Science Politique (2001: 51, 1-2) provided by the GERMM.

The essential point that I wish to make about theories of pressure and interest groups in France, which I come back to in Chapter 5, concerns their understanding of collective protest. I have shown above that general (i.e. non-French) theories of pressure groups are primarily concerned with understanding how groups seek to influence policies by lobbying decision makers within government, parliament, EU bodies or local government. To recapitulate, Grant for instance states that, 'It must be stressed that the bulk of pressure group activity is very undramatic and routine, and is invisible to the public eye' and refers to 'the dullness of lobbying' (2000: 60; 67). Some theorists look at how certain pressure groups use what they refer to as 'direct action'. However, they pay far less attention to this type of activity than conventional lobbying, and tend to portray direct action as a strategy of limited effectiveness that pressure groups employ when all other channels of influence are closed (although see Coxall [2001]). To exaggerate somewhat, in French theories the emphasis is reversed in that they pay considerably more attention to pressure groups' use of direct action than their lobbying activities. Theories of pressure groups relating to France acknowledge the historical salience of collective protest and portray the country as exceptional[21].

By way of example, Offerlé's (1998) study of interest groups in France pays much closer attention to groups' use of collective action within the public sphere (demonstrations, strikes and so on) than their interaction with the state at the legislative and executive levels. In order to explain the phenomenon of interest groups, he draws extensively on the insights of protest and social movement analysts such as Tilly (1986) and Favre (1990). This is markedly different from the general theoretical approaches that I have outlined above (e.g. Grant, 2000; Baggott, 1995). In the general literature, there is a clear distinction between pressure group analyses on the one hand and social movement studies on the other. However, this divide is not replicated to the same extent in the French literature. In brief, general theories emphasises that pressure groups try to influence public policy through bargaining and lobbying; theories pertaining to France portray pressure groups as frequently trying to influence policy through direct action, which is deployed either by itself or alongside collective bargaining and lobbying activities.

To take a further example, Wilson (1987) maintains that France requires a theoretical model of its own to account for the prevalence of protest action by comparison with other countries. His central argument is that there is evidence in France of pressure groups conforming to one of (or a combination of) four models in terms of their relationship with the state, types of action and organisational makeup, although he concedes that in fact, 'No single model suffices (...) French interest-group politics is a hybrid of complementary and occasionally contradictory features of several of these models' (1987: 45). Bearing in mind then that Wilson is referring to ideal-types, he states, firstly, that some groups conform to a pluralist model (or are at least semi-pluralistic), and take part in activities such as lobbying and collective bargaining that are related to pluralism. Secondly, he states that some groups conform to a neo-Marxist model, given 'the inability of all

[21] Cole (1998) and Safran (1998) among others offer overviews of the main pressure and interest groups in France. These make a distinction between occupational interest groups (trade unions, employers' associations and professional groups) and pressure groups which encompasses all other types of non-economic, voluntary and promotional organisations. Cole observes that, 'Pressure groups in France have proliferated in the course of the Fifth republic; the legendary French reluctance to join groups has been countered by an explosion of voluntary associations at all levels of society (especially locally). Occupational interest groups remain weak, however, with the notable exception of certain professions and the farmers' unions (1998: 189).

interests, save only the ruling capitalist class, to influence government' (1987: 26). Thirdly, Wilson states that certain pressure groups provide evidence of a neo-corporatist relationship with the state. The main farmers' union (FNSEA) for instance is closely involved in the creation and implementation of agricultural policy in France. To these, Wilson adds a third protest model of interest-group politics to account for the specificity of France, that is, the 'proclivity of French citizens to resort readily and frequently to protest politics' (1987: 39). Groups that conform to the protest model are seen to reject a close state-group relationship, choose confrontational protest action over cooperation with decision-makers and view such tactics as effective, and commonly form and dissolve freely. Wilson points out that, while such tactics are not always effective, there are times when protest has forced governments to either withdraw unpopular policy proposals or introduce new ones (1987: 176). The student protests that are studied in this thesis are a case in point, as the following chapter illustrates.

(vi.) Summary

This chapter paves the way for an investigation (in Chapter 5) of whether the student protests can be adequately defined as a social movement or a type of pressure group. Firstly, it has studied the social movement scholarship, which offers the bulk of analyses of collective protest. The chapter has identified four broad areas of theory, which are: (1) earlier American approaches which place rational action, resources and organisation, and the political environment at the centre of analysis (e.g. McCarthy & Zald, 1973, 1977; Tilly, 1978), (2) mainly European NSM theories which try to understand the structural origins of movements and their potential to bring about social change (e.g. Offe, 1985), (3) theories that interpret movements as processes of meaning construction (e.g. Snow, et al., 1986), and (4) theories developed in the 1990s which attempt to combine the insights of different schools of thought (e.g. Tarrow, 1998). Secondly, the chapter has looked at recent theories of pressure groups (e.g. Grant, 2000; Coxall, 2001). To varying degrees, pressure group theories try to understand the nature of collective protest (or what they tend to call direct action), but their main concern is with explaining how groups influence the policy process through lobbying.

The chapter has in fact identified two separate literatures, produced by two separate communities of scholars. For me however, this dichotomy belies the fact that, in reality, social movements and pressure groups are not entirely separate entities but often overlap and interconnect. To take an example, a broad historical perspective shows that many established pressure groups (trade unions, for instance) in fact evolved out of earlier social movements (in the case of trade unions, the labour movement). Furthermore, the separate communities of scholars seem at times to be studying the same phenomena but under different labels and headings. For instance, pressure group theorists stress that groups operate within various constraints. Grant (2000) for instance observes that there are several factors affecting pressure group effectiveness, such as the resources available to them, the external economic and political environment and the nature of their objectives and strategies. The analyses within pressure group perspectives have clear parallels with POS and RM theories of social movements, although scholars within the two communities have seldom tried to combine their insights.

Finally, the chapter has studied theories of social movements, protest and pressure groups relating to France. It has shown that the prevalence of Tourainean theories in the 1970s and 1980s has given way to two broad developments. On the one hand, there have been several attempts to bring the French social movement literature closer to the broader theoretical scholarship (e.g. Fillieule, 1997). On the other hand, since the mid-1990s there has been a revival of academivist scholarship (e.g. Béroud et al., 1998; Bourdieu, 1998). In addition, the chapter has highlighted the literature on the *coordination* phenomenon in France (Denis, 1996), as well as prominent analyses of protest within pressure group theories concerning France (e.g. Wilson, 1987; Offerlé, 1998). The essential question that the indigenous literature prompts, which I consider in Chapter 5, is whether theories relating exclusively to France can best explain the student protests. Before tackling this question however, the main characteristics of the student protests must be identified.

Chapter 4

Student protest in France, 1986-1999: a historical account

CHAPTER 4

STUDENT PROTEST IN FRANCE, 1986-1999: A HISTORICAL ACCOUNT

This chapter provides a historical account of the main student protests in France between 1986 and 1999, thus filling a substantial lacuna in the literature concerning student protests. It singles out seven episodes of student protest. The first is the mobilisation against the Devaquet bill in November-December 1986 which culminated in some of the largest demonstrations seen in France since the events of May 1968. The second is the *lycée* student protests of October-November 1990. The third is the mobilisation against the CIP in March 1994 when students and diverse organisations thwarted attempts to introduce a reduced minimum wage for young people. The fourth is the student protests of October-December 1995, which overlapped with the workers' strikes and demonstrations that peaked in early December. The fifth episode of student protest was in *collèges* and *lycées* in Seine-Saint-Denis in March 1998. The sixth concerns the *lycée* student protests of October-November 1998 when, on October 15th, a reported half a million students took to the streets in Paris. The seventh episode of protest was in September-October 1999 and mainly involved students in *lycées professionnels*[1].

Numerous other examples of student protest can be cited, but do not form the main focus of this study. Students' propensity for protest seemed to intensify in the early to mid-1990s. In 1992, students protested against proposals for university reform. In the following year, they barred an attempt to end the system of student rent reductions. In February 1995, IUT students took issue with the Bardet circular which recommended that DUT and BTS graduates be prevented from enrolling at university and encouraged to take up immediate employment. This coincided with sporadic opposition to the Laurent proposals in universities, which revived concerns about selection and tuition fees. While not studied here, many features of these protests are similar to those that have been selected.

This chapter aims to set out the 'facts on the ground' of the student protests, drawing on different sources of empirical information gathered during the protests and in the weeks after they ended[2]. It investigates who the participants were and their possible motives for taking part. It looks at how student protesters forced successive governments to take heed of their demands and abandon plans for reform. The chapter investigates the decision-making structures that students put in place and the means of protest they adopted. It considers how various 'non-student' actors and institutions - teachers, trade unions, associations, local and central government, police authorities and the mass media – influenced the nature of the protests. It also attempts to gauge levels of participation in the protests and the extent of sympathy for them. The information gathered will then be used in Chapter 5 to interpret the student protests in light of theories of protest and social movements.

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[1] Appendix D provides a detailed chronology of events.
[2] My research methodology is outlined in Appendix A.

(i.) November-December 1986: the anti-Devaquet protests

In March 1986, a coalition of right wing parties gained a narrow majority of seats in the legislative elections, beginning the first period of political *cohabitation* in France. The Chirac government announced plans for a series of policy changes that included stricter regulations for the acquisition of French citizenship, draconian measures to combat crime and illegal immigration, a reduction in public spending and the privatisation of a number of state-owned companies. Certain ministers and government policy advisers were keen to extend the neo-liberal logic behind such reforms to the sphere of education. They proposed to restore autonomy in universities, enabling them to introduce greater selection and increase tuition fees. The minister in charge of higher education, Alain Devaquet (RPR), held moderate views on the issue of education. However, he came under pressure from ministers and policy advisers with a neo-liberal vision for the university system and yielded to their agenda. In late October, the Senate adopted the Devaquet bill and it was predicted that the reform would be pushed through the National Assembly with little opposition from students and teachers' unions (*Le Monde*, 24th October 1986)[3]. There was little indication that a campaign originating in Paris XIII University (Villetaneuse) would turn into the largest wave of student protest ever seen in France.

The role of UNEF-ID and the coordination structure

Several accounts (Masson Report, 1987; Dray, 1987; Assouline & Zappi, 1987; Chambraud, 1988) focus on the pivotal role of UNEF-ID activists in the 1986 protests[4]. Up to mid-October, the national committee of UNEF-ID was opposed to the Devaquet reform but the organisation's internal factions could not agree on a strategy of action. The dominant faction (Convergence Socialiste) adopted a 'wait and see' stance, which was challenged by two minority factions within the organisation. On the one hand, Trotskyist activists within Luttes étudiantes - action syndicale (LEAS), which formed a part of Jeunesse Communiste Révolutionnaire, advocated the immediate formation of a *coordination* structure with the aim of catalysing a national protest. On the other hand, a campaign started by activists within the Questions Socialistes faction based in Villetaneuse had sparked an unusual level of interest among ordinary (i.e. non-activist) students who, by mid-November, had gone as far as to vote for a strike and the total withdrawal of the Devaquet bill (Chambraud, 1988: 44-47; Dray, 1987: 9-14). Minority factions thus by-passed the national committee of UNEF-ID and triggered the first protests in Villetaneuse, Amiens and Caen (Masson Report, 1987: 116-122).

When it became evident that the potential existed for a wider student protest to emerge, the national committee sought a compromise. The minority factions proposed that a UNEF-ID meeting scheduled for November 22nd be transformed into an *Etats Généraux de tous les Etudiants*. This symbolised the tactical retirement of UNEF-ID from the mobilisation, a strategy that the organisation's president Philippe Darriulat endorsed. From this point onwards, the protests were

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[3]Appendix C summarises the Devaquet bill.
[4]Appendix B outlines the main student organisations in France between 1986 and 1999 and their internal composition.

represented by a *coordination* structure in which UNEF-ID activists (but not UNEF-ID as an organisation) played a key role. As Chambraud states:

Le coup symbolique de Philippe Darriulat donne l'impression que l'UNEF-ID en tant que telle s'efface volontairement devant un mouvement plus large. En réalité, si elle semble se mettre en retrait, ses militants, toutes tendances confondues, ne cesseront de jouer un rôle primordial dans le mouvement. (1988: 47)

This role encompassed, first of all, the mobilisation of UNEF-ID's extensive know-how and resources. The organisation's network of activists across French universities facilitated the extension of the protests in their nascent phase. Many activists were experienced protest organisers and knew how to gauge the propensity for mobilisation among ordinary students, begin an awareness campaign, contact the mass media and deal with political authorities. For instance, Isabelle Thomas was a prominent activist in Villetaneuse who sat on the national committee of UNEF-ID, was an active member of SOS-Racisme and a member of the Socialist party. Other key representatives of the protests (such as David Assouline and Daniel Cabieu) had experience that dated back to the *lycée* student protests of the 1970s (Chambraud, 1988: 46).

Crucially, a group of UNEF-ID activists provided the central decision-making structure of the protests. This was the *coordination* structure that had been used during the student protests of the 1970s. It was originally adopted by organisations such as JCR, whose overall aim was to have a permanent national structure representing students in order to counteract the declining influence of the two UNEFs and the proliferation of extremist political groups. Activists on the far left hoped that this would ultimately radicalise ordinary students and connect their struggle to that of the workers' movement, although their goals were never realised and the *coordination* structures that did emerge were short-lived[5]. The *coordination* structure of November-December 1986 was thus inherited from the student protests of the 1970s (Assouline & Zappi, 1987).

The *coordination* structure operated on the principle of direct democracy. It was designed to guarantee the representation of all participants by favouring horizontal communication networks over the hierarchical types of structure found in traditional organisations. In November-December 1986, students attended general assemblies held in each university department. They directly elected *coordination* representatives (with revocable mandates) to form local strike committees. Committees were composed of different sections (a media commission, a treasury and an action group for example) and, in principle, each university sent five strike committee representatives to attend national *coordination* meetings (Assouline & Zappi, 1987: 56). In practice however, this did not occur until the second national meeting held on December 2nd (Dray, 1987: 86-7). The national *coordination* met approximately every four days (on November 27th, December 2nd and December 6th). If we are to believe Assouline and Zappi's account, there was parity between members of student organisations and political *groupsuscules* on the one hand, and students who were not

[5]For a more detailed historical background of the student *coordination* structure, see Denis, J.-M (1996) Les coordinations. Recherche désespérée d'une citoyenneté (Syllèpse), pp.38-44, and Levy, J.-D (1997) Les coordinations, émergence et développement. Etude à partir des mobilisations de la jeunesse scolarisée DEA de sociologie politique (Dir: Isabelle Sommier) Université de Paris I.

members of any organisation on the other hand, in order to ensure that a broad cross-section of views was represented (1987: 56). Assouline and Zappi also state that there was unity between elected representatives and the mass of protesters, whose common goal was to bring about the total withdrawal of the Devaquet bill. They assert, 'La base était en osmose avec la coordination et son bureau' (1987: 17).

However, the effectiveness of the *coordination* structure was limited in two essential ways. Firstly, *lycée* students were not represented within it and failed to establish a decision-making structure of their own. According to the Masson Report, a *Coordination inter-lyceés* was held on November 25th but it was 'manipulée de bout en bout par les professionnels: désorganisation totale, discussions enflammées illimitées' (1987: 137-138). Dray observes that on November 28th, activists in *lycées* attempted to put in place a representative structure but became embroiled in partisan disputes (1987: 93)[6]. A third meeting was held on December 1st, which seems to have been more orderly (*Libération édition spéciale*, January 1987: 15). However, *lycée* students were unable to coordinate their efforts with the same efficiency as their counterparts in universities. Secondly, certain accounts of the protests show that there was not in fact parity between activists and ordinary students within the national *coordination* structure. An analysis of the protests in Paris VIII University (Saint-Denis) indicates for instance that, on a local level, most representatives were from student organisations and political *groupuscules* (*Raison Présente*, 1987: 31). Chambraud also observes that, 'Malgré son institutionnalisation progressive, la coordination est restée marquée par la présence des militants de l'UNEF-ID' (1987: 49). For instance, the delegation that met with ministers on December 4th was composed mainly of UNEF-ID members[7].

The role of politicised activists is perplexing when we consider the waning credibility of student organisations in France in the mid-1980s[8]. Roger Duclaud-Williams appropriately stresses the mismatch between a tiny minority of highly politicised student union activists and the vast majority of less active students (1989: 45-46). The question thus emerges as to how a student organisation such as UNEF-ID with seemingly so little influence could have triggered a wave of mass protest. All the more puzzling is the emergence of a situation in which politicised activists seemed to be leading a protest that the mass of participants claimed to be 'apolitical', at least in its early stages. Duclaud-Williams's explanation is that ordinary students will only form links with the student unions when they perceive their academic and professional prospects to be in jeopardy. While this is undoubtedly the case, additional factors can explain UNEF-ID's central role in the 1986 protests.

The first explanation is found in the use of clever tactics on the part of UNEF-ID, in its effacement as an organisation through the adoption of a *coordination* structure. This initiative made the prospect of joining the protests more palatable to ordinary students, who would almost certainly

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[6]Appendix B outlines the main student organisations and political *groupuscules* in *lycées*.
[7]Of the sixteen delegates, ten were from UNEF-ID and three from UNEF-SE. One delegate, David Assouline, belonged to a very small Trotskyist group. Only two delegates were not connected in any way to student organisations. There was however parity between Parisian and provincial representatives (*Le Monde*, 6th December 1986).
[8] To take one measure of student organisations' influence, between 1987 and 1998 turnouts for student elections never exceeded 7 %, and in 1991 fell to 3.41% (*Cahiers du Germe* 1999 11/12, pp.17-18) (see Appendix B).

have shunned any overt attempt at leadership by the organisation[9]. There is evidence throughout the protests of activists playing down their political affinities and internecine disputes in order to conform to an image that ordinary students wanted, which was essentially one of a mobilisation founded on broadly moral rather than political values[10]. Ordinary students consistently emphasised their 'méfiance jusqu'au bout des ongles à l'égard de toute étiquette, sigle, banderole ou récupération politique' (*Le Monde*, 5th December 1986). Having conformed to this image, politicised activists gave the impression of being at the service of the ordinary protesters. As Gérard Courtois affirms:

Ils se sont placés d'emblée au service du mouvement étudiant pour l'accompagner, le relayer et le relancer régulièrement, lui apporter soutien matériel, capacité d'analyse politique et habitude des relations avec les medias. (*Le Monde*, 5th December 1986)

This tactical effacement by activists begs the question of how much ordinary students knew about them. It is plausible that, at the start of the protests, many ordinary students were oblivious to the political and organisational affinities of many of their elected representatives, which highlights the success of UNEF-ID's strategy. According to one account, many students were astounded to discover that their 'independent' leaders were often in fact politicised activists, 'Ainsi, telle délégation de province découvre aujourd' hui, ébahie, que bon nombre de ses 'non-syndiqués' étaient en réalité des militants bon teint de la LCR, de LO, voire de la Ligue ouvière révolutionnaire (LOR)' (*Le Monde*, 5th December 1986).

It is equally plausible that ordinary students knew who their leaders were but, aware that the protests' outcome depended on their expertise and resources, turned a blind eye to their political affinities. As I discuss in more depth further below, Borredon's study suggests that this was the case in some *lycées* (1995: 32). Yet, this could also be interpreted as a sign that many *lycée* students who joined the protests simply did not care about who their leaders were or what they were doing. For them, the protests may have been less about decisions made within the *coordination* structure than the events that were unfolding on the streets. The relationship between leaders and ordinary protesters is thus complex given that their perceptions of events were almost certainly not the same. On the one hand, many activists undoubtedly saw continuity between the student protests of the 1970s and those of 1986, notably in the revival of the *coordination* structure. On the other hand, for ordinary students the protests appeared to represent a new phenomenon. This was reinforced by one of the dominant images in the mass media of an 'objet social nouveau non-identifié' (*Le Monde,* 5th December 1986).

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[9]As Michel Dobry remarks, the tactics adopted by activists showed their instinctive awareness of what ordinary students were and what they would find acceptable (1990: 374).

[10]Chambraud observes that during the first two national *coordination* meetings (of November 27th and December 2nd) most delegates refused a proposition requesting that they declare their organisational and political affinities. She notes, 'Une majorité de délégués "organisés" est hostile à une proposition qui pourrait entacher cette image dont ils tirent profit' (1988: 48). This did not seem to prevent political maneouvres occurring 'behind the scenes' of the *coordination* structure, the eviction of Isabelle Thomas on December 2nd by opponents from within UNEF-ID being a prime example.

November 17th- 27th: the escalation of the protests

A striking feature of the protests is the speed at which students were galvanised into action. In little more than a week, the strike in Villetaneuse turned into a wave of mass protest and extended to the *lycées.* On November 27th, over 200,000 students in Paris and around 400,000 in the provinces took part in the first of three national demonstrations (*Le Monde*, 29th November 1986). On November 17th, students in Villetaneuse responded to UNEF-ID's call for a strike. Dray observes how activists entered the first lecture theatre and persuaded students to begin strike action (1987: 31). There seems to have been a hesitant response to this initial call for action, as students stated that they would go on strike only on the condition that lectures were postponed. This prompted the lecturer to organise a vote, the outcome of which was a massive endorsement of strike action. That afternoon, more than a thousand students attended a general assembly and formed a strike committee. In the following days, the same procedure was repeated in universities and *lycées* throughout France. On November 19th, delegates from Villetaneuse went to neighbouring universities (Censier, Nanterre and Saint-Denis) with the aim of broadening support for the protests (Dray, 1987: 45-48).

From November 20th, *lycée* students unexpectedly took to the streets in large numbers. Several factors facilitated the extension of the protests to the *lycées.* Firstly, there were links between activists in universities and *lycées.* For instance, members of SOS-Racisme in *lycées* were encouraged by their counterparts in universities to draw up the first leaflets opposing the Devaquet bill (Dray, 1987: 49). Secondly, activists in universities visited neighbouring *lycées* in a bid to extend the protests, notably in the Paris region (Dray, 1987: 65)[11]. A third factor explaining the rapid extension of the protests to the *lycées* concerns the mass media. The first newspaper articles about the protests appeared in *Libération* on November 17th and in *Le Monde* two days later. By November 22nd, the protests were making front page headlines in the press and being reported on the television news. By November 24th, general assemblies were multiplying and around thirty universities had voted for strike action (*Le Monde,* 26th November 1986). Growing numbers of *lycée* students throughout France joined the protests and there were strikes in some Parisian *lycées* (Rodin, Monnet and Jules Ferry among others) (*Le Monde,* 28th November 1986). The telephone lines of SOS-Racisme and UNEF-ID headquarters were blocked with calls from students demanding advice and information about the protests (Dray, 1987: 66).

There seems to have been little opposition to the protests by teachers and staff. Forty out of 74 members of the Conférence des Présidents d'Université (CPU) had already signed a petition objecting to the abrogation of the 1984 Savary law and the prospect of another reform (Masson Report, 1987: 50). The teachers' unions, notably the FEN, had also rejected René Monory's proposals for *lycées* (see Appendix C). On November 23rd, an estimated 200,000 teachers, joined by UNEF-ID and UNEF-SE activists, voiced their concerns in a national demonstration (*Le Monde,* 25th November 1986). There is however some evidence that not all teachers in *lycées* were

[11] According to the Masson Report, 'Les jeunes étudiants de Villetaneuse ou de Saint Denis n'ont aucune peine à retrouver leurs anciens camarades de classe aux sorties des lycées. Les arguments ont souvent moins de poids que les complicités passées et que l'amitié maintenue pour convaincre de la nécessité de protester' (1987: 129).

enthusiastic about the prospect of student protest. In an interview with Patrick Boumard for example, two students in a *lycée professionnel* stated that their head teacher and other teachers had tried to dissuade them from taking part (1987: 53-54).

While the protests rapidly gathered momentum, they were marked by periods of hesitation and doubt. There is evidence of students weighing up the potential costs and benefits of taking part. One student's diary recording the nascent protests in Paris VIII University states: 'Les étudiants sont indécis: ils ont peur de prendre une décision à l'encontre de la majorité, de se retrouver en cours alors que les autres font grève ou inversement' (1987: 42). Rémi Hess's collection of students' diary extracts also indicates that while some students joined the protests from the outset, others were more cautious and waited until the potential costs of participation were minimised, such as missing lectures or becoming isolated if the protests dwindled (1987: 35-47). Student activists thus had to work hard to galvanise their peers into action, and one tactic they employed was to persuade hesitant students that the protests were gaining momentum elsewhere. One diary extract records how activists talked students into joining the protests: 'Ils nous apprennent que plus de la moitié de la Fac a déjà débrayé. Ils nous apprennent qu'une assemblée générale se tient actuellement' (1987: 42). In the early stages of the protests, activists also had to convince students of the dangers of the Devaquet bill, although some accounts indicate that they did not need much persuasion (Dray, 1987: 33).

At this stage, ministers tried to halt the protests by inferring that students had misunderstood or not read the actual text of the bill[12]. Devaquet said that leaflets and posters distributed by left wing activists contained misleading information. Monory claimed that students were being manipulated and urged them to read the text. Chirac expressed regret that students had been misinformed (*Le Monde*, 26th, 28th November 1986). Their tactics backfired, as students were keen to assert that they had not been manipulated and were fully informed about the proposed legislation (*Le Monde*, 29th November 1986).

Students' motives in the early stages of the protests

During the first demonstrations, most protesters' grievances were leveled at Devaquet and his proposal for reform. The most frequently raised issue was the introduction of variable tuition fees. Students expressed fears that they would not be able to pay for their studies, and some went as far as to interpret the proposed changes as a move towards a privatised education system:

T'as pas cent balles? Ch'uis étudiant
450F, il faudrait être fou pour dépenser plus.
Halte aux frics-facs
Non aux facs côtées en Bourse
Les facs, c'est pas Saint Gobain

(*Le Monde*, 29th November 1986)

Some protesters, notably arts and humanities students, voiced concerns that private companies would not sponsor their courses. One student's banner affirmed, 'Cherchons écrivains pour

[12] For a day-to-day summary of ministers' responses to the protests see *Libération édition spéciale*, January 1987, pp.86-93.

sponsoriser les lettres'. Others expressed concerns that, with the introduction of variable tuition fees and more stringent selection, universities would lose their equal status. As one student in Marseille conveyed on a poster, 'Des quatres étoiles pour les beaux quartiers, le ghetto ailleurs, le fric fera la différence' (*Le Monde*, 28th November 1986). At this stage however, only a minority of protesters was explicitly calling into question the government's policy agenda as a whole, which included stricter regulations for the acquisition of French citizenship and plans to combat crime and illegal immigration (*Le Monde*, 29th October 1986).

A puzzling aspect of students' slogans and chants is that they conveyed opposition to practices that in fact took place under the Savary law (Masson report, 1987: 70). There was already selection in French universities, in both official and more subtle forms; tuition fees were in a sense variable since many universities imposed extra charges exceeding the fixed ceiling of 450 francs; universities were partially funded by private companies; and by no means did all universities have equal status in the eyes of employers (*Le Monde Campus*, 23rd October 1986; *Le Monde*, 28th November 1986). In addition, protesters alluded to policy changes that were not actually mentioned in the Devaquet bill, notably the privatisation of universities (the term 'privatisation' does not appear in the text). The apparent discrepancies between students' understanding of their actual situation and the changes being proposed beg the question of what information they received about the Devaquet bill and how they interpreted it.

The first information ordinary students received about the Devaquet bill almost certainly came from activists in the form of leaflets, posters and speeches made in general assemblies. Dray observes that activists in Villetaneuse spent considerable time explaining the content of the bill to ordinary students and distributed full copies of the text (1987: 12, 33). Although the entire text of the bill never appeared in any of the national newspapers, in late November it was sold to students throughout France at a cost of three francs. There is however no means of ascertaining whether ordinary students in possession of the text actually read or understood its content and, in fact, much of the information they received came in summarised form. Most leaflets and posters underscored the most controversial aspects of the bill (Masson Report, 1987: 456-478; *Raison Présente*, 1987: 50-51). One poster drawn up by activists contained an image of a 'Diplôme de l'Université Paris-Coca-Cola'. The perceived Americanisation of the French university system is again evident on a poster entitled 'Contre la Fac Américaine'. Other posters portrayed the future education system as a type of lottery or wheel of fortune[13]. Leaflets produced by activists were also designed to create a sense of urgency and generate fears about the Devaquet bill. One of the first leaflets distributed in Villetaneuse referred for instance to the 'The Horror Devaquet Show' and claimed 'Si ce projet passe, c'est vraiment l'horreur' (*Libération édition spéciale*, January 1987).

This suggests that ordinary students did not have a very sophisticated understanding of the Devaquet bill, despite their claims to the contrary. The Masson report states that left wing activists misrepresented the bill, 'Il est clair que "l'information" reçue par les lycéens s'est tenue à bonne distance de la réalité des textes' (1987: 90, 95). Borredon's study also suggests that, while activists in *lycées* had an 'intellectual' grasp of the Devaquet bill, ordinary protesters did not (1995:

[13] Several posters are published on the GERME website. *See www.germe.info.*

31)[14]. It might be expected that, given their greater maturity, university students would have had a more detailed knowledge of the text. Yet, this does not seem to have been the case, and Boumard for instance remarks the lack of any substantial debate around the plans for reform in Paris VIII University (1987: 19)[15]. What then were ordinary students' motives for joining the protests, if not an adequate understanding of the Devaquet bill? From the available evidence, a number of explanations can be put forward.

Firstly, as I have pointed out above, Borredon's study suggests that many *lycée* students trusted their leaders' judgment. He refers to a 'phénomène de délégation de connaissance et de jugement' inherent in all decisions made in modern democratic societies, which explains why most students did not have a detailed understanding of the Devaquet bill (1995: 32). He reminds us that some aspects of the text were ambiguous and open to diverse interpretations, as the Masson report also acknowledges (1987: 70). According to Borredon, it thus comes as no surprise that *lycée* students did not understand the technicalities of the proposals, since many adults had failed to do the same (1995: 49).

Borredon provides a second, perhaps more convincing, explanation as to how *lycée* students could have opposed a reform which they apparently knew little about. He highlights a process of 'cognitive globalisation' which inhibited any detailed examination of the text:

Tout semble donc s'être passé comme s'il avait suffi de savoir que le projet allait leur poser un problème d'accès à l'enseignement supérieur pour les inciter, sur ce plan-là, à agir et à ne guère chercher à savoir les conditions précises de mise en oeuvre de ce dont ils ne voulaient à aucun prix. (1995: 29)

Lycée students thus perceived the Devaquet bill 'in black and white'. The news that the reform might pose a barrier to higher education was sufficient for them to reject the entire notion of change. Although imperfect, the status quo seemed preferable to the uncertainty that change would bring.

Boumard's analysis of the protests in Paris VIII University also reveals what he calls a 'globalising dimension'. However, he attributes the lack of any debate around the Devaquet bill to students' fixation on the protests themselves[16]. In order to guarantee unity in the streets, students had to reject the entire content of the bill:

La fascination de la force supplante totalement l'analyse de la réalité de la Fac (...) Face à la dimension clairement festive de ce début de mobilisation, les propositions de travail critique sur la Fac elle-même ne rencontrent presque aucun écho. C'est le point aveugle du mouvement. (1987: 19-20)

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[14]Borredon devised a test of students' knowledge surrounding the Devaquet bill. Their average score was 6.4/20. The results show that the clauses related to tuitions fees were most frequently misinterpreted. 41 per cent stated that tuition fees would exceed 1000 francs when the actual ceiling was set at 800 francs (1995: 30).

[15] According to several reports, organised debates about the Devaquet bill and the government's overall political programme were poorly attended (*Le Monde*, 2nd December 1986).

[16] According to several reports, students' energies were entirely taken up by the protests, 'Toutes et tous en réalité sont complètement mobilisés par la grande manifestation prévue le 4 décembre' (*Le Monde*, 2nd December 1986).

Both Borredon and Boumard emphasise the importance of values in the protests. They argue that students opposed the bill because it infringed certain universal principles, such as freedom of choice and equality of opportunity. As Borredon puts it, 'La référence aux valeurs (...) fonde l'argumentation centrale de la contestation lycéenne' (1995: 49). On the theme of values however, caution must be exercised. This analysis cannot go much further without drawing attention to the fact that, during demonstrations, protesters did not always seem to say what they really meant. Some students undoubtedly acted out of a genuine attachment to certain values, but in many cases the reference to values seems to disguise an assortment of motives for taking to the streets.

This is exemplified by Boumard's interviews with *lycée* students from contrasting backgrounds who joined the protests. Firstly, he interviewed students in two *lycées* in central Paris, one of whom asserted, 'On avait envie que la classe soit en grève. Il y avait un grand mouvement dans la rue, on n'y connaissait rien, et tout le monde disait qu'il connaissait quelque chose! On avait envie que ça bouge' (1987: 51). For this student, the Devaquet bill was evidently no more than a pretext to take to the streets. She wanted to be involved in the festivities but had no apparent desire to understand the key issues at stake. The second student from central Paris also focused on the festive dimension of the protests, asserting, 'On était forts. C'était la fête' (1987: 52). She went on to state that the protests were less about the Devaquet bill than an opportunity to defend certain values, 'On était parti d'un petit truc (le projet Devaquet légalisait des choses qui existaient déjà). Cela nous a donné un prétexte, et on en est venu aux vraies valeurs, à ce qu'on voulait défendre' (1987: 52).

Two students in a *lycée professionnel* had very different motives for joining the protests. According to one student interviewed by Boumard, 'On ne comprenait pas la loi Devaquet, mais on comprenait la sélection'. Another remarked, 'On avait toujours dit qu'on était des nuls, des cons. Là, on s'est rendu compte qu'on existait' (1987: 54). Unlike the Parisian students, their reference to values is implicit. Both were concerned that they did not have equality with other students because they were in a *lycée professionnel*. They acknowledged that the Devaquet bill was unlikely to have any impact on their lives because their chances of going to university had already significantly diminished. However, they joined the protests to highlight their existence and challenge the negative stereotype of their establishments (1987: 49-55). Some leaflets produced by students in *lycées professionnels* highlight similar concerns about social and economic exclusion. One leaflet asserted: 'Pour nous la sélection a déjà joué, l'université nous est fermée, et nos CAP et nos BEP nous mènent tout droit à l'usine après un petit tour à l'ANPE' (Boumard, 1987: 57). Other leaflets remind us that many *lycée* students were in fact protesting against the 'Monory proposals'. For some, a possible reduction in teaching hours and course options triggered fears of a devaluation of diplomas (Boumard, 1987: 56-7)[17]. During demonstrations, some students thus targeted the minister of education René Monory (*Le Monde*, 29th November 1986).

In an opinion poll of protesters carried out in late November, only 35 per cent of those asked claimed to be acting out of opposition to the Devaquet bill, even though most stated that the plans were 'unjust' or 'pointless'. However, 55 per cent explained their participation in terms of anxiety

[17]Appendix C outlines the proposals for reform in upper-secondary education.

about future employment prospects (*Libération*, 5th December 1986). Intriguingly, nowhere near 55 per cent of protesters on the streets seemed to be addressing such concerns, which again implies that students' slogans and chants (their public display of grievances and demands) were not necessarily the same as their personal motives for joining the protests.

Protest participants

A diverse cross-section of students took part in the protests but certain groups were more prominent than others. According to the Masson Report, 'Le centre de gravité de la protestation était en réalité situé à la charnière de l'enseignement secondaire et de l'enseignement supérieur, dans les lycées et les premiers cycles universitaires' (1987: 23). The Masson Report estimates that 70 per cent of participants in demonstrations were *lycée* students, and also mentions that many were in *collèges* although regrettably it gives no additional information about the latter (1987: 18).

In universities, students in certain disciplines were more prominent than others. The Masson Report states that literature and economics students were the most visible in protests (1987: 20). According to other accounts, arts and humanities and social science students played a key role, while economics and law students did not (*Le Monde*, 26th November 1986). Assouline and Zappi's account also stresses that many protesters were in IUTs (1987: 80-92). Furthermore, students in some institutions were more active than in others. There were few protests in the *grandes écoles*. Students in universities in central Paris with a more 'bourgeois' or right wing tradition were also slow to react or opposed the protests, as was the case in Paris II University (Assas), the stronghold of the ultra-right group GUD. Students in Paris IV University (Dauphine) were also poorly mobilised, but after December 4th voted for the total withdrawal of the Devaquet bill (*Le Monde*, 26th, 29th November 1986). According to Bernard Lacroix's study, students in the least prestigious universities and disciplines were among the first to mobilise:

> *Ce sont plutôt des étudiants de facultés ou de disciplines de second rang, ou même des étudiants se sentant, du fait de leurs attributs scolaires ou universitaires, les plus vulnérables dans la course au titre, qui tendent à se mobiliser.* (1988: 11)

Borredon goes a stage further and stresses the importance of class background in explaining why certain *lycée* students were more prominent than others. Borredon discovers 'une prépondérance nette de l'implication des lycéens d'origine défavorisée dans la participation aux actions du mouvement' (1995: 34). He attributes this to the fact that students from working class backgrounds were more likely than others to have aspirations of upward social mobility and, as a result, were extremely sensitive to any move which could potentially block access to higher education and future careers (1995: 43). Yet, not all *lycée* students who took to the streets were from working class backgrounds. Students in some of the elite establishments took part, and in central Paris students in Louis-le-Grand, Fénelon and Condorcet joined the protests (*Libération*, 25th November 1986). It is however important to note that students' motives were not the same. Those in the least prestigious disciplines and establishments (and most likely to come from working class backgrounds) viewed the Devaquet bill as a potential barrier to continuing their education and finding stable employment, but this was not the case of all students who joined the protests.

Several reports draw attention to the prominence of female students and ethnic minority groups in the protests (*Le Monde*, 9th December 1986). Dray observes that many leaders were of North African descent and also women (1987: 59). The question emerges as to whether these groups had specific motives for joining the protests. Interestingly, some Maghrebi students interviewed during a demonstration were keen to stipulate that, 'Nous ne sommes pas là en tant que Maghrébins; nous sommes étudiants, lycéens' (*Le Monde*, 9th December 1986). Unfortunately, the prominence of women and ethnic minority groups was not given much serious academic attention.

November 27th - December 4th

With a national turnout estimated at over half a million, the November 27th day of action was a watershed. The success of the demonstrations did not however alter the fact that the main goal of the protests, the withdrawal of the Devaquet bill, was yet to be achieved. At this stage, the protests entered a period of uncertainty, notably within the national committee of UNEF-ID which met in secret on November 29th. The Convergence Socialiste faction, which included UNEF-ID's president, continued to advocate a moderate approach and did not eliminate the possibility of reaching a compromise with the government. They were opposed by students in Villetaneuse, Créteil and Orsay who advocated the total withdrawal of the bill. At this stage, the latter became nervous that many UNEF-ID members would begin to withdraw their support for the protests (Dray, 1987: 96-7).

However, the government's response at this stage seemed to provide the protests with new impetus. On November 28th, a day after the bill was due to come under parliamentary discussion, the government decided to adjourn the debate and refer the bill to the Committee of Cultural Affairs. In a televised debate on November 30th, Chirac stated that the text needed to be reformulated because students had misinterpreted aspects of it, and was ambiguous about the government's planned course of action. On the one hand, he asserted, 'Le projet de loi de M. Devaquet répond tout à fait à ces exigences'. On the other hand, he insinuated that the government might back down on certain issues such as tuition fees. By early December, divisions within the government were beginning to surface. Some ministers, notably Pierre Méhaignerie and Charles Pasqua, were openly advocating the total withdrawal of the bill. Others were determined not to back down to students' demands. The latter included Monory himself who declared, 'Si on retire le texte il n'y a plus de gouvernement' (Dray, 1987: 90-91). On December 2nd, the government's official stance was that the text would be rewritten with the consultation of student representatives and other actors. Yet, Devaquet himself contradicted this commitment when he suggested on television that the government's strategy would in fact hinge on the turnout for the national demonstration of Thursday December 4th, 'Il n'est pas question de tout remettre à plat. Tout le monde attend jeudi' (*Le Monde*, 3rd December 1986).

Concerns that the protests might lose momentum were dispelled in general assemblies in universities and *lycées* on December 1st. Ballots showed 60 to 80 per cent of students to be in favour of the continuation of the protests and the total withdrawal of the bill (*Le Monde*, 2nd December 1986; Dray, 1987: 101-102). The message to continue was relayed from local

assemblies to the national *coordination* meeting of December 2nd, during which a motion was passed condemning any move by delegates to negotiate with the government (Dray, 1987: 107; Masson Report, 1987: 159-168)[18].

Students' energies were taken up with preparations for the demonstration of December 4th. Each Parisian faculty sponsored between two and four universities in the provinces (*Libération édition spéciale*, January 1987: 17). Students employed various means of fundraising, blocking motor way tollbooths, staging concerts and selling badges (*Le Monde,* 30th November 1986). They negotiated with the SNCF to obtain reduced train fares to Paris (*Le Monde*, 5th December 1986). Many left wing town councils also helped with transport, financial assistance and so on, as did some regional federations of the PS. In some regions, the FEN donated money (Masson Report, 1987: 157). Students worked hard to retain mass media attention and ensure the continuation of the protests until December 4th. They staged a sit-in in front of the Orsay Museum where President Mitterrand and Prime Minister Chirac were attending its opening ceremony (Dray, 1987: 101-102). They organised a massive picnic on the Place des Invalides, equipped with parasols, sunglasses and guitars. IUT students from Saint Denis climbed the Eiffel tower and attached a banner stating 'La colère monte' (Dray, 1987: 103).

At this stage, levels of commitment to the protests fluctuated. Some universities were permanently occupied, such as Paris VII (Jussieu), Paris I (Tolbiac) and Paris XIII (Villetaneuse). Provincial students were also extremely active, perhaps because they had joined the protests later than their counterparts in and around Paris (Dray, 1987: 103; *Le Monde*, 3rd December 1986; Assouline & Zappi, 1987: 80-92). Students in some universities were technically 'on strike' but attended lectures or studied from photocopies (*Libération édition spéciale*, January 1987: 15). Many *lycée* students started partial strikes, or what they referred to as 'grèves à la japonaise'. This entailed attending lessons but displaying support for the protests by wearing armbands and badges (*Le Monde*, 3rd December 1986; *Libération édition spéciale*, January 1987: 20).

The emergence of a political crisis

On December 4th, an estimated half a million students marched in Paris and 300,000 in the provinces (*Le Monde,* 6th December 1986). Delegations from several trade unions marched at the back of the demonstration, and some teachers also took part with their students (Dray, 1987: 116). The atmosphere was festive, and students devised humorous and artistic ways of voicing their disapproval of the proposed reforms. Some branded effigies of Monory and Devaquet. Others adapted jingles from popular television advertisements as a means of ridiculing the two ministers ('La vâche qui Monorit'; 'Mamivaquet, les étudiants ne te disent pas merci'). In a more serious tone, students in *lycées techniques* asserted, 'Laissez-nous étudier, nous ne sommes pas des

[18] An incident on December 2nd that sparked much media interest was the 'eviction' from the national *coordination* of Isabelle Thomas, a UNEF-ID activist in Villetaneuse affilitated with the Questions Socialistes faction. Despite having played a prominent and highly mediatised role in the protests, Thomas was not elected as a delegate for the negotiations of December 4th. Her sudden elimination was interpreted in two ways. Certain analysts maintained that she was ousted in a tactical move by other UNEF-ID activists. Others argued that Thomas was rejected by 'independent' representatives within the *coordination* who disliked her highly mediatised style of leadership (Dray, 1987: 96). Interestingly however, Thomas was subsequently reinstated as one of the delegates who met with ministers on December 4th.

jouets' and 'Laissez-nous réussir, on n'est pas des fils de prince, on n'est pas des bébés Nobel' (*Le Monde,* 6th December 1986).

As protesters made their way to the Esplanade des Invalides, it became clear that there had been a change in police tactics. Whereas on November 27th students had demonstrated in front of the National Assembly, on this occasion access was blocked. When students at the head of the march reached the Esplanade des Invalides, a group of individuals intent on provoking a confrontation with the police tried to pass through the barriers and climb the walls of the ministry of foreign affairs. The police deployed water cannons and triggered the first angry response from students in the crowd. Later, clashes between police and the group of individuals intensified and water cannons were aimed at the mass of protesters[19]. Meanwhile, negotiations between student delegates and ministers had reached a deadlock. The demand for the total withdrawal of the bill was met by Monory's insistence that an amendment was the only option (Dray, 1987: 118-120; *Le Monde,* 6th December 1986)[20]. After the meeting, David Assouline made the following announcement to students waiting on the Esplanade des Invalides, which was transmitted live on France-Inter: 'Le gouvernement vient d'opposer un refus catégorique au million d'étudiants et de lycéens venus pour lui demander le retrait du projet. Les AG décideront demain la poursuite du mouvement' (Dray, 1987: 120-121).

Following Assouline's announcement, some individuals started throwing Molotov cocktails and stones at the police, who responded by deploying tear gas. The question of who these individuals were subsequently became an issue of much debate. According to some eyewitness accounts, the confrontation had clearly been orchestrated by certain ministers as a means of discrediting protesters and catalysing violence (Dray, 1987: 121-123, 153). This was later denied by the government (Masson Report, 1987: 249-255), even though police officers on the ground had received an order to clear the Esplanade des Invalides which was crowded with protesters (*Libération édition spéciale*, January 1987: 49). To students' surprise, many of whom were sitting down, the police responded to this order and began its advance[21]. Some students started to throw stones at the police and a three-hour confrontation ensued. By this time, students were criticising the government in general:

Pasqua, enculé!
Pasqua, terroriste!
Chirac, salaud, le peuple aura ta peau!
Chirac, démission! On n'est pas au Chili! (*Le Monde,* 6th December 1986)

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[19] The Masson Report provides a minute by minute account of events on the Esplanade des Invalides. It also provides mass media reports and records of police radio communication (1987: 198-248; 263-285).
[20] Monory made the following statement to the press, 'Nous avons proposé un dialogue pour modifier notre texte, mais malheureusement nos interlocuteurs, ce soir, ont été particulièrement fermés au dialogue et persistent à demander le retrait du projet Devaquet' (*Libération édition spéciale*, January 1987: 49).
[21] According to one report, 'Toutes les têtes se tournent vers la Quai d'Orsay. Les tirs des bombes lacrymogènes font un feu d'artifice, les premières fumeroles commencent à battre sur les étudiants sages. Dès cet instant, la solidarité s'établit avec le millier de jeunes qui, depuis deux bonnes heures, font face aux CRS du quai d'Orsay' (*Libération édition spéciale*, January 1987: 49).

By 11pm, the Esplanade des Invalides was almost empty, except for injured students. Twenty police officers and 41 students received hospital treatment, three of whom were seriously injured (*Le Monde*, 6th December 1986; *Libération édition spéciale*, January 1987: 67).

December 5th - 8th

On December 5th, there were spontaneous student demonstrations throughout France. The central theme of the protests had clearly shifted from the Devaquet bill to the denouncement of the police and the government in general. While many students marched in silence, often carrying black flags, others openly vented their anger:

Monory, t'es pourri, y a du sang sur ta copie
La jeunesse matraquée, tout le monde concerné
On veut étudier pour pas être CRS
Chirac, on s'en souviendra en 1988
Pasqua, c'est pas toi, c'est la rue qui fait la loi

(*Le Monde*, 5th December 1986; *Libération édition spéciale*, January 1987: 68)

General assemblies in universities were much more widely attended than those of previous days. Many students supported the idea of an extension of the protests to the population as a whole and expressed a sense of betrayal that their peaceful protest had been met with heavy-handed police tactics. Some students also blamed delegates representing the national *coordination* for the deadlock that the protests had reached (*Le Monde*, 7-8th December 1986).

On December 5th, Monory made a formal declaration on the television news. Making no reference to the violence of the previous night, and to the surprise of certain ministers, Monory declared that henceforth he alone was in charge of the university reforms and announced the withdrawal of the three most contended articles of the bill which concerned tuition fees, selection and national diplomas (*Le Monde*, 7-8th December 1986). His propositions had however come too late. The events of the previous night had shifted the central theme of the protests from the sphere of education towards a much broader criticism of the government. Monory's bid to end the crisis single-handed also precipitated Devaquet's announcement of his resignation, thus further exposing divisions within the cabinet.

A few hours later, a student protester was killed at the hands of a motorcycle police brigade following a demonstration in Paris. Although Malik Oussekine, a student of Algerian descent in Paris IV University (Dauphine), suffered from a kidney disorder, witnesses and medical experts testified that a series of blows from police officers was the cause of his death (*Le Monde,* 9th December 1986; *Libération édition spéciale*, January 1987: 70-73). The day after, there was a wave of sympathy demonstrations in memory of Malik Oussekine which involved students, teachers, parents, intellectuals and left wing politicians. While many of the demonstrations were held in silence, protesters used badges and banners to express their sadness and anger (*Le Monde,* 9th December 1986; *Libération édition spéciale*, January 1987: 74-75). That night, there were further confrontations, this time between police and around two thousand rioting

demonstrators, known as *casseurs* or *provocateurs* (*Le Monde,* 9th December 1986). According to one report:

Un cocktail de manifestants où se côtoient divers autonomes, étudiants et militants d'extrême droite - certains membres du GUD ont été reconnus - empilent méthodiquement et calmement tout ce qui se trouve à leur portée. (*Libération édition spéciale*, January 1987: 76-77)

During the national *coordination* meeting, delegates formally dissociated the student protests from the incidences of violence. They once again relayed the message from ordinary students that the protests were to continue (Dray, 1987: 146-7). New tactics were also proposed, which included: sending a deluge of letters and telephone messages to Matignon and the ministry of education; staging sit-ins in front of the Hôtel de Ville; appealing to students to withdraw their money from bank accounts and write cheques for derisory sums in order to clog up the banking system; and calling for young people to register on the electoral roll (Assouline & Zappi, 1987: 121). For the first time during the protests, representatives from the main trade unions (FEN, CGT, SGEN-CFDT), parents' associations, SOS-Racisme, and the press were officially present in the meeting. The extension of the protests to the population in general was unanimously endorsed. The delegates also agreed to hold a sympathy demonstration on December 10th, as well as a general strike and national day of action on December 19th. Several trade unions had already decided to stop work for an hour on Monday December 8th (Dray, 1987: 46; *Le Monde*, 9th December 1986).

By December 8th, the prime minister was under increasing pressure to announce the total withdrawal of the bill. The student protests were showing no signs of abating and several ministers were publicly advocating the withdrawal of the proposals. President Mitterrand criticised the proposed reform as pointless and ill-timed. Furthermore, there was a drop in prices on the Stock Exchange (*Le Monde*, 9th December 1986). On December 8th, Prime Minister Chirac announced the total withdrawal of the Devaquet bill and the Monory proposals. That afternoon, students demonstrated throughout France and declared, 'On a gagné mais on n'oublie pas' (Dray, 1987: 155).

The national *coordination* went ahead with the demonstration in memory of Malik Oussekine. Some trade unions (notably the CFDT) initially decided to withdraw support for the demonstration but subsequently reversed position when rank and file members objected (Dray, 1987: 155-156; Assouline & Zappi, 1987: 286). On December 10th, between 200,000 and 250,000 people marched in Paris, and there were also large turnouts for demonstrations in the provinces (*Libération édition spéciale*, January 1987: 84). The relatives of injured students, student delegates, trade unionists (mainly from the CGT, FEN and CFDT) and representatives from the PS and PCF led the demonstration in Paris. On this occasion, many participants were clearly not students. Most marched in silence but some openly criticised ministers, especially Charles Pasqua. Others carried symbols of grief for Malik Oussekine, including wreaths, black flags and armbands, cardboard coffins and pictures of targets. Many showed their solidarity by wearing badges stating 'Plus jamais ça' (*Libération édition spéciale*, January 1987: 84-5). This was the final demonstration of the protests.

In November-December 1986 then, mass student protest resulted in the withdrawal of the Chirac government's plans for university reform. Students broadly interpreted the Devaquet bill as an attempt to prevent them from continuing their studies and diminish their future prospects. The protests were characterised by the emergence of a national *coordination* established by UNEF-ID activists. Although ordinary students widely endorsed this decision-making structure, it was temporary and did not give rise to any enduring channel for student participation. On December 10th, a majority of student delegates voted for the disbandment of the *coordination*, although plans were made for an *Etats Généraux* to be held in March to discuss the future of the French university system.

(ii.) The lycée student protests of October-November 1990

In October-November 1990, there was a wave of protests in *lycées* which was triggered by inadequate security and poor conditions, notably in the department of Seine-Saint-Denis. This followed the school 'headscarf controversy'. It also coincided with mounting opposition to the prospect of French intervention in the Gulf war, as well as growing hostility towards a new taxation proposed by the Socialist government, in the form of the Contribution Sociale Generalisée (CSG). The student protests culminated in a national march in Paris supported by teachers' unions and parents' associations, which was disrupted by groups of youths who damaged property and looted merchandise from stores. The protests ended when Prime Minister Rocard unveiled an agreement for the *lycées*.

Participants and their motives

The protests can be traced to a deepening crisis in some of France's least prestigious *lycées*. On October 4th, around 5000 *lycée* students in Le Mans protested against teacher shortages and poor conditions, with the widespread support of teachers and parents' associations (*L'Humanité*, 5th October 1990; *Le Monde de l'Education*, November 1990). There were also *lycée* student protests in the predominantly working class territory of Seine-Saint-Denis to demand better conditions and tighter security following a series of violent assaults on teachers and a student (*L'Humanité*, 11th, 12th October 1990; *Le Monde*, 21st October 1990). While some of the first large demonstrations were held in central Paris, most participants were from *lycées* in and around Seine-Saint-Denis. Many students were in *lycées professionnels* and *lycées techniques*, and also from immigrant backgrounds (*Le Monde*, 21st, 24th October 1990; *L'Humanité*, 25th October 1990)[22]. The protests extended to other regions where traditional industry had fallen into decline, notably Nord-Pas-de-Calais, Lorraine and some areas of Brittany and Normandy. This was the first time that students in the least prestigious *lycées* had protested in such large numbers (*Le Monde*, 10-11th November 1990). However, no region was unaffected and there were unprecedented turnouts for demonstrations in many small provincial towns with no notable history of student protest (*Le Monde de l'Education*, December 1990).

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[22] According to one report, many were first and second year *lycée* students (*Libération*, 12th November 1990). This contrasts with the profile of *lycée* student protesters in November-December 1986 when third year students were more prominent.

During the first demonstrations, students protested against inadequate security, dilapidated buildings, outdated equipment, teacher shortages and large class sizes (*Libération*, 23rd October 1990; *Le Monde*, 24th October 1990). Notably, students in *lycées professionnels* and *lycées techniques* demanded money from the government for immediate, tangible improvements:

De l'argent pour notre éducation
Des sous, du fric, du pognon, de la thune
Des sous, des profs, du travail
Des actes, pas des promesses
On sait ce qu'on veut, des moyens pour étudier

(*L'Humanité*, 5th October 1990; *Le Monde*, 10th, 14th, 26th October 1990)

Occasionally, protesters raised the issue of French intervention in the impending Gulf war. On November 12th for instance, students in Besançon chanted 'Des sous pour l'éducation, pas pour les canons'. Their counterparts in Brittany demanded 'De l'argent pour les écoles et pas pour la guerre du pétrole' (*Le Monde*, 14th November 1990).

As in November-December 1986, there were different groups of students with different motives for taking part. Some went beyond demanding better conditions and hinted at a profound sense of malaise. The idea of a 'sacrificed generation' permeated the earlier protests. Many protesters wore the traditional badge of SOS-Racisme asserting 'Est-ce que j'ai une gueule de génération à se laisser sacrifier?'. Others wore stickers declaring 'Non aux lycées ghettos' (*Le Monde*, 24th October 1990). Expressions such as 'la galère' and 'ras-le-bol' also recurred in protesters' banners, slogans and chants. *Lycée* students in Seine-Saint-Denis chanted, 'Des lycéens en colère. Au lycée, c'est la galère' (*Le Monde*, 24th October 1990). Some students expressed fears of social and economic exclusion. A protester in Seine-Saint-Denis declared for instance, 'On en a marre d'être pris pour des cons, ignorés, méprisés, relégués dans des bahuts crasseux. On est l'avenir et on n'a pas envie de vivre dans la merde' (*Le Monde*, 14th November 1990). However, these protesters seemed at a loss to define any causes or solutions. According to one report, many believed that it was futile to go beyond demanding 'quick-fix' improvements since, given their temporary status as students, that was all they could hope to benefit from (*Le Monde*, 14th November 1990).

As the protests extended, a broader cross-section of students became visible in the streets. Students in the more prestigious *lycées* and the private sector joined the protests and, according to one report, some pupils in *collèges* also took part (*Le Monde*, 7th November 1990). Their motives appear to have been diverse. Some said they were taking part as a gesture of solidarity towards those in more difficult circumstances (*Libération,* 25th, 26th October 1990; *Le Monde*, 10th November 1990). Others claimed to be taking to the streets 'pour le fun' (*Le Monde*, 26th October 1990). Many banners simply stated 'Lycéens de Chelles' or 'Villepinte à Paris'. Indeed, many participants after the Toussaint holiday seemed to lack urgent motives (*Le Monde*, 26th October 1990). According to one report of the November 5th protests:

Beaucoup de lycéens défilent sans étiquette par petits groups flottants, lancés dans la rue sans échauffement de leur retour de vacances, soucieux d' être là pour le plaisir ou 'par solidarité' comme quelques centaines de lycéens de Sèvres avouant n'avoir dans leur lycée 'aucun problème particulier'. (*Le Monde*, 7th November 1990)

Some students in *lycées généraux* and, notably, FIDL activists demanded more democratic representation and freedom of expression in *lycées* (*Le Monde*, 14th November 1990)[23]. As Borredon affirms, this demand was not present from the outset but coupled on by students who joined the protests at a later stage (1995: 95). A further theme which became visible as the protests unfolded was the hostility of many provincial students towards their counterparts in Paris (*Le Monde*, 10th, 14th November 1990).

The emergence of leaders, politicised versus 'independent'

As in 1986, student activists played a crucial but paradoxical role. JC (Jeunesse Communiste) activists organised the first protests in Seine-Saint-Denis (*L'Humanité*, 17th October 1990; *Libération*, 27th October 1990), and FIDL (Fédération Indépendante et Démocratique Lycéenne) activists organised one of the first demonstrations in central Paris (*Le Monde*, 21st October 1990). However, the role of activists was much more precarious than four years previously, due in part to the fragmentation of student organisations in *lycées* (*Le Monde*, 7th November 1990). The newly created FIDL and the more traditional organisations on the far left had some marginal influence, but this was concentrated in certain towns and regions (see Appendix B).

The question reemerges as to how politicised activists succeeded in catalysing a wave of mass protest when the vast majority of students habitually chose to have no part in their activities. There is evidence that activists tried to adopt the same tactical effacement as UNEF-ID in 1986. Borredon observes that activists on the far left in a Grenoble *lycée* refrained from promoting any agenda that their peers would reject as too radical or 'intellectual' (1995: 71-73). On the whole however, the relationship between activists and ordinary students was fraught with tensions. According to a student in Seine-Saint-Denis, ordinary protesters followed the lead of communist activists purely because they did not know how to organise a protest by themselves:

Les militants débarquent avec leurs tracts, leurs affiches, leurs banderoles toutes prêtes. Nous, on suit comme des moutons car, on ne sait pas trop quoi faire ni comment le faire. C'est bien qu'il y en a qui soient actifs, mais ça nous gonfle un peu. (*Libération*, 22nd October 1990)

An important development in 1990 was the appearance of leaders claiming to be 'independent' or 'apolitical', that is, autonomous from any type of politicised organisation. In 1986, the latter were represented in the national *coordination* structure formed by UNEF-ID. The difference in 1990 was that many ordinary students, mainly in the provinces, attempted to form their own decision-making structures that were in no way connected to student organisations or political *groupuscules*, although unfortunately there is not enough information about these. A notable weakness in Borredon's study for instance is that it acknowledges the local dominance of leaders who did not

[23]An account of the November 12th march in Lyon highlights a variety of motives for taking part: 'Les élèves des lycées professionnels ont surtout réclamé cantine et foyer, alors que ceux de l'enseignement général ont ajouté aux revendications habituelles un désir d'expression au sein de leurs établissements' (*Le Monde*, 14th November 1990).

appear to belong to any organisation, alluding to the 'masse des délégués, située localement en dehors des appareils', but does not pursue any further investigation of them (1995: 78).

Modes of organisation and protest tactics

In terms of organisation, the 1990 protests were extremely fragmented. This can be attributed to a number of factors. Firstly, the sheer number of *lycées* and the absence of any extensive network of activists made the creation of a unified decision-making structure extremely difficult[24]. Secondly, students' demands in 1990 were localised, with no single objective to facilitate unity as there had been four years previously. Thirdly, the decentralisation laws in operation since 1986 tended to separate students' demands into local and national issues. While regional councils were responsible for the building and maintenance of *lycées*, staff recruitment and retention remained under the control of central government. Fourthly, rivalries between the main organisations and political *groupuscules* in *lycées* prevented the emergence of unity. Finally, and most importantly, ordinary students were much more reluctant to accept the leadership of politicised activists than in 1986.

In Paris, two *coordination* structures were formed by activists from rival organisations, although neither could credibly claim national legitimacy. The first was the *Coordination nationale des lycées et des lycées professionnels* created by activists on the far left, which claimed to represent students in the Paris region (*L'Humanité*, 28th October 1990). The second was the *Coordination nationale provisoire* formed by FIDL and SOS-Racisme activists from around twenty *lycées* in the Paris region and some provincial cities (*Le Monde*, 30th October 1990). Students who were not connected with any organisation were initially represented in both *coordinations* but affirmed their 'independent' status (*Le Monde*, 9th November 1990; *Libération*, 31st October 1990). Both *coordinations* drew up fairly similar platforms of demands, except that the latter pushed for greater democratic representation and freedom of expression in *lycées* (*Le Monde*, 9th November 1990; *Libération*, 12th November 1990). One of the key issues dividing the two *coordinations* was the itinerary for the national march in Paris on November 12th, although activists eventually overcame their differences and formed a joint delegation to meet with ministers (*Le Monde*, 10th, 13th November 1990). While unity was achieved at a crucial stage in the protests, it was fragile and at no point did the two *coordinations* merge. Partisan rifts became increasingly visible, particularly after the government unveiled the agreement of November 14th. While some FIDL delegates appeared satisfied with the agreement, their counterparts on the far left wanted to push for further concessions and the continuation of the protests. At this stage, many 'independent' delegates in both *coordinations* objected to what they saw as the excessive politicisation of the structures and began to withdraw their support (*Le Monde*, 16th, 17th November 1990).

In the provinces, 'apolitical' and 'independent' decision-making structures mushroomed. Many students seemed to want to experiment with forms of direct democracy on a local level. They attempted to create ad hoc, transient structures without the help of student organisations or political *groupuscules*. A *Coordination lycéenne indépendante* (CLI) was created in Saint-Etienne (*Le*

[24] In October 1990, there were approximately 2500 *lycées* (1219 *lycées généraux* and *lycées techniques*, and 1283 *lycées professionnels*) (*Libération*, 12th November 1990).

Monde, 11-12th November 1990). In Besançon and Clermont Ferrand, students representing 'independent' *coordinations* met with education officials from local councils (*Le Monde*, 14th November 1990). In Toulouse, there was a *Coordination Midi-Pyrénées* (*Le Monde*, 17th November 1990). Some representatives of provincial *coordinations* went to Paris and demanded to take part in talks with ministers, but were prevented from doing so (*Le Monde*, 17th, 28th November 1990). There is unfortunately very little information about these structures. Furthermore, the possibility that politicised activists were behind them cannot be ruled out, although there is no evidence to suggest that this was the case in 1990.

Available reports underscore the democratic manner in which decisions were made on a local level. In most *lycées*, general assemblies appear to have been held and representatives were elected. In many cases, students collectively drew up registers of grievances (*L'Humanité*, 5th, 12th October 1990). Borredon's study of the protests in a Grenoble *lycée* observes 'le sérieux de l'implication démocratique avec des assemblées générales souvent biquotidiennes, une réelle consultation de la base et son implication dans la préparation des manifestations' (1995: 71). Yet, Borredon also observes that in some *lycées* leadership styles were intrusive or aggressive and refers to a 'democratic deficit' (1995: 81). Inversely, there was an excessive adherence to democratic principles in departmental *coordination* meetings, exemplified by the naive refusal to designate a chairperson and the unworkable practice of allocating time for all delegates to speak. Moreover, implicit maneouvres and petty disputes among politicised activists tended to undermine any democratic procedures that had been put in place (1995: 82). Borredon attributes these organisational weaknesses to the actors' age, 'Ils sont finalement à l'image de leur âge, des acteurs adolescents (...) les acteurs ne sont pas préparés à l'exercise du pouvoir et ils ne savent donc pas suffisamment s' y prendre pour le maîtriser (1995: 79, 81).

As for students' tactics, they adopted similar means of protest to their predecessors in 1986. Students preferred to march in the streets, often in an ad hoc manner (*Libération*, November 12th 1990). There is however an important contrast between the 1986 and 1990 protests. The 1986 protests turned into a forum for all kinds of self-expression through the creation of posters, costumes and various symbols of grief for Malik Oussekine. In 1990 however, there was no such development. Students in Toulouse and Bordeaux obstructed railway lines to obtain free transport to the demonstration of November 12th, and some students from Lille went to Paris by bicycle (*Le Monde*, 10th, 11-12th November 1990). However, such initiatives were on the whole isolated. Furthermore, two events organised by the Parisian *coordinations* - a fundraising event in Paris on November 10th and a picnic sit-in on November 16th - were poorly attended (*Libération*, 10-11th November, 1990; *Le Monde*, 18th November, 1990).

Responses of central government, local authorities and political parties

The government managed to avert a political crisis by engaging in a dialogue with protesters from an early stage (*Libération*, 17th, 19th, 22nd October 1990). The Education Minister Lionel Jospin drew up an immediate agreement which included the recruitment of a thousand non-teaching staff and the creation of new student representative councils, although students deemed this to be

insufficient (*Le Monde*, 28-29th October 1990). The Home Office Minister Pierre Joxe also encouraged a cautious approach to the policing of demonstrations, which was on the whole respected by police officers on the ground (*Le Monde*, 6th, 7th, 14th November 1990).

As in 1986, a number of local councils supported the protests. This support did not just come from the opposition parties and the PCF. The socialist mayor of Pau provided transport for the November 12th demonstration, a decision which was met with disapproval by the departmental federation of the PS (*Libération*, 10-11th November 1990). The mayor of Brest (a Rocard supporter) provided the city's student *coordination* with telephones and other equipment (*Libération*, 17-18th November 1990). Many local politicians were displeased with Mitterrand and Jospin's comments about decentralisation, and their reminder to regional councils that since 1986 the building and renovation of *lycées* was their responsibility. This prompted an angry response from many local leaders, who pointed out that at least a third of their budget was already used for that purpose (*Libération*, 17-18th November 1990).

On November 14th, the prime minister unveiled an agreement which was finalised in consultation with student delegates (*Le Monde*, 17th November 1990) (see Appendix C). The bid to defuse the protests at this stage was based upon a number of factors. Firstly, the government was keen to avoid any further episodes of violence (*Libération*, 14th November 1990). Secondly, certain ministers, not least the prime minister, were concerned that the student protests would coalesce with the continuing conflict over the CSG (*Le Monde*, 16th November 1990; *Libération*, 16th November 1990). Thirdly, the student protests were exposing political divisions within the PS itself, notably between Prime Minister Rocard and President Mitterrand. On several occasions, the president marked his distance from ministers by inferring that they had misunderstood the concerns of young people. Meeting with student delegates on November 12th, Mitterrand allegedly stated, 'C'est au gouvernement Rocard de prendre ses responsabilités' (*Le Monde*, 14th November 1990). Mitterrand's subtle disapproval of Rocard is reminiscent of his stance towards Jacques Chirac in November-December 1986.

The response of teachers, trade unions and parents' associations

There is little information about the role played by 'non-student' actors, although some general observations can be made. Firstly, many teachers supported the protests and in some cases actively encouraged their formation. Borredon remarks how some head teachers indirectly supported the protests by allowing students to act freely (1995: 59). Teachers and parents' associations in Seine-Saint-Denis and Le Mans were as vociferous as students in demanding better conditions (*L'Humanité*, 3rd, 11th, 12th, 19th October 1990). Some teachers joined the two national demonstrations, either marching alongside their students or with their trade unions (*Le Monde*, 6th, 13th November 1990; *Libération*, 6th, 13th November 1990)[25]. Many local branches of teachers' unions offered activists advice and equipment (*Libération*, 17-18th November 1990). However, the national headquarters of most trade unions did not officially support the protests until the two student *coordinations* agreed on a minimum number of issues (*Libération*, 12th November

[25]On October 20th, the main teachers' unions had demonstrated in Paris to demand more education funding, voicing similar concerns to students (*Le Monde*, 21st October 1990).

1990). On November 12th, representatives from teachers' unions, parents' associations, UNEF-SE and UNEF-ID joined the national march. There is however little evidence of unity on the ground between the mass of student protesters and representatives from the diverse organisations (*Le Monde*, 14th November 1990).

To sum up, in October-November 1990 a broad cross-section of *lycée* students with diverse motives took to the streets: students in the least prestigious establishments protested against inadequate security, poor conditions and teacher shortages, and some went as far as voicing fears of social and economic exclusion; students mainly in *lycées généraux* demanded more freedom of expression and democratic representation; some students said they were taking part out of solidarity or purely to enjoy the festive atmosphere. In 1990, a national *coordination* structure failed to emerge, due in part to rifts between student activists in Paris and the formation of diverse representative structures in the provinces. An important development was the appearance of leaders claiming to be 'independent' or 'apolitical', that is, autonomous from any type of politicised organisation. The government's agreement of November 14th sufficed to defuse the protests, which had garnered the support of several local councils, the main teachers' unions and parents' associations.

(iii.) The March 1994 anti-CIP protests

In February 1994, the Balladur government unveiled a scheme to combat rising youth unemployment in France. This took the form of the Contrat d'Insertion Professionel (CIP) which, unlike previous schemes that tended to target the long-term unemployed with few or no qualifications, contained measures aimed specifically at young people educated up to and beyond 'bac + 2' level. The most contentious aspect of the CIP was its proposal to remunerate those concerned at 80 per cent (or below) of the official minimum wage (see Appendix C). The plans triggered the opposition of trade unions, parents' associations, human rights groups, student organisations and large numbers of ordinary students who took part in various local protests and two national days of action. Two particular aspects of the protests merit investigation. The first is the link between student protesters and other detractors of the CIP. The second concerns the reasons why the CIP provoked such a hostile response.

The convergence of students and other actors opposed to the CIP

Students in IUTs and STS (pursuing advanced technical courses) were among the first to protest against the CIP. IUT students in the northern suburbs of Paris (notably Saint Denis, Villetaneuse and Créteil) were extremely active. So too were their counterparts in numerous provincial towns where, since the early 1980s, many IUTs and STS had been established. One report refers to:

une géographie qui ne doit rien au hasard: les STS et les IUT implantés récemment dans ces villes concrétisent parfaitement, dans des régions industrielles touchées de plein fouet par la crise, l'espoir des familles de voir leurs enfants échapper à la galère du chômage. (*Le Monde de l'Education*, April 1994)

From March 10th onwards, a broad cross-section of *lycée* students joined the protests, although there is limited information about them (*Le Monde*, 13-14th, 27-28th March 1994). While students

with aspirations of upward social mobility were among the key actors of the 1986 and 1990 protests, the available evidence indicates that in 1994 they were joined by students from more comfortable backgrounds who were concerned that their economic status would diminish with the introduction of the CIP (Borredon, 1995: 136). University students were on the whole less prominent in the protests, with the exception of activists on the left and far left. In early March, there were protests in some universities about poor conditions and staff shortages (notably in Saint-Denis, Nantes, Brest and Toulouse) (*L'Humanité*, 10th March 1994; *Le Monde*, 27-28th March 1994). While some university students protested against the CIP, others had different motives that I outline further below.

Trade unions, parents' associations and various other organisations also opposed the CIP. They formed loose alliances with UNEF, UNEF-ID and political *groupuscules* on the far left in universities (*L'Humanité*, 26th, 28th February, 9th March 1994). On March 3rd, activists from the CGT, FCPE, UNEF, UNEF-ID and other socialist and communist groups based in universities staged a joint protest (*Le Monde*, 4th March 1994; *L'Humanité*, 4th March 1994). On March 12th, 42 organisations took part in a national march organised by the CGT (*Le Monde*, 15th March 1994). On March 17th, the CFDT, CGT, FO, teachers' unions, student organisations and other associations marched behind a common banner stating 'Non au SMIC-Jeunes'. This was the first time in thirty years that all of these organisations came together in a unified demonstration (*Le Monde*, 19th March 1994). The various organisations called on ordinary students to take part in the two national days of action, and many responded favourably (*Le Monde*, 19th March 1994). This begs the question of whether ordinary students had come to view politicised organisations in a more positive light.

In fact, the relationship between ordinary students and politicised activists in March 1994 was an awkward alliance. The former seemed prepared to accept the role played by different organisations in order to halt the CIP, but at the same time were keen to assert their independence from them. On the March 17th day of action, a distance could be observed between ordinary students and other protesters. One account describes a 'patchwork unitaire...deux cortèges entremêlés mais curieusement imperméables' (*Le Monde*, 19th March 1994). The orderly protest of trade union members and other organisations contrasted with the spontaneity of ordinary students, with their makeshift banners and slogans chanted to the rhythm of pop songs. According to one report, 'Quelques étudiants portent gentiment badges ou petits drapeaux "offerts" par les confédérations' (*Le Monde*, 19th March 1994). This suggests tolerance towards the trade unions on the part of students rather than any profound sense of solidarity.

A similar distance between ordinary students and other social actors was observed in the provinces. Bauby and Gerber state that at best:

> *des soutiens extérieurs ont été recherchés auprès des syndicats étudiants et de travailleurs d'associations comme SOS-Racisme, mais avec le souci de conserver l'indépendance et l'autonomie du mouvement.* (1996: 197)

At worst, the relationship between students and other actors was fraught with tensions. Many students feared the 'takeover' of their protests by political organisations. This was the case in

Bordeaux and Lyon for instance, where students refused to march with trade unionists and held separate demonstrations. On March 23rd, students in Auch staged what they defined as a 'manif propre' behind a banner asserting 'Non au CIP, à la casse et à la récupération' (*Le Monde*, 26th March 1994).

Finally, there are isolated cases of highly informal contacts emerging between students and other actors. Students protesting in Saint-Etienne on March 16th merged with a demonstration of unemployed workers. In Nantes too, student protesters were joined by unemployed workers and the homeless during demonstrations against police repression (*Le Monde*, 26-27th March 1994). There is not much information about the nature of these contacts, although on the whole such demonstrations do not appear to have been organised in advance.

Diverse groups and organisations thus came together to oppose the CIP and, in retrospect, they seemed almost to be paving the way for the strikes and demonstrations of November-December 1995. However, many ordinary students seemed to draw back when faced with the prospect of uniting with other actors, even though they voiced broadly similar concerns in relation to the CIP.

Motives for opposing the CIP

The banners, slogans and chants of non-student participants highlight two main concerns. The first was that the CIP would bring greater economic vulnerability for workers in general. Unemployment and social exclusion were recurrent themes adopted by non-student protesters. So too was the broader issue of human rights. Employment was depicted as a necessary prerequisite to basic human dignity:

Contre le SMIC-Jeunes, le chômage, l'exclusion
Ce qui est général avec le chômage, c'est qu'il y en a pour tout le monde
La dignité, c'est l'emploi
Le droit de vivre, le droit au travail (*L'Humanité*, 13th March 1994)

Secondly, non-student actors voiced profound discontent with the Balladur government. They condemned the government for putting the interests of the economy and company managers before those of workers, and interpreted its new scheme as an attempt to bring in cheap labour:

Balladur, l'esclavage est aboli depuis 200 ans
Nous ne sommes pas de la chair aux patrons
La loi du fric, ça suffit (*L'Humanité*, 13th March 1994)

Certain student protesters (notably activists on the left and far left) also voiced concerns about unemployment, social exclusion and cheap labour. For instance, Carine Seiler, the vice president of UNEF-ID, described the CIP as a move to create 'des jeunes Kleenex' and a 'main-d'oeuvre malléable' (Bauby & Gerber, 1996: 166).

Students who were directly targeted by the CIP (who had obtained or were likely to obtain qualifications up to 'bac+2' level) highlighted a sense of anger at being 'sold at cut price' on the job market, and claimed to be defending themselves from becoming a new social category of 'sous-smicards':

Bac + 2 = SMIC - 20
Nous ne sommes pas des jeunes à 80%
Mini-smic, Mini-prix
Smic-Allégé
(*Le Monde*, 12th, 18th March 1994)

Many students expressed concerns that they would not be able to live decently under the official minimum wage (80 per cent of the SMIC amounted to a monthly wage of 3700 francs). During the March 10th demonstration, a student in a *lycée professionnel* asserted, 'On ne boucle pas une fin de mois avec 5400 francs, alors 3700 francs!' A student in an STS also implored, 'C'est quoi une vie à 3700 francs? Ils en ont une idée, ceux qui en parlent?' (*L'Humanité*, 11th March 1994). Students also deplored the government's hypocrisy in imposing such a scheme. *Lycée* students in Sarcelles held a banner stating 'Eh Balladur, pourquoi pas 80% de ton salaire?'. Balladur was repeatedly accused of giving company managers free reign, putting the interests of profit over people, and thinking solely in terms of his own career objectives:

Les patrons en rêvaient, Balladur l'a fait
Mini-prix, Maxi-profit
Contrat d'intérêt patronal
Contrat d'intérêt présidentiel
(*L'Humanité*, 11th March 1994; *Le Monde*, 12th March 1994)

Students condemned the government for breaking a moral promise, not only on the issue of the minimum wage but also the value of qualifications on the job market. In targeting young people with qualifications, the CIP seemed to overturn the dominant political discourse of the 1980s which asserted that diplomas were the answer to unemployment. Student protesters feared that the CIP would standardise the social and economic recognition of different qualifications. They highlighted a sense of frustration at having to climb the education ladder when the ladder was constantly being extended. Moreover, students questioned the usefulness of accumulating qualifications when they were not going to be adequately rewarded for their efforts. This was notably the case of students in IUTs and STS who, in a sense, had the most to lose. A former IUT student in Lyon asserted for instance:

C'était un véritable choc de se rendre compte que nos études ne servaient plus qu' à gagner un ¾ du SMIC, alors que nous avions tous passé la barre d'une sélection souvent ardue. (Interview with Thierry Lichet, 23rd October 2002)

Many students in IUTs and STS had worked hard to be selected precisely because of the guarantee that they believed the courses offered in terms of employment prospects (see Chapter 2). Hence, far from its intended purpose as a gateway to the job market, the CIP extended a sentiment of economic vulnerability to students who had hitherto felt protected by the safety net of qualifications. One student affirmed, 'Avant on disait avec le bac, t'as rien. Maintenant, c'est avec un BTS ou un DUT' (*Le Monde*, 4th March 1994). Another *lycée* student stated, 'On nous demande de faire le plus d'études possible, mais au bout du compte nous serons tous payé pareil' (*Le Monde*, 24th March 1994). Many students pointed out that they already worked on a part-time basis and earned around 2500 francs (*Le Monde*, 12th March 1994). A student in a *lycée professionnel* in Lyon asserted, 'Je n'ai pas envie de me faire exploiter en sortant de l'école. J'en

ai marre de ce système pourri. A quoi sert les diplômes? Aujourd'hui, le niveau d'études n'a pas de sens' (*Le Monde*, 24th March 1994).

Some protesters voiced concerns about the potential impact of the scheme on other workers, alluding to a substitution effect. One student asserted, 'Je crois que le CIP, c'est virer des vieux pour prendre des jeunes à moindre prix. On risque de prendre du travail de ceux qui sont déjà en poste' (*Libération*, 4th March 1994). Notably, students' slogans and posters raised concerns about the possible effects of the CIP on their own family members:

Papa, fais gaffe, j'ai bientôt le CIP (*Le Monde*, 12th March 1994)
Papa, j'ai trouvé un boulot, le tiens! (*L'Humanité*, 22nd March 1994)

For others, the CIP was a potential barrier to attaining personal autonomy. According to one protester, 'Si on accepte d'être sous-payé, il va falloir que nos familles continuent à nous entretenir....Papa en plus, il va se retrouver au chômage' (*Le Monde*, 12th March 1994).

Some protesters were concerned that they would be paid less than other workers in the same profession. The banner of the *Coordination indépendante des IUT et BTS* on March 10th announced 'A travail égal, salaire égal. Pas de divisions entre les générations'. In one interview, an STS graduate who took part in the protests asserted, 'On était jeune, et alors? On avait le droit au même salaire' (Interview with Philippe Thépaut, June 17th 2000). Many students in IUTs and STS believed that the CIP undermined the high level of professional training that they had already received, stressing that they were not supposed to require further training on graduation (*Le Monde*, 12th March 1994).

Finally, there is evidence of anxiety among young people who would leave (or had already left) the education system with qualifications at or below *baccalauréat* level. The source of their anxiety is summed up by a young job seeker who joined the protests: 'Avec le CIP, mon problème ne va pas s'arranger. Si les employeurs peuvent se payer un bac + 2 à plein temps, ils ne vont pas prendre moi avec mon petit bac' (*Libération*, 4th March 1994). The CIP thus had the effect of compelling young people to reconsider their position in relation to other students, workers and job-seekers.

As for university students, Le Bart and Merle's (1997) study shows that, while many were technically exempt from the scheme, some feared its eventual extension to broader categories of young people[26]. Firstly, their findings indicate that the most important determinant of students' attitudes towards the CIP was their propensity to think of themselves as eventual targets of the scheme (1997: 221). Most students interviewed either planned to study beyond 'bac + 2' level or were already at a more advanced stage in their education. As a result, many did not consider

[26] Le Bart and Merle's study is based on university students in three specific disciplines and institutions in Rennes. The first group consists of students in IEP (Institut d'études politiques), a selective institution which enjoys the prestige of a *grande école*. The second group consists of law students in Rennes I University, one of the oldest faculties in the city. The third group is made up of students in the AES (Administration économique et sociale) discipline in Rennes II University. It is important to note that the social backgrounds, educational trajectories and overall prestige enjoyed by students in these institutions vary widely. For instance, 54.9 per cent of AES students in 1994 were from working class backgrounds compared with only 11.8 per cent in the IEP; 37.3 per cent of AES students who took part in the study had a section G (technical) *baccalauréat* diploma, but none in the IEP had a similar academic profile (1997: 11-17).

themselves to be immediately affected by the CIP or concerned by the protests. A final year AES student affirmed for instance: 'C'est le problème des bac + 2. Je n'ai jamais entendu parler de rien pour les licences'. As Le Bart and Merle put it, 'ne pas se sentir visé, c'est d'abord parce que protégé par un diplôme distinctif' (1997: 224). However, this leaves the problem of explaining why some university students opposed the CIP and supported the protests (although support did not necessarily translate into participation). Certain students did not consider themselves to be direct targets of the CIP, but felt that the scheme epitomised the general economic climate of the mid-1990s. A postgraduate law student asserted, 'Je sais que nous aussi on sera sous-payé. Ceux qui disent que toute la jeunesse est menacée n'ont pas tort' (1997: 227).

Secondly, Le Bart and Merle's study reveals the limits of many students' affirmed solidarity towards each other. Those interviewed often expressed solidarity towards students directly targeted by the CIP, but were also keen to preserve a sense of distance from them. One IEP student claimed for instance, 'Je suis solidaire des lycéens techniques, des peu qualifiés'. However, he refers to *lycée* students in the third person and, above all, voices concerns about his own employment prospects (1997: 225). Le Bart and Merle underscore the ambivalence in many students' claims of solidarity:

Comment expliquer alors la mobilisation? Par l'esprit de solidarité qui pousse certains à dépasser leur intérêt égoïste? Il s'agira dans ce cas d'une solidarité "d'en haut" qui vaut implicitement réaffirmation des classements hiérarchiques (...) Cette solidarité d'en haut débouche sur des attitudes en demi-teinte. On ne se mobilise pas, mais on ne se désintéresse pas non plus du mouvement: on comprend, on n'en pense pas moins, on en discute, même, mais seuls les militants de gauche se mobilise vraiment. (1997: 222,226)

Thirdly, Le Bart and Merle's study recommends that a distinction be recognised between students' opposition to the CIP, their support for protest action and their actual participation in protests. Some students opposed the CIP but were for various reasons reluctant to join the protests. A final year AES student for instance supported the protests but did not take part in them. Among the reasons he gives for his inaction are concerns that the trade unions would gain control of the protests, the fear of being isolated from his peers and a desire not to miss lectures (1997: 231). Another AES student joined earlier protests but withdrew at a later stage to avoid the prospect of a prolonged struggle and return to lectures (1997: 230). Many students who took part in the study, notably those from working class backgrounds, in fact wavered between defending their long term interests (ensuring that their employment prospects were not compromised by the new scheme) and protecting their short-term interests (passing their exams without sacrificing an academic year). A final year AES student opposed the CIP but did not participate in the protests, out of concern that the reputation of her institution and her academic achievements to date would be compromised by a prolonged struggle (1997: 233). Interestingly, the stance of *lycée* students from working class backgrounds who protested in 1990 contrasts with that of university students from similar backgrounds during the March 1994 protests. In 1990, *lycée* students from working class backgrounds took to the streets out of a desire to progress further up the education hierarchy; on reaching university however, students from working class backgrounds seemed anxious not to sacrifice their new-found status. Le Bart and Merle's study thus draws attention to the heterogeneity of university students' attitudes and behaviour concerning the protests and the CIP.

The authors conclude:

Ces quelques analyses n'épuisent pas la richesse des opinions concernant le mouvement anti-CIP. Plusieurs variables jouent et s' enchevêtrent: la culture de filière (plus ou moins politisée), l'origine sociale, la place dans le cursus (premier ou second cycle), le positionnement politique (pour ou contre Balladur). Selon que le projet est jugé positif ou non, selon que l' étudiant se sent plus ou moins concerné, les opinions se distribuent en d'infinies nuances. (1997: 236)

Finally, perhaps Le Bart and Merle do not sufficiently stress the fact that the protests in Rennes II University only gained ground in late March and continued after the withdrawal of the CIP. A similar situation was also observed in several other universities such as Tolbiac, Besançon, Brest and Nantes (*Le Monde*, 27-28th, 31st March 1994). University students protested over two main issues in addition to the CIP. The first was the use of repressive tactics by police during protests, the arrest of student protesters and the deportation of two Algerian students. Notably in Nantes and Lyon, there were violent confrontations between police and protesters (*Le Monde*, 27-28th March 1994). In Nantes on March 31st, 20,000 students protested against police repression and the arrest of students (*Le Monde*, 2nd April 1994). The second issue concerned poor working conditions in universities. In Brest for instance, students and staff protested to demand more funding (*Le Monde*, 31st March 1994). The prospect of a further escalation of the protests in universities was undoubtedly one of the factors behind Prime Minister Balladur's decision to abandon the CIP.

The response of central government

In March 1994, the prime minister averted a potential political crisis by abandoning the CIP before a radicalisation of the protests. Balladur's willingness to negotiate with social actors and amend the proposals contrasts with the intransigence of ministers in November-December 1986, although on both occasions proposed legislation had to be abandoned. Balladur was in fact attempting to gain support for the CIP in an increasingly combative social climate. The government had already backed down in response to two widely supported protests (the conflict of Air France workers and the mobilisation against the abrogation of the Falloux law), and was determined not to abandon any further plans. The CIP was of vital importance to the government as it formed the centrepiece of its agenda to reduce unemployment, and ministers were aware that a defeat would risk undermining its overall economic programme.

From March 3rd, there were negotiations between ministers and representatives of diverse organisations which resulted in two amendments of the proposed scheme (see Appendix C). The prime minister also tried to persuade young people via the national press that the CIP was not a 'SMIC-Jeunes', reminding them that previous schemes introduced by the PS had not reduced youth unemployment and paid well under the minimum wage (*Le Monde*, 3rd March 1994; *Libération*, 17th March 1994). While adopting a much more cautious stance than Chirac in 1986, Balladur also made the mistake of suggesting that young people were being manipulated by political forces on the left and far left, 'Il doit se garder de la récupération politique et de l'illusion de ceux qui, aujourd'hui, prétendent résoudre le lancinant problème du chômage' (*Le Monde*, 3rd March 1994).

As in 1986, the majority of student protesters demanded the total withdrawal of the proposed legislation and bluntly rejected any amendments. Deeply mistrustful of the government, they eschewed negotiations and accused ministers of resorting to repression and manipulation. Not only the prime minister, but increasingly Charles Pasqua and François Bayrou became the targets of students' anger (*Le Monde*, 26th, 27-28th March 1994)[27]. Student activists also grew frustrated when they were not invited to take part in negotiatons on March 28th (*Le Monde*, 30th March 1994; Bauby & Gerber, 1996: 213-214). By the end of March, the prime minister seemed to face no alternative but to abandon the CIP and avoid a further escalation of the protests.

Other factors contributing to the prime minister's decision to abandon the CIP were, firstly, the fact that many of the scheme's initial supporters had defected, not least the CNPF (*Le Monde*, 26th March 1994). Secondly, Balladur was undoubtedly keen to preserve his personal credibility in the run up to the 1995 presidential elections. The results of a national opinion poll which were televised on March 27th showed 66 per cent of those asked to be opposed to the CIP, and 64 per cent demanding its total withdrawal. The second round of the cantonal elections had also produced more disappointing results for the right than the first round of the previous week (*Le Monde*, 29th March 1994).

Modes of organisation and protest tactics

The protests were characterised by different types of mobilisation. The first was piloted by diverse student organisations (UNEF, UNEF-ID, MJCF, FIDL, UNL and so on) which formed alliances with each other, as well as with non-student organisations. The second type of mobilisation was much more informal and tended to emanate from the protests' ordinary actors. In late February, six students in the IUT-Paris formed a *Coordination IUT-Paris* and appeared on national television to urge students to take action against the CIP (Borredon, 1995: 99). At the same time, students in around twenty IUTs and STS in the Paris suburbs (including Villetaneuse, Bobigny and Créteil) formed a *Coordination nationale des IUT et BTS*. Its representatives repeatedly claimed to be independent from student organisations and trade unions, although according to several reports student activists were in fact prominent in both structures. A UNEF-ID activist in Créteil confirmed that politicised activists were among the leaders of the *Coordination IUT-Paris* (Bauby & Gerber, 1996: 211). Thierry Lichet, a former leader of an IUT *coordination* structure in Lyon also observed in relation to the two *coordinations* in Paris that, 'L'une comme l'autre laissait pressentir de fortes ficelles syndicales derrière elles' (Interview, 16th October 2002). This would explain the existence of two rival *coordinations* in the Paris region rather than a unified structure.

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[27] Both Charles Pasqua (the home office minister) and François Bayrou (the minister of education) made controversial statements during the protests. On television, the former criticised parents for letting their children demonstrate and inferred that protesters lacked maturity: 'Les parents devraient s'occuper un peu plus de leurs enfants!'. Bayrou invited similar criticism when he tried to persuade head teachers not to allow younger students to demonstrate: 'Les proviseurs des lycées et les principaux des collèges ont le devoir de ne pas laisser sortir les élèves quand ils n'ont pas à le faire' (*Le Monde*, 24th March 1994).

It is also important to note that provincial students formed *coordination* structures that were separate from those based in the capital. Lichet offers a valuable insight into one such structure in Lyon, in which he participated. He states that the *coordination* structure was independent in the sense that it had no links with the *coordinations* in the Paris region or any of the student organisations based in Lyon. He explains however that an activist from one of the UNEFs visited the IUT to advise students how to organise a protest campaign, control demonstrations and galvanise *lycée* students into action. Lichet describes this as an 'apport purement technique'. He also explains that key representatives of the *coordination* (himself included) were not elected during a general assembly. He adds that the representatives in fact had credibility among their peers because they already sat on the student council or were representatives of (non-political) student associations. On an almost daily basis, up to 500 students attended general assemblies (Interview, 23rd October 2002).

The organisation of the *lycée* student protests was even more fragmented, although available information is limited. On a national level, Borredon observes that:

l'absence d'une réelle unité d'action, la quasi-absence même d'une coordination entre jeunes alliés, pire, les conflits internes aux monde étudiant, doublés de la méfiance persistante des coordinations de province à l'égard de la FIDL, fragilisaient grandement le mouvement, pour la première fois depuis 1986. (1995: 144)

Bauby and Gerber mention that a *coordination* structure representing *lycée* students progressively formed in the Paris region, in which FIDL activists were prominent (1996: 208). In the provinces, there were various local structures in towns and departments, such as the *Coordination lycéenne de Dordogne*, and the *Coordination des Actions Lycéenne* (CAL) in Grenoble. Although it is impossible to determine whether the CAL was typical of structures which emerged elsewhere, Borredon's findings point to some interesting developments in Grenoble since the 1990 protests. He explains:

Si 1990 pouvait paraître exemplaire avec élection en assemblée générale des membres des comités d'action, lesquels élisaient en leur soin trois délégués à la coordination départementale, 1994 souffre d'un déficit democratique...la plupart des membres du CAL n'ont pas été élus par leurs pairs, pour la bonne raison que les assemblées générales furent rarissimes. (1995: 127-128)

Borredon attributes the infrequency of general assemblies to the pressure placed upon head teachers not to let students organise on the premises. He notes that many directors of regional education authorities supported the CIP and had been given orders from ministries not to allow students to demonstrate (1995: 127). Yet, while this explanation may hold some truth, it is not entirely convincing. The very fact that the ministries were giving such orders seems to indicate that many head teachers were allowing students to organise protests.

Furthermore, Borredon acknowledges that the CAL did not operate according to the principles of direct democracy, referring to a 'mouvement des leaders':

C'est la victoire des leaders plus que celle du 'peuple lycéen'. Parce que le mouvement de 1994 a finalement oscillé entre mouvement de masse et participation occasionnelle, ne valant donc que parce qu' un petit groupe était là pour assurer les fonctions de mobilisation, direction et animation. (1995: 133)

There are some examples of *lycée* students and their counterparts in higher education forming joint representative structures. There was for instance a *Coordination des étudiants et lycéens de Toulouse* (*Le Monde*, 26th March 1994). However, there is evidence of tensions between different groups of students, particularly between *lycée* students and politicised activists in universities. According to one report of a general assembly in Lyon:

Le décalage entre lycéens non-syndiqués peu organisés et des étudiants rompus à l'action syndicale s'est clairement ressenti (...) les lycéens restent méfiants envers leurs aînés, d'autant plus qu'ils parviennent, peu à peu, à former leur propre coordination. (*Le Monde*, 26th March 1994)

Some students appeared to bypass organisations altogether and took to the streets having learned about the protests via word of mouth or the mass media:

Comment se sont-ils trouvés en si grand nombre? Pour certains, la décision a été prise le matin même devant leurs établissements, d'autres parlent de tracts distribués à l'entrée des lycées. Mais c'est par la bouche à l'oreille que la plupart ont été informées. Il n'y a pas eu de mobilisation à l'intérieur des classes, aucune AG, tout paraît venir de l'extérieur, de petits groupes très déterminés qui ont fait le tour des bahuts pour grossir les rangs des cortèges. (*Le Monde*, 23rd March 1994)

Finally, local demonstrations were of an ad hoc nature (*Le Monde*, 13-14th March 1994). In addition, in March 1994 students' tactics diversified as the protests extended. The obstruction of transport networks was much more common than in previous episodes of protest. In Nancy, student protesters occupied railway stations and blocked roads, and in Valence they obstructed a bridge (*Le Monde*, 23rd March 1994). In Lyon, students blocked railway lines and carried out an *opération péage gratuite* at motorway toll booths. In Bordeaux, IUT students circulated a petition on a motorway and slowed down traffic by means of an *opération escargot* (*Le Monde*, 24th March 1994). In Paris, Chambéry and Toulouse students blocked railway stations. IUT students in Toulouse visited the ANPE in small groups to apply for unemployment benefits, and blocked a bus depot (*Le Monde*, 25th March 1994).

To conclude, the prospect of the CIP ignited fears among large numbers of students (notably in IUTs and STS) about the devaluation of qualifications and diminishing employment prospects. A loose coalition of student organisations and *political groupuscules*, trade unions, parents' associations and human rights groups was formed. At best however, ordinary student protesters were tolerant of trade unionists' presence and many went as far as to oppose their participation in demonstrations. As in October-November 1990, there was no overarching decision-making structure and diverse channels of participation were formed on a local level. Finally, confronted with the opposition of diverse social actors, the Balladur government had to abandon the CIP despite having proposed a series of amendments to the original decree.

(iv.) The student protests of October-December 1995

In October 1995, students in Rouen University protested against cutbacks in funding. After three weeks, the government conceded 9 million francs and promised to recruit new teachers. This response triggered a wave of protests in other universities, IUTs and *lycées* which overlapped with

the workers' strikes and demonstrations. Levels of participation were lower than in 1986, 1990 and 1994, but the protests were widely supported by staff and many university presidents.

Protest participants

The first students to stage protests were predominantly in the newer provincial universities where conditions were poorest. In Rouen University, science and technology students started the protests. Rouen was reportedly one of the universities which had been worst affected by government cutbacks (*Le Monde*, 1st November 1995). In early October, students in Paul-Sabatier Science University (Toulouse III) also began a protest against cutbacks (Bauby & Gerber, 1996: 254-255). They were followed by humanities and social science students in the universities of Metz, Orléans and Marne-la-Vallée (Bauby & Gerber, 1996: 259). Other provincial students protested in Aix-en-Province, Nancy II, Montpellier (humanities and social science students), Pau (where law students were the first to mobilise) and La Rochelle (acknowledged by the ministry of education as the university with the poorest budget in France) (Bauby & Gerber, 1996: 253-264; *Le Monde*, 10th November 1995). Students in central Paris were slower to join the protests, with the exception of architecture students who had specific objectives that are outlined below. By mid-November, there were protests in Paris X (Nanterre), Paris VIII (Saint-Denis), Paris I (Tolbiac), and later in Paris XIII (Villetaneuse) and Paris VII (Jussieu) (Bauby & Gerber, 1996: 263). Students in Britanny and Normandy (Cane, Nantes, Rennes, Brest, Anger), many of whom had been extremely active during the anti-CIP protests, were also slower to join the protests but did so from late-November onwards. The overlap between the student protests and workers' demonstrations in Brittany and Normandy was thus more marked than in many other regions (*Le Monde*, 21st November 1995; Bauby & Gerber, 1996: 269).

While many IUT students had protested against the CIP and the Bardet circular, they were on the whole more reluctant to join the October-December 1995 protests. However, IUT students in and around Toulouse were very active, as were their counterparts in Metz and Marne-la-Vallée (*Le Monde*, 13th, 17th, 18th November 1995). According to reports of the national march of November 21st, IUT students from Paris, Orléans, Metz, Pau, Nancy and Lyon took part (*L'Humanité*, 22nd November 1995; *Le Monde*, 23rd November 1995). IUT students appeared more likely to join protests where there was a university in the vicinity, although this was not always the case (*Le Monde*, 23rd November 1995).

In mid-November, *lycée* students joined the protests, although unfortunately information about them is limited. According to one report, there were often twice as many *lycée* students on the streets as their counterparts in higher education (*Le Monde*, 23rd November 1995). Students in the elite *lycées* of central Paris (Condorcet, Renoir de Paris) and also the Paris suburbs (Montreuil, Vitry, Clamart and Sceaux for example) turned out to demonstrate on November 21st (*L'Humanité*, 22nd November 1995). In Lyon, most of the participants appear to have been *lycée* students (Bauby & Gerber, 1996: 267). In the provinces, many *lycée* students took to the streets in towns where there was no university (*Le Monde*, 23rd November 1995). According to one report, *lycée* students dominated the protests in the north west of France in towns such as Rouen, Lorient,

Vannes, Le Mans and Cherbourg (*L'Humanité*, 22nd November 1995) and also turned out in fairly large numbers for the second national day of action of November 30th (*Le Monde*, 1st December 1995). *Lycée* students and even pupils in *collèges* in some towns such as Le Havre and Nantes protested well into December (*L'Humanité*, 18th December 1995)

Students' motives

The protests in universities were centred primarily on local grievances and demands. Students in Rouen and Toulouse Paul-Sabatier protested against poor working conditions and staff shortages (*Le Monde*, 1st November 1995; Bauby & Gerber, 1996: 254). In Metz, students opposed an increase in supplementary enrollment fees and the imposition of stricter selection between DEUG and degree courses (*Le Monde*, 12-13th, 15th November 1995). Architecture students opposed the transfer of responsibility for their faculty from the ministry of education to the ministry of culture, fearing a reduction in their budget by comparison with students in other disciplines (*Le Monde*, 20th November 1995). Student activists in Nanterre protested against the financing of a new private university (Le Pôle Léonard de Vinci) with public funds, as did students in Brittany who opposed the construction of the private Kerlann University (*Le Monde*, 30th November 1995).

The government's agreement with Rouen triggered a series of similar claims from students elsewhere. Students in Metz demanded 11 million francs, and their counterparts in Orléans demanded 13 million francs. The firm stance of students in Rouen, who had refused the government's initial agreement of 6 million francs, encouraged others to adopt similar tactics. Students asserted for instance that, 'Rouen a gagné, Toulouse gagnera' (Bauby & Gerber, 1996: 256-257). Some were indignant that Rouen had 'won' while they had not gained anything. A student from Paul-Sabatier lamented, 'C'est Toulouse qui rame et c'est Rouen qui empoche' (*Libération*, 4-5th November 1995). The general sentiment among protesters on the streets was that, the more noise they made and the stronger their numerical power, the more money they would receive. Students chanted 'Si tu veux un bon budget, tape du pied et fais du bruit' and 'La lutte paie' (*Le Monde*, 1st November 1995). Student protesters' goal of securing more funding is reminiscent of *lycée* students' demands for money in 1990:

Pas 1, pas 2, pas 10, pas 11, mais 12 millions
Du fric et non des flics
Bayrou donnes-nous nos 11 millions
Il était un petit ministre, qui n'avait jamais calculé, ohé ohé
Des sous pour une université de qualité
Aucune, aucune, aucune hésitation, nous voulons du pognon
Bayrou, on veut nos 2 milliards
Entre Bayrou et nous, c'est une histoire de sous

(Bauby & Gerber, 1996: 254-268; *L'Humanité*, 16th November 1995)

Students urged the government to respond with an immediate agreement. One leaflet stated, 'L'urgence, c'est aujourd'hui M. Bayrou! Les étudiants ne peuvent pas attendre!'. Others asserted, 'Future now!' and 'Pas de bla bla, il n'y a rien à négocier' (Bauby & Gerber, 1996: 264,266).

Students also highlighted concerns about employment prospects. In Rouen University, a first year student asked, 'Qu'est ce que je vais valoir sur le marché du travail?' (*Le Monde*, 1st November 1995). A protester on November 21st asserted, 'Pour notre génération, c'est difficile de s'imaginer plus tard. Depuis qu'on est jeune, on se dépatouille dans la crise et dans 10 ans, on y sera peut-être encore'. Another student in Nanterre declared, 'Pour l'heure, je suis très angoissé sur mon avenir, surtout que je n'ai pas quelque chose de précis en tête' (Bauby & Gerber, 1996: 266). Students in Toulouse Paul-Sabatier University declared, 'Diplômes dévalorisés, génération sacrifiée' (*Le Monde*, 12-13th November 1995). *Lycée* students in Le Havre warned, 'Lycéens négligés, chômeurs assurés' (*L'Humanité*, 18th December 1995).

Many were frustrated that the Chirac government had not honoured its electoral promise to improve educational provision and reduce unemployment. Their slogans asserted, for instance:

Sous les pommiers, le chômage
On nous a promis des pommes, on n'a eu que des pépins
Tombola Bayrou, tous perdants
(*Le Monde*, 23rd November 1995; Bauby & Gerber, 1996: 274)

Many protesters also expressed disillusionment with politicians:

Ils font tous pour nous décourager, on se fout de nous
Depuis toujours à Matignon, on prend les jeunes pour des cons
On nous a promis beaucoup de choses, en plus, avec l'arrivée de Chirac...qui n'ont pas été faites... tout le monde est déçu
(Bauby & Gerber, 1996: 266)

Some students said they were taking part out of solidarity for others. A postgraduate in Toulouse affirmed, 'Nous, on n'a pas trop de problèmes. Je manifeste par solidarité. Je me souviens comment c'était avant' (Bauby & Gerber, 1996: 266). However, as during previous protests, expressions of solidarity often seemed to mask other motives for taking part. Some protesters were anxious that an extra budget granted to the poorest institutions would translate into a loss of funding for their own. A protester in Sceaux stated:

Nous, on est une université assez privilégiée, le plan que veut le gouvernement, c'est de prendre nos profs pour les mettre dans les facs désavantagées. Nous, on deviendra une fac désavantagée, c'est pourquoi on manifeste par solidarité avec les autres facs. (Bauby & Gerber, 1996: 275)

Students' expressions of solidarity often thinly disguised competitiveness between students in different disciplines and institutions. Many IUT students for instance feared that they would 'lose out' if they did not make their voice heard. An IUT student in Lille asserted:

Qu'est-ce qu'on va obtenir, nous? Est-ce qu'ils vont se contenter de donner des moyens à ceux qui ont crié haut et fort dans la rue depuis des semaines en vue de les calmer; les autres facs n'ont pas trop bougé, c'est qu'ils sont bien logées, ces facs-là on les oublie, on leur donne rien, il faut donc rester mobilisés pour l'instant. (Bauby & Gerber, 1996: 275)

Some IUT students were resentful towards university students who had not acted out of solidarity for them in the past, such as in February 1995 in opposition to the Bardet circular. IUT students in Tours explained:

Il y a eu peut-être une certaine rancoeur par rapport au mouvement de février 1995. Car, pendant ce dernier, les étudiants de fac ne nous ont pas soutenu. Alors, cette fois, quand ceux des facs ont bougé, certains se sont dits, nous, on ne bougera pas. (Bauby & Gerber, 1996: 273)

Many protesters in *lycées* highlighted poor conditions and teacher shortages in their own establishments. However, they also expressed concerns about their status as future university students. A *lycée* student stated, 'Aujourd'hui, nous voulons soutenir les étudiants et les enseignants qui sont en grève, car, en tant que lycéens, nous sommes de futurs étudiants. C'est notre avenir qui est en jeu' (*L'Humanité*, 22nd November 1995).

Some protesters raised the issue of nuclear testing in Mururoa, stating 'Oui à la reprise des essais budgétaires' and 'Chirac, ton cinquième essai nucléaire, c'est nous!' (*Le Monde*, 20th November 1995). Yet, rather than adopting a moral stance about nuclear weapons, many of their slogans and chants revealed a conviction that the money spent on nuclear testing would be better spent on education, 'Du pognon pour l'armée, des trognons pour l'université', 'Les sous de l'armée à l'université' (*Le Monde*, 20th November 1995).

A broadening of themes

From late November, there were disagreements in general assemblies about whether students should link up with the broader workers' protests. Many wanted to preserve the 'independence' of the student protests. In a general assembly in Toulouse, some students opposed the idea of protesting with workers on December 5th, fearing that the trade unions would take over their mobilisation. They eventually agreed to take part in a unified demonstration but under separate banners (*Libération*, 6th December 1995). Others argued that students and workers should join forces and members of UNEF, UNEF-ID and various organisations on the far left called for unified demonstrations (*L'Humanité*, 25th November 1995). They argued that the state's abandonment of the public services was the root of the crisis in education and that, consequently, students' struggle was inextricably linked to that of workers. In general assemblies in Pau and Tours, students voted to demonstrate alongside workers on December 5th (Bauby & Gerber, 1996: 277-8)[28].

In fact, the workers' conflict peaked as the student protests were declining. The national turnout for the November 30th day of action, students and workers included, was around 160,000. Yet, the poor turnout by comparison with other student demonstrations since the mid-1980s cannot be taken to mean that ordinary students were unsympathetic to workers' cause. According to national opinion polls carried out in early December, up to 75 per cent of students supported the broader conflict (Béroud et al., 1998: 302).

The types of connection that emerged between students and workers varied considerably. In Rouen and Marseille, students organised joint demonstrations with workers. A banner heading the march in Marseille asserted 'Cheminots, étudiants, ensembles pour les besoins sociaux, l'éducation, la culture le service public'. In Toulouse, students at the front of the march chanted 'Etudiants, salariés, même combat!', but most demonstrated under separate banners. Workers

[28] In general assemblies, themes such as rights for foreign students and the introduction of a new social status for students were also addressed (Bauby & Gerber, 1996: 199).

and students also marched together in Nantes. However, according to reports from Bordeaux and Clermont Ferrand, on November 30th there were separate demonstrations of workers and students that merged in the afternoon. In Paris there were two separate marches, although a small group of students and railway workers demonstrated together behind a common banner announcing 'Cheminots, étudiants, tous unis contre le plan Juppé'. In Brest also, students and workers marched separately (*Le Monde*, 1st December 1995; *Libération*, 1st December 1995).

A small minority of students took part in workers' demonstrations after November 30th. According to one report, only around 1000 students took part in the December 5th demonstration in Paris, 5000 in Montpellier and 2000 in Lyon (*Libération*, 6th December 1995). On December 7th, small groups of students participated in demonstrations (*Libération*, 8th December 1995; *L'Humanité*, 8th December 1995). Very little mention is made of student participation in the largest workers' demonstrations of December 12th, although some reports note that students took part in Lyon, Marseille, Nantes and Rouen. A report from Bordeaux also makes reference to 'de nombreux étudiants et lycéens' (Bauby & Gerber, 1996: 279). There are isolated examples of links emerging between students and workers after December 12th, such as in Bobigny on December 14th when *lycée* students demonstrated with workers, and in Le Havre on December 16th when *collège* and *lycée* students marched alongside workers (*L'Humanité*, 15th, 18th, 20th December 1995). In Grenoble, around a hundred students and thirty bus drivers blocked a depot (*Le Monde*, 9th December 1995). There is however little evidence that such occurrences were common. As one report puts it, 'Les étudiants étaient là et dynamiques mais finalement pas très nombreux' (*Libération*, 6th December 1995).

Modes of organisation

A number of factors prevented the formation of a national *coordination* structure. Firstly, the protests were centred on local issues. As in October 1990 there was no central theme to facilitate the emergence of unity. Secondly, only around 50 out of 90 universities were affected by the protests. A third factor working against the formation of a national structure was the fragmentation of student organisations and associations in universities in the early 1990s (see Appendix B). This was despite the fact that, from 1994 onwards, numerous organisations unanimously began to call into question the Balladur government's planned social and economic policies.

A *Coordination nationale étudiante* was formed on November 21st, although by this time the protests in Rouen and Metz had already ended. Representatives from around thirty universities, some IUTs and the Schools of Architecture attended the meeting, although it is impossible to ascertain whether they had all been directly elected in general assemblies. Members of organisations, political *groupuscules* on the far left and 'independent' students attended (*Le Monde de l' Education*, December 1995). Any hopes that the *Coordination nationale étudiante* would gain national legitimacy ended with a series of maneouvres and disputes between politicised activists. One account of a meeting on December 1st describes:

une journée et presque une nuit de dupes, un grand moment de happening ininterrompu comme savent les mettre en scène les spécialistes de manipulations de salle et de tractations, redoutables experts de la procédure en votes répétitifs pour savoir comment on vote et sur quoi on vote. (*Le Monde*, 3-4th December 1995)

Activists from UNEF and other groups on the far left eventually took control of the structure. Among their demands were an investment of fifty thousand million francs for universities over a period of five years, an immediate extra budget of two thousand million francs and the requisition of private universities (Bauby & Gerber, 1996: 238; *Le Monde*, 5th December 1995). The third meeting of the national *coordination* culminated in a spectacular walkout by UNEF-ID activists (*Le Monde*, 8th December 1995; Interview with Cécile Frugier, June 16th, 2000). The disorder in Paris prompted provincial representatives to demand that the national *coordination* meet elsewhere. In mid-December, representatives met in Tours University, where proceedings appear to have been much more orderly. However, students in some universities (Perpignan, Angers and Nîmes) where the protests had ended did not to send delegates. Furthermore, many delegates who did attend left before the end of the meeting (*Le Monde*, 15th December 1995). Thus by mid-December, the legitimacy of the national *coordination* was all the more open to dispute.

On a local level, diverse vehicles of participation emerged. Students adopted different names for these, such as *coordination*, *comité de lutte*, *collectif étudiant* and *comité de mobilisation* (Bauby & Gerber, 1996: 210). In some universities and disciplines, representative structures were defined as 'independent' or apolitical'. In La Rochelle University (where the traditional student organisations have little influence) students formed an 'apolitical' *coordination* structure. According to one representative, 'Avec des syndicats, on n'aurait pas été tous ensemble. On serait divisé. Etre ensemble, c'est ce qu'on voulait et c'est ce qu'on a' (*Libération*, 30th November 1995; *Le Monde*, 14th December 1995). In Montpellier, students with no apparent links to any organisation formed a *collectif* (Bauby & Gerber, 1996: 210). Students in the schools of architecture also formed a *Coordination nationale des étudiants en architecture* (Bauby & Gerber, 1996: 191, 269). In some universities, activists on the left and far left and 'independent' students came together to organise protests. In Toulouse, students in Paul-Sabatier, Le-Mirail and the IUT formed a *coordination* structure. As one delegate affirmed, in Toulouse students from the rival organisations UNEF, UNEF-ID, LCR and CNT were able to bury their differences:

Les mandats sont renouvelables à chaque assemblée générale. Parmi les représentants dans la coordination, il y a des syndiqués et quelques inorganisés, mais le choix ne s'effectue pas en fonction de ce critère, il est lié à l'engagement de la personne au sein du mouvement. (Bauby & Gerber, 1996: 199, 224)

There are other examples of politicised activists and ordinary students working together within *coordination* structures. In Metz, students from UNEF, UNEF-ID and the *Fédération des étudiants lorrains* (affiliated to the FAGE) were able to play down their rivalries (*Le Monde*, 22nd November 1995). In the *comité de mobilisation* formed in Nanterre, there was parity between politicised activists and 'independents' (Bauby & Gerber, 1996: 210). In Marne-la-Vallée University, ordinary students did not seem to know that their leaders were politicised activists. One student affirmed, 'Il n'y a pas de tradition militante. Le seul syndicat présent, UNEF-ID, se met en retrait' (*Le Monde*,

22nd November 1995). Yet, a UNEF-ID activist there gave an interview to the press, suggesting that the organisation was active behind the scenes (*Libération*, 14th November 1995).

There is also evidence of tensions between politicised activists and 'independent' representatives. There were disagreements in Metz, despite the efficiency of the *coordination* structure. According to one 'independent' representative, 'On ne se comprenait pas toujours, on n'était pas sur la même longueur d'ondes. Il fallait veiller aussi à ce qu'il n'y avait pas trop de débordements, des choses incontrôlés' (Bauby & Gerber, 1996: 225). In Tours University, there was a well-run *comité d'étudiant*. There was however a dispute between activists on the left and members of the FAGE, who criticised the former's refusal to negotiate with a government mediator (*Le Monde*, 24th, 30th November 1995). In Paris VIII University, Trotskyist activists attempted to gain control of the protests but were opposed by ordinary students (*Le Monde*, 22nd November 1995). In Paris I (Tolbiac) UNEF-ID activists initially attempted to control the *coordination* structure. However, when their rivals from UNEF gained control of the national *coordination* structure, they subsequently withdrew all support. According to one 'independent' representative in Tolbiac, 'Ils ont eu une attitude scandaleuse, et on s'est bien débrouillé sans eux' (Bauby & Gerber, 1996: 226).

On the streets, many student protesters voiced their hostility towards student organisations and political *groupuscules*, as they had done during previous episodes of protest. On November 21st for instance, students were angry that UNEF and UNEF-ID activists were leading the march in Paris. A protester in Paris I University exclaimed:

> *Cela me dégoûte! Pendant les AG, ils se camouflent ou bien ils crient à l'union sacrée en niant toute divergence. Et aujourd'hui, on les découvre, arrogants, uniquement là pour défendre leur boutique.* (*Le Monde*, 23rd November 1995)

On the whole, politicised activists either went unrecognised as such or remained discrete. Known activists were often allowed to represent students on condition that they respected their mandate and set aside their political and organisational affinities. Their failure to do so often resulted in a shower of criticism from 'independent' representatives, who often gave activists from rival organisations no option but to work together within a single *coordination* structure (Bauby & Gerber, 1996: 224-225).

Little reference is made in newspapers and other sources about representative structures that may have been formed in *lycées*. As in March 1994, the participation of *lycée* students took on an ad hoc character. In some towns, such as Rouen and Cahors, university students galvanised *lycée* students into action (*L'Humanité*, 22nd November 1995). A *Coordination nationale lycéenne* is mentioned, although the lack of available information suggests that it did not play a pivotal role in the protests.

François Bayrou's response to the protests

Bayrou attempted to defuse the protests by negotiating agreements with individual universities, firstly Rouen and then Metz. Far from ending the protests, this initiative catalysed a series of claims from students elsewhere. On November 5th, Bayrou unveiled an agreement for the poorest

universities, although this triggered concerns that resources and staff from more privileged universities would be transferred to the poorest ones (*Le Monde*, 10th November 1995). On November 9th when the education budget was discussed in the National Assembly, Bayrou announced that the agreement would be finalised in talks with all ninety university presidents. Following talks, Bayrou unveiled what he called a *plan d'ensemble* which included an extra budget of 200 million francs and 262 new teaching posts. While many university presidents were satisfied, students voted to continue the protests and push for further concessions (*Le Monde*, 22nd November 1995). As the protests gathered momentum, Bayrou announced that he was willing to negotiate with student representatives after the demonstration of November 30th. Following three days of talks with student organisation leaders, representatives from the student *coordination* that claimed national legitimacy, university presidents and teachers' unions, Bayrou unveiled a final agreement (see Appendix C).

Despite students' dissatisfaction with the agreement of December 3rd, Bayrou refused to negotiate any further. The decline of the student protests in early December and the absence of any legitimate student representatives had evidently worked to his advantage. Bayrou's margin for maneouvre had been extremely limited. François Léotard, Raymond Barre and Nicolas Sarkozy had all publicly questioned the usefulness of allocating more money to universities (*Le Monde*, 22nd November 1995). Under pressure to reduce budgetary deficits, Bayrou could never have matched the agreement presented to *lycée* students in November 1990, and his final offer was more the product of a redeployment of resources than any real increase in spending (*Le Monde*, 20th December 1995).

The response of the wider university community

In many universities, staff were sympathetic to the students' cause and in some cases joined the protests. Their cooperation meant that students could participate in strikes and demonstrations in the knowledge that lectures and examination dates would be postponed. The student protests in Rouen were triggered when science lecturers postponed the start of the academic year due to poor conditions and staff shortages. Parents of striking students also formed an action group (*Le Monde*, 29th October 1995). In Paul-Sabatier University, lecturers went on strike with students (*Le Monde*, 15th December 1995). Lecturers and administration personnel also supported students in Montpellier, Orléans and Nice (*Le Monde*, 18th, 24-25th November 1995). However, the participation of teachers, lecturers and other staff was in fact limited to certain universities. In early October, university staff protested in much larger numbers against the planned public sector wage freeze (*Le Monde*, 12th October 1995), as well as on December 7th in response to the proposed reform of the social security system (*Le Monde de l'Education*, January 1996).

Teachers' unions called for their members to take part in national student demonstrations. On November 9th, SNES-Sup, UNEF and UNEF-ID organised a national march, in which the main teachers' unions and parents' associations participated (*Le Monde*, 11th November 1995). Teachers' unions and student organisations formed an *intersyndicale* to organise the demonstration of November 30th (*Le Monde*, 27th November 1995).

Many university presidents also backed the student protests. The president of Metz University, who had been trying to alert the ministry of education of a crisis for several months, wrote a letter to Minister Bayrou stressing the need for more funding (*Le Monde*, 6th, 15th November 1995). The president of Paul-Sabatier University participated in student demonstrations (Bauby & Gerber, 1996: 255). The CPU also supported the student protests. In late October, the vice president of the CPU announced, 'Ces actions ponctuelles dressent un sombre état des lieux d'universités en voie de "paupérisation" ou de "sous-développement"' (*Le Monde*, 1st November, 1995; *Espace universitaire*, 1996: 26). Several university presidents (notably in Metz, Orleans and Toulouse Le-Mirail) initially expressed satisfaction with Bayrou's first agreement, as did the CPU (*Le Monde*, 17th November 1995; Bauby & Gerber, 1996: 260). However, when students voted to continue the protests and push for more concessions, presidents tended to go along with them (*Le Monde*, 19-20th November 1995). In late November, the CPU attempted to devise a common platform of demands with teachers' unions and student organisations. This was not achieved because many of the latter expressed concern that the CPU's demands were too moderate (this prompted teachers' unions and student organisations to form a separate alliance).

To sum up, the October-December 1995 protests were centred on local grievances and demands and mainly concerned university students. The localised nature of students' demands contributed to the structural fragmentation of the protests, as did disputes between various organisations based in universities (notably UNEF, UNEF-ID and political *groupuscules* on the far left). As the workers' conflict peaked in early December, the student protests were on the wane. However, a minority of students (primarily activists on the left and far left) joined forces with workers to protest against the state's abandonment of the public services in general.

(v.) The lycée student protests of October 1998

In October 1998, there were *lycée* student protests in the south of France which rapidly extended to other regions. Students mainly demanded more teachers and better working conditions, and many claimed to be taking part out of solidarity for students in the poorer establishments. There were also student protests against the presence of FN members on school administrative councils. Turnouts for demonstrations were massive: an estimated 200,000 on October 13th; 500,000 on the 15th; and 300,000 on the 20th when students were joined by teachers. Despite the festive atmosphere, groups of youths from inner-city suburbs repeatedly used the protests as a means of resorting to theft and violence.

A diverse cross-section of participants

In late September, there were protests in a number of *collèges* against staff shortages and poor conditions[29]. These were started by parents and teachers, who were often joined by their pupils. In some cases (such as in Cahors) the protests extended to neighbouring *lycées*. On October 7th, several hundred *collège* and *lycée* students in the northern suburbs of Paris demonstrated in front of the ministry of education (*Le Monde*, 3rd, 4-5th, 8th October 1998; *L'Humanité*, 3rd October 1998).

[29] *Collèges* in Cahors, Gennevilliers, Sarcelles, Asnières and Paris are mentioned (*Le Monde*, 3rd, 4-5th, 8th, October 1998; *L'Humanité*, 3rd October 1998).

At the same time, *lycée* students were also protesting in Nîmes and Montpellier. It was the protests in the south of France that gained mass media attention and appeared to catalyse protests elsewhere (*Le Monde*, 8th, 9th October 1998). By mid-October, the protests had extended to central Paris and most other regions.

Students in all types of *lycées* took part in demonstrations, as did students in the private sector (*L'Humanité*, 16th October 1998; *Le Monde*, 11-12th, 17th October 1998). The following account of the protests in Toulouse is typical:

Depuis plusieurs jours, ils font monter la pression dans la ville. Partis 200, jeudi 8 octobre, ils se retrouvent 16 000 aujourd' hui dans la rue, selon la police. Cette fois, la quasi-totalité des lycées de l'agglomération toulousaine est là, les pauvres comme les riches, ceux des beaux quartiers mélangés à ceux du péri-urbain. Les plus jeunes - garçons et filles de second, voire collégiens de troisième- sont nombreux. (*Le Monde*, 17th October 1998)

In Paris, students in elite *lycées* (Henri IV, Fontaine and Chaptal, among others) were prominent (*L'Humanité*, 16th October 1998). In Marseille however, students in *lycées techniques* and *lycées professionnels* situated on the outskirts of the city were more visible (*Le Monde*, 17th October 1998).

A striking aspect of the 1998 protests was the prominence of female students. Several accounts observe that women seemed to equal or outnumber their male counterparts among the protest organisers and often marched at the front of demonstrations (*Libération*, 8th October 1998; *Le Monde*, 14th, 22nd October 1998). Furthermore, many female protesters were from immigrant backgrounds (*Le Monde*, 24th October 1998).

Students' motives

Students had diverse motives for taking to the streets. In an opinion poll carried out during a march in Paris on October 13th, 75 per cent of students said they were taking part as a gesture of solidarity towards *lycée* students in poorer establishments; 61 per cent said they were demanding better working conditions, smaller class sizes and more teachers; 30 per cent said they were motivated by a desire to be treated with more respect by adults (*L'Humanité*, 20th October 1998). Interestingly, the demand for money was not as prevalent as in 1990 or 1995 and protesters mainly highlighted the problems they faced in their own establishments, such as staff shortages, large class sizes, unworkable timetables, poor security and a lack of recreational space:

Allègre, allège nos classes
Profs et moyens pour nous construire, et non la haine pour nous détruire
Deux chaises pour trois élèves
Pas de profs, 40 élèves par classe, c'est trop
Travailler, c'est la santé, mais il faut gueuler pour étudier.
Mon lycée va craquer ... moi aussi
(*L'Humanité*, 14th, 16th October 1998; *Le Monde*, 15th, 17th October 1998)

Protesters claimed that poor conditions and staff shortages were compromising their chances of passing their exams and securing a decent future. On October 15th, a student in Caen asserted, 'Nous sommes motivés, déterminés, c'est notre vie. C'est pas pour le plaisir qu'on est ici. C'est

pour nos études, notre avenir, notre boulot. Enfin, on voudrait bien' (*Le Monde*, 17th October 1998). Many students expressed a desire to obtain the *baccalauréat*:

Et un, et deux, et trois, le bac on l'aura
Classes surchargées, bac menacé
Pas de profs, pas de salles, pas de bac

Other protesters projected further into the future and stressed the link between education and employment prospects:

Donnez-nous des moyens, nous sommes les actifs de demain
C'est notre avenir qui est en jeu
Notre avenir est en détresse
Nous sommes l'avenir du pays

(*L'Humanité*, 14th, 16th, 21st October 1998; *Le Monde*, 14th October 1998; *Libération*, 16th October 1998)

As during previous protests, students in *lycées professionnels* had particular motives for taking part. One student affirmed, 'Nous, on demande une seule chose: pouvoir travailler dans de bonnes conditions pour obtenir notre cap en fin d'année'. He also objected to the fact that *lycées professionnels* were widely perceived as an institution for failures, 'Il y en a marre d'entendre que si nous sommes là, en LP, c'est parce que nous aurions des problèmes. On nous fait comprendre que nous ne sommes pas des jeunes et des élèves comme les autres. C'est dur' (*L'Humanité*, 13th October 1998). Students in some of the least prestigious *lycées* voiced concerns that they would lose their status as a ZEP (*L'Humanité*, 21st October 1998).

As in 1990, protesters in the more prestigious establishments tended to have more qualitative demands. When they did not require more teachers, they demanded 'better' ones. Protesters in l'Essonne were unhappy about their relationship with some teachers, affirming, 'Il n'y a plus d'échanges, certains profs donnent l'impression de n'en avoir rien à foutre'. Others criticised a climate of competitiveness, 'Si ça continue comme ça, profs et élèves seront bientôt des "robots". Ici, on privilégie ceux qui réussissent' (*Le Monde*, 17th October 1998). Students preparing entrance examinations for the *grandes écoles* also demanded 'des profs plus qualifiés pour enseigner' (*L'Humanité*, 16th October 1998).

In Montpellier, a protest against poor conditions coalesced with discontent about the presence of FN members on school administrative councils. Many of the students who expressed concerns about the FN were girls. One female protester asserted, 'Au lycée Joffre, des membres du FN siègent au conseil administratif. Nous ne l'acceptons pas!' (*Libération*, 8th October 1998). Another in the same *lycée* claimed, 'On n'est pas d'accord avec le FN. Ces gens remettent en cause les valeurs de la République' (*Le Monde*, 9th October 1998). Two girls in a *lycée* near Montpellier declared that they were protesting 'Contre le FN et par solidarité; on n'aime pas le racisme, il faut lutter' (*Le Monde*, 15th October 1998). In and around Montpellier, protesters declared:

Pas de FN!
Y'a plus de profs, y' a du FN
Des moyens pour étudier, pas de FN dans nos lycées

(*Libération*, 8th October 1998; *L'Humanité*, 14th October 1998; *le Monde*, 15th October 1998)

At a later stage in the protests, students were angry with the groups of youths who caused violence:

Casseurs, barrez-vous!
La colère sans violence
Vous vous êtes trompés de combat. Pas de place pour la casse

(*L'Humanité*, 16th October 1998; *Libération*, 16th October 1998)

The theme of solidarity permeated the protests, although a close analysis reveals that the expression encompassed a range of different meanings. Occasionally, students expressed credible sentiments of solidarity, notably the antiracist protesters. Some students in prestigious establishments also expressed credible empathy towards their counterparts in other *lycées*. Two protesters in Montpellier asserted:

Tout compte fait, dans notre bahut ça ne se passe pas trop mal. Mais lorsque nous avons appris les conditions de travail ailleurs, on ne se sont pas senties le droit de rester dans les pantoufles. La solidarité, ça existe. (*L'Humanité*, 8th October 1998)

Often however, students' affirmations of solidarity were tinged with ambivalence and thinly disguised self-interest. The following remark is typical of many: 'On est bien sûr solidaire de tous ceux qui luttent, mais on a aussi nos revendications. Nous, on veut que ça change et vite. C'est pour cela qu'on est dans la rue' (*L'Humanité*, 14th October 1998). Another student said she was protesting 'pas seulement par solidarité parce que nous avons aussi des classes à 35' (*Libération*, 13th October 1998). It is also worth noting that solidarity was not always reciprocated. *Lycée* students in Chelles (Seine-et-Marne) ridiculed the 'solidarity' protests of Parisian students. They asserted, 'Il paraît que le lycée Henri IV est en cours mais solidaire avec nous. On va tous demander asile à Henri IV' (*Le Monde*, 20th October 1998). A student in Créteil declared, 'C'est con d'aller manifester à Paris. Là bas, les lycéens ne bougeront pas pour nous. Ils sont superthunés et ne risquent pas de nous soutenir' (*Libération*, 15th October 1998). In some cases, students appeared to adopt the terms 'solidarité' and 'tous ensemble' in a superfical way[30]. Some said they were part out of solidarity without going into any further detail about their motives (*L'Humanité*, 14th October, 1998; Le *Monde*, 17th October 1998). According to several reports, many students took to the streets without banners or slogans and enjoyed the festive atmosphere (*Le Monde*, 22nd October 1998).

Other students expressed disappointment that, having completed the ministry of education's national questionnaire in 1997, their situation had not changed. One protester in a *lycée professionnel* stated, 'On a bien répondu l'an passé au questionnaire des lycéens. Depuis, aucune nouvelle...rien n'a changé' (*L'Humanité*, 13th October 1998). Students in Toulouse also declared,

[30]Some students used slogans that were reminiscent of the events of May 1968 (68-98 en colère!; Mai 68, Octobre 98; 68-98: un goût de déjà vu; Aucune hésitation, c'est la revolution; Dans grève il y a rêve). According to an account of a student protest in Bordeaux, there was a 'foule qui ne prenait pas très au sérieux des slogans d'un autre âge, repris comme de vieilles chansons' (*Le Monde*, 15th, 17th October 1998).

'Nous avons gentiment attendu un an et rien n'est venu. Cette fois, c'est assez' (*Le Monde*, 15th October 1998). Many claimed that the government was fobbing them off with empty promises. A student in a Montpellier *lycée professionnel* asserted, 'On n'en a plus rien à faire des 'peut-être'. On sait que les ministres peuvent faire les choses, alors qu'ils les fassent! Nous, on n'attend plus!' (*Le Monde*, 15th October 1998). Allègre was the main target of protesters' slogans and chants:

Allègre = Galère
Allègre, on croit plus au père Noël!
La France championne du Monde, Allègre champion du mensonge
On se moque de nous, ça ne peut plus durer
Finies les propositions, on veut des solutions
Stop au bla bla
Ras-le-bol de belles paroles!
Stop aux illusions, on veut du concret
Le changement maintenant et pas dans dix ans
Une seule solution, la manifestation

(*L'Humanité*, 14th, 16th, 21st, 22nd October 1998; *Le Monde*, 15th, 17th October 1998; *Libération*, 16th October 1998)

Participants seldom referred to Allègre's proposals for *lycée* reform (see Appendix C). It is possible that many were oblivious to such proposals, although this is not certain. What is clear is that the majority of student protesters' demands conflicted with the minister's proposals. In the streets, there were few calls for a reduced curriculum, more democratic representation for students and the introduction of 'citizenship studies' on the curriculum, all of which were included in Allègre's proposals. Protesters' demand for more teachers was also at odds with Allègre's insistence that the shortages could be solved with efficient management. So too was the demand for a reduction in class sizes, since on this issue the minister had only made a commitment to third year students. Furthermore, there was a contrast between ordinary protesters' demands and the platforms devised within the two 'national' *coordination* structures. In this respect, the *coordination* led by FIDL activists seemed to be particularly disconnected from the grievances and demands voiced on the streets.

Modes of organisation and protest tactics

Thousands of students joined the protests before any attempt was made to represent them nationally. According to several accounts, students' action was largely ad hoc, a 'mouvement spontané né en province qui, depuis son démarrage il y a une dizaine de jours, reste incontrôlé et incontrôlable' (*Le Monde*, 15th October 1998). Many students appeared to learn about the protests via word of mouth or the mass media. The following student in Rennes for instance stated:

C'est dans ma classe que tout a commencé. Hier matin, on a commencé à parler des problèmes des lycéens du sud de la France qu'on avait vu manifester à la télé. En discutant, on s'est rendu compte qu'on avait les mêmes problèmes qu'eux. On s'est donc dit qu'on ne pouvait pas laisser les lycéens du sud seuls dans la grève et qu'il fallait les rejoindre. On est donc passé dans toutes les salles du lycée, puis on est parti en ville. C'est la première grève à laquelle je participe.
(*L'Humanité*, 9th October 1998)

Diverse channels for participation were formed on a local level, although regrettably there is not much information about these. Some were formed by activists in *lycées*, often with the help of

student organisations in higher education or trade unions. In Montpellier, there was a *coordination* structure claiming to represent students in all of the city's *lycées*, which was run from the local university's arts and humanities department. In Marseille, a JC activist created a *Coordination lycéenne pour l'école et sa réforme*, which was run from the local branch of the SNES (*Libération*, 14th October 1998). Other local structures were formed by activists who tried to conceal their political and organisational affinities. In Bordeaux for instance, there was a structure called the *Mouvement Lycéen Bordelais* (MLB). Initial reports would lead us to believe that the MLB was created by ordinary students (*Libération*, 14th October 1998). However, as the protests continued it became evident that several delegates, in all probability the founders of the MLB, were JC activists. This was a fact which the MLB's elected leader and JC activist, Seddik Khalfi, was keen to play down and he repeatedly asserted, 'Nous tenons à notre identité de lycéens indépendants' (*L'Humanité*, 21st October 1998).

There were also structures that were not controlled by any student organisation or political *groupuscule.* Mention is made of a *coordination* structure in Toulouse, where a delegation of students presented registers of grievances to regional authorities. From one of their declarations, it appears that the delegates were not politicised activists:

Toute tentative de récupération du mouvement, par un quelconque parti politique, groupuscule ou syndicat sera combattue et considérée comme un insulte à un mouvement qui se veut lycéen et qui s'est fixé comme but l'amélioration du système éducatif. (*Le Monde*, 27th October 1998)

Reports from other towns and cities observe that ordinary students fiercely guarded their independence and rejected any form of intrusion by politicised activists. In Nîmes and Montpellier for instance, student organisations such as FIDL attempted to gain control of the protests but were largely unsuccessful. According to one report, many students organising the protests on a local level did not have any previous experience: 'Les lycéens apprennent la grève sur le tas' (*Libération*, 14th October 1998). Several other local structures are mentioned, although there is no detailed information about them. In Grenoble for instance, there was a *Coordination inter-établissements* (*Le Monde*, 15th, 17th October 1998), and in Lyon there was a *coordination* structure representing over twenty *lycées* (*Le Monde*, 4th November 1998).

On a national level, two rival *coordination* structures claiming to represent the protests nationally were formed, although only after the national demonstration of October 15th. The first was formed by FIDL and UNL activists (Interview with Céline Bertret, 17th June, 2000). Very few, if any, of those attending the first meeting had been elected in general assemblies. However, a core group of activists claimed that their structure had widespread legitimacy. They were evidently trying to gain control of the protests and establish a national decision-making structure as UNEF-ID had done twelve years previously, and it is no coincidence that UNEF-ID activists attended all of the meetings. One report states, 'Il n'était pas question de laisser apparaître la moindre trace de division interne, et moins encore les signes d'un certain essoufflement' (*Le Monde*, 16th October 1998).

On October 17th, FIDL activists took the further step of attempting to form a *Coordination nationale élargie Paris-Province*. This was unsuccessful, and culminated in a walkout by several provincial delegates who disputed what they perceived to be the hegemony of FIDL activists in the capital (*L'Humanité*, 19th October 1998). According to delegates from Grenoble, 'On ne peut pas se faire entendre à cause des grandes gueules de Paris, Versailles et Créteil' (*Le Monde*, 20th October 1998). They also opposed FIDL's support for a reduced *baccalauréat* syllabus, stating, 'Or, dans nos manifestations, on n'a jamais vu de banderoles sur ce thème!' (*Le Monde*, 21st October 1998). FIDL's endeavors to form a national *coordination* in fact had the opposite effect of inciting provincial delegates to distance themselves from any initiatives based in Paris. Students in Montauban for instance affirmed that their key objective was to form a *Coordination interrégionale* with students from Midi-Pyrénées and Acquitaine. They claimed, 'Cette décision a été prise après la réunion de la coordination samedi à Paris où il nous est apparu que la FIDL voulait récupérer le mouvement. Nous, nous sommes apolitiques et indépendants' (*L'Humanité*, 20th October 1998).

The second *coordination* structure claiming national legitimacy was also formed on October 15th by students on the far left[31]. Activists from around twenty-five *lycées* in central Paris and the surrounding areas attended. They stressed that the *coordination* formed by FIDL activists did not represent ordinary students, and argued that the government was using FIDL as a political tool in order to implement unpopular reforms (*Le Monde*, 17th October 1998). During a second meeting on October 17th, students renamed their structure the *Coordination d'Ile de France* and stressed that, unlike their rivals from FIDL, they were 'independent' and had been democratically elected by ordinary students. In a further meeting, students confusingly renamed their structure again, to the *Coordination lycéenne indépendante* (CLI) (*Le Monde*, 20th October 1998).

The rival *coordination* structures adopted different platforms. The *coordination* led by FIDL activists demanded measures to improve the democratic representation of students and a reduced *baccalauréat* syllabus, in line with Allègre's plans for reform (see Appendix C). FIDL activists thus expressed satisfaction with the minister's eventual agreement (*Le Monde*, 21st October 1998; *L'Humanité*, 23rd October 1998). Among the demands of the *coordination* led by activists on the far left were (ambitiously) an immediate extra budget of ten thousand million francs, the recruitment of 100,000 teachers, a radical reduction of class sizes and greater equality between *lycées.* Delegates also rejected all aspects of Allègre's plans for reform (*L'Humanité*, 19th, 22nd October 1998). Eventually, the rival *coordinations* tried to combine efforts and agreed on a unified demonstration on October 20th. However, various attempts to form a unified *coordination* structure failed (*Le Monde*, 22nd, 30th October, 3rd, 6th November 1998).

As for students' tactics, these did not differ dramatically from earlier protests, although the festive element of demonstrations in October 1998 is striking. Various reports highlight 'une fête spontanée','un joyeux chahut', 'un joyeux désordre', 'des bruyantes balades plus que manifs' and 'une atmosphère très musicale' (*Le Monde*, 14th, 17th October 1998; *Libération*, 8th October 1998).

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[31] Among the organisations represented were JC, JCR, SL-UNEF, LO and the CNT (*Le Monde*, 17th October 1998; *L'Humanité*, 17th October 1998).

This again raises the possibility that, for some students, the protests were a pretext to enjoy the festivities. As in earlier protests, *lycée* students' preferred means of action was to march in the streets. There is little evidence of students resorting to strike action and, on the whole, they only missed lessons to attend demonstrations (*Libération*, 20th October 1998). However, by comparison with the 1990 protests, students showed a greater propensity for other forms of direct action. On October 15th, students in Rennes occupied public places; in Montpellier they had a sit-in; in Poitiers they blocked main roads; and in Mulhouse and Clermont Ferrand students staged 'giant picnics' (*Le Monde*, 17th October 1998).

Political responses to the protests

Several political parties supported the protests, including the Verts, PS, PCF and FN (*L'Humanité*, 21st October 1998). Allègre expressed sympathy for protesters and claimed to understand their grievances. He made repeated declarations in the mass media that the student protests were justified. Allègre also urged students to be patient, although his own patience was clearly wearing thin when on one occasion he declared, 'Je ne suis pas un magicien et je ne peux pas donner tout, tout de suite' (*Le Monde*, 15th October 1998; *Libération*, 15th October 1998). The minister's first response in early October was to rapidly implement measures to improve student representation via the newly formed Conseils de la vie lycéenne[32]. On October 11th, Allègre met with regional education officers and urged them to see that the new student councils were functioning (*Le Monde*, 3rd, 8th, 15th October 1998). The minister's intention was for students to voice their concerns through the new channels for participation and deal with problems without resorting to direct action. For many reasons however, this was not achieved. In one *lycée* for instance, students refused to accept the mediating role of the new student council representatives (*Le Monde*, 15th October 1998).

Secondly, Allègre promised to accelerate the implementation of proposed reforms (see Appendix C). These had already been set out in the Meirieu report, which claimed to incorporate the opinions and ideas of teachers and students collected during the 1997 national questionnaire. On October 8th, the minister announced a number of measures which included a simplification and reduction of certain *baccalauréat* syllabuses after the Toussaint holiday, as well as a promise to fill vacant teachers' posts (although not by means of new recruitment). Furthermore, Allègre urged students to negotiate directly with regional authorities (*Le Monde*, 10th October 1998). The minister was criticised for using the protests, and notably FIDL activists, to push through reforms that some of the teachers' unions opposed. Allègre indeed engaged in talks with FIDL activists on several occasions during the protests[33]. As I have already pointed out, FIDL's contact with ministers not only damaged the organisation's credibility among ordinary students, but also provided ammunition for its rivals on the far left (*Le Monde*, 23rd October 1998).

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[32]These were a revival of the Conseils de délégués élèves created in the wake of the 1990 protests.
[33]The delegation of October 15th was composed of 5 representatives from FIDL, 2 from UNL, 1 from SL-UNEF and 2 independents. The delegation of October 21st was made up of 5 FIDL activists, 3 UNL and 4 'independents' (*Le Monde*, 17th, 23rd October 1998).

The support of parents, staff and teachers' unions

Many teachers supported students and in some cases joined them on the streets. In Montpellier and Nîmes for instance, staff and head teachers supported the protests (*L'Humanité*, 3rd October 1998; *Le Monde*, 15th October 1998). In Marseille on October 9th, around 800 students marched with 200 teachers (*Libération*, 10-11th October 1998). Some head teachers may have tried to dissuade their students from joining the protests, although it is difficult to ascertain how prevalent such discouragement was (*Le Monde*, 17th, 18-19th October 1998). One report describes a 'mouvement sans opposition', maintaining that the protests garnered widespread sympathy among parents, administration staff and teachers (*Le Monde*, 22nd October 1998). Allègre was indeed a deeply unpopular minister of education and was reputed for his lack of tact and a propensity to make unrealistic promises, such as the creation of an education system 'à zéro défaut' (*Le Monde*, 3rd, 9th October 1998).

All of the main teachers' unions supported the protests, but some went further than others. As in 1990, this support was at first discrete but as the protests extended the idea of a unified demonstration gained favour. The SNES, FSU, FO and SUD-éducation called for their members to join the student protests of October 20th (*Le Monde*, 18-19th October 1998). The SE-FEN, SGEN-CFDT and FEN sent delegations, and offered security and logistical support for the demonstration (*Le Monde*, 21st October 1998).

Trade union support proved problematic for two main reasons. Firstly, ordinary students had often accused the unions of trying to interfere in the past. This partly explains why some trade unions did not call for their members to join the protests, claiming to respect students' desire for autonomy (*Libération*, 20th October 1998). In a thinly veiled criticism of the SNES, the SE-FEN stated, 'La manifestation du 20 doit rester la propriété des lycéens et s'oppose à toute tentative de récupération ou de dénaturation de ce mouvement qu'il soutient depuis le début' (*Le Monde*, 18-19th October 1998). Other teachers' unions called for their members to join the protests but without their union banners. Although union members were given permission to wear badges, they were even asked to remove these at the request of some student protesters (*L'Humanité*, 20th October 1998; *Le Monde*, 22nd October 1998). One report states: 'Les états-majors syndicaux oscillent entre le souci de ne pas apparaître étrangers aux revendications des élèves, et celui de ne pas être accusés de récupération' (*Le Monde*, 18-19th October 1998).

Secondly, some trade unionists supported the student protests but feared that Allègre would use the protests to push through reforms that they opposed. As one account states, 'Leur plus grande crainte serait bien, en participant aux manifs des lycéens, que M. Allègre ne s'appuie sur cette participation comme preuve d'une approbation de sa réforme' (*Le Monde*, 18-19th October 1998). The different stances of the trade unions are evident in their responses to Allègre's agreement of October 21st. While the SNES and FSU rejected the agreement, FEN and SE-FEN were more satisfied (*Le Monde*, 23rd October 1998).

In October 1998 then, there was a wave of *lycée* student protests that was triggered by poor conditions, teacher shortages and opposition to the presence of FN members on school governing councils. As the protests gathered momentum, a diverse cross-section of students became visible on the streets and the theme of 'solidarity' became prominent. As in 1990, the protests were characterised by the formation of two rival *coordination* structures based in Paris, the first by FIDL activists and the second by activists on the far left. Their legitimacy was again disputed by provincial students who formed diverse representative structures of their own. Although some students and teachers expressed dissatisfaction with Allègre's agreement of November 21st, the protests lost momentum after the Toussaint holiday.

(vi.) Protests in the least prestigious lycées and collèges

Two further episodes of protest deserve brief analysis because they exemplify the specific grievances of students in the least prestigious establishments. In February 1998, teachers and parents of students in *lycées* and *collèges* in Seine-Saint-Denis protested to demand more funding. On March 3rd, Allègre unveiled an agreement to bring Seine-Saint-Denis in line with other departments, but this was rejected by protesters. In March, students in *collèges* and *lycées* joined the protests. Repeatedly, several thousand teachers, parents and students demonstrated in central Paris. The newspaper *L'Humanité* estimated that on March 26th 13,000 marched in the capital (*L'Humanité*, 27th March 1998). On one occasion, students demonstrated outside the elite Lycée Louis-le-Grand in central Paris which had obtained 300 million francs from the regional council (*L'Humanité*, 3rd April 1998).

Protesters consistently highlighted the status of Seine-Saint-Denis as the department with the poorest education provision in France, and demanded greater equality of opportunity for young people. They also underscored the stigma of being in the least prestigious establishments:

On veut des moyens, on n'est pas des moins que rien
Non au ghetto, oui au plan d'urgence
Nous voulons, nous aurons une école de qualité pour tous
Pour avoir un avenir, donnez-nous les moyens de réussir
Investir dans l'école, c'est l'avenir du pays
(*L'Humanité*, 27th March, 4th April 1998).

As one student put it, 'La Seine-Saint-Denis a une mauvaise réputation. On veut avoir les mêmes moyens que les autres départements. Quand tu dis que tu viens de Seine-Saint-Denis, tu es forcément mal jugé. On le vit mal' (*L'Humanité*, 27th March 1998).

The second episode of protest occurred in September-October 1999 and mainly concerned students in *lycées professionnels*. The first protests were started by FIDL and JC activists in the south of France. They sought to build a protest around the accusation that Allègre's emergency agreement of October 1998 had not been properly implemented. This particular grievance was evident in protesters' slogans:

Pas de promesses, on veut des résultats
On nous a allègrement menti
Battons-nous pour un lycée zéro-défaut (*Le Monde*, 30th September, 2nd October 1999)

Although students' demands echoed those of October 1998, many of their comments were on this occasion tinged with lassitude. One student stated, 'On n'a plus confiance...Qu'est-ce qui nous reste? Faire la grève chaque année?'. Another said, 'Toujours la même chose, parce que rien ne change' (*Le Monde*, 29th September 1999). The protests culminated on September 30th in a national demonstration of an estimated 160,000 students throughout France (*Le Monde*, 2nd October 1999; *Libération*, 1st October 1999). On October 19th however, only 6000 students joined a national march that did not receive the official backing of the main teachers' unions, apart from the FSU (*Le Monde*, 21st October 1999).

(vii.) Levels of support and participation

It is not possible to be absolutely precise about the extent of participation in the protests, although it can be measured in two main ways: firstly, by focusing on strike action and, secondly, by estimating turnouts for protest events. The term 'strike' is in fact problematic in the context of student protests because, unlike workers, students do not halt production when they stop work. Furthermore, the Masson Report identifies a number of difficulties in measuring student strike activity: not all students are present on campuses at any given time; strikes may be voted in general assemblies, but not all students may follow suit; and it proves impossible to know whether students are on strike or absent due to cancelled lectures. The Masson Report states that the student strike in November-December 1986 was 'irrégulier dans le temps et variable selon les établissements, les cycles d'études, les disciplines ou les sections' (1987: 20-21). This was also the case of student protests in the 1990s, although in fact the use of strike action declined, especially in *lycées.*

Again, one cannot give absolutely accurate figures relating to turnouts for demonstrations and estimates vary according to whether they emanate from police and political authorities, civil servants, the mass media or protest organisers[34]. For example, political authorities estimated a turnout of 200,000 for the demonstration of December 4th 1986 in Paris; *Le Monde* gave a figure of 500,000; and protest organisers said that around a million students had turned out to demonstrate (Masson Report, 1987: 255-261). The estimates cited in this thesis are drawn from *Le Monde* given that they most often represent a middle ground between official figures and those provided by organisers.

The largest student demonstrations took place in 1986 and 1998. Working from *Le Monde*'s estimate of 600,000 protesters throughout France on November 27th 1986, the Masson Report calculates that approximately one in six university students and one in four *lycée* students joined the protests on that day, and turnouts were even larger on December 4th (1987: 22). On October 15th 1998, an estimated half a million *lycée* students took to the streets throughout France (*Le Monde*, 17th October 1998)[35]. An estimated 300,000 *lycée* students, teachers and parents took

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[34] Various research methods have been designed to measure turnouts for demonstrations. See McPhail, C (1991) The Myth of the Madding Crowd (Aldine de Gruyter); Best, J (2001) Damned Lies and Statistics: Untangling Numbers from the Media, Politicians and Activists (University of California Press).

[35] In 1998, there were just over 2.3 million *lycée* students (1529000 students in *lycées généraux* and *technologiques*, and 815000 in *lycées professionnels*). This meant that approximately 1 in 4 *lycée* students turned out to demonstrate on October 15th (*Le Monde*, 15th October 1998).

part in the national march of November 12th 1990 (*Le Monde*, 14th November 1990). In 1994, participation peaked at around 250,000 for the unified demonstration of March 17th (*Le Monde*, 19th March 1994). In 1995, student turnouts were largest on November 21st (around 100,000 throughout France) and November 30th (160,000, including workers) (*Le Monde*, 23rd November, 1st December 1995). The September-October 1999 protests peaked with a national turnout of around 160,000 students (*Le Monde*, 2nd October 1999).

It is necessary to make a distinction between support for and participation in the student protests. As one would expect, most studies show levels of support to have exceeded actual turnouts for protest events. In Borredon's study, 82 per cent of *lycée* students said they supported the 1986 protests, and 76 per cent said they took part in at least one protest event (1995: 63-65). However, his study relating to the 1990 protests produced some unanticipated results, as only around half of students who claimed to have taken part said they supported the goals of the protest (1995: 63-65)[36]. Borredon's explanation is that a large proportion of participants were in fact 'suiveurs' who were galvanised into action by a minority of highly persuasive students. Once again, his results lead us to question the seriousness of certain students' motives for taking to the streets. For different reasons, Borredon's findings relating to the participation of *lycée* students in the anti-CIP protests are equally surprising. A majority of *lycée* students in his study (79%) opposed the CIP, and almost as many (72%) claimed to have taken part in at least one protest event (1995: 135-136). This begs the question of why *lycée* student turnouts for protests against the CIP were not much higher than they actually were. Borredon offers a number of explanations: dissuasion on the part of head teachers; students' mistrust of the trade unions; the possibility that *lycée* students did not perceive the CIP as an immediate threat; and a desire not to miss lessons (1995: 137-139). Whatever the explanation, many students who claimed to have joined the protests evidently had not.

Finally, the protests attracted a great deal of public interest, which is reflected in the extensive media coverage they received. In 1986 for instance, there were large audiences for television programmes on the theme of the anti-Devaquet protests, as well as a significant increase in national newspaper sales (Masson Report, 1987: 138-154). Opinion polls provide one indication of the extent of public sympathy for the student protests. In December 1986, 76 per cent of young people aged between 16 and 22 said they supported the protests (Bauby & Gerber, 1996: 186). In an opinion poll carried out on 27th March 1994, 66 per cent of those asked said they opposed the CIP (*Le Monde*, 29th March 1994). Two opinion polls carried out during the October-December 1995 protests indicate broad public support for student protesters (*Le Parisien*, 25-26th November 1995). Over 80 per cent of participants in an opinion poll carried out during the October 1998 protests stated that they supported students (*L'Humanité*, 19th October 1998). If we go by opinion polls then, public sympathy towards student protesters between 1986 and 1999 was widespread.

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[36] Borredon's study also finds that in 1986 levels of student support increased as the protests gathered momentum (from 71.7 per cent at the start of the protests to 81.8 per cent at the end). However, during the 1990 protests levels of support gradually declined (from 55.9 per cent at the start of the protests to 42.4 per cent at the end) (1995: 63-65).

(viii.) Summary of key findings

The key findings of this investigation, which will be used in the following chapter to interpret the student protests, are as follows:-

(1) **Protest participants**

Students in the least prestigious *lycées* and universities were frequently among the first to take to the streets (in 1986, 1990, March 1998 and 1999). The notable exception was in March 1994 when students in the selective IUTs and STS were prominent in the early stages of the protests against the CIP. As each episode of protest grew in size, the profile of participants diversified and included students in the more prestigious *lycées* and universities. Female students and ethnic minority groups were also highly visible among the protest participants. Pupils in *collèges* joined certain protests, although information about them is extremely limited. Students in the *grandes écoles* were conspicuous by their absence.

(2) **Motives for participation**

On two occasions, students took to the streets to oppose planned legislation. The prospect of the Devaquet reform in 1986 ignited fears among *lycée* students and university students pursuing DEUG courses that they would be prevented from continuing their education any further. The prospect of the CIP in March 1994 triggered concerns among a broad-cross section of students relating to the devaluation of diplomas and diminishing prospects on the job market. On other occasions (in 1990, 1995, 1998 and 1999), students protested against poor conditions, teacher shortages and inadequate security in *lycées* and universities. Many said that they needed improved conditions in order to pass their exams and secure a decent future.

Although grievances linked to proposed legislation and poor conditions catalysed the protests, other motives for taking part can be identified. Some groups of students in *lycées* and universities went beyond protesting about student-related issues and condemned racism, the use of heavy-handed police tactics during demonstrations, the violence of urban youths, and the state's abandonment of the public services in general. A further minority of *lycée* students demanded greater student representation and freedom of expression in upper-secondary education. Some students (notably in *lycées*) claimed to be taking part out of solidarity towards their counterparts in less favourable circumstances. Other *lycée* students appeared to lack any urgent motives for taking to the streets and enjoyed the festive atmosphere.

It is instructive to note that ordinary students' demands were for the most part pragmatic and centred on specific, short-term objectives (the total withdrawal of a proposal for reform, more teachers, more money, and so on). Most ordinary protesters were unwilling to negotiate with ministers or engage in broader debates around, for instance, the future of the education system.

(3) **The role of student organisations and political *groupuscules***

Activists within student organisations and political *groupuscules* played a crucial but precarious role in the protests. They brought considerable resources and know-how to the protests, which the majority of students did not possess. However, the mass of ordinary students habitually ignored the student organisations and political *groupuscules* or were suspicious of their links with political parties and trade unions. UNEF-ID activists played a pivotal role in the 1986 protests, which can be attributed to their ability to play down their partisan and organisational affinities and be accepted as protest leaders by the mass of ordinary protesters. During the student protests of the 1990s however, the main student organisations and political *groupuscules* became embroiled in a series of partisan disputes and tried to form rival decision-making structures. The result was that ordinary student protesters most often eschewed politicised activists' attempts at leadership.

(4) **Decision-making structures**

The 1986 protests were characterised by the emergence of a national *coordination* structure put in place by UNEF-ID activists. This structure operated according to the principles of direct democracy and allowed ordinary students to make key decisions concerning the tactics and goals of the protests. However, the student protests of the 1990s took on a much more ad hoc appearance. The main student organisations and political *groupuscules* based in Paris formed competing structures, none of which could credibly claim legitimacy among the mass of ordinary protesters. In the provinces, students formed diverse structures. Some were controlled by local activists who either openly declared their political affinities or tried to conceal them. Others appeared to have no formal links with student organisations and political *groupuscules* and fiercely guarded their independence from them. The decision-making structures that characterise the student protests between 1986 and 1999 were highly diverse, but had two key features in common. Firstly, they aspired to a participatory, grass roots style of organisation that rejected traditional modes of leadership. Secondly, the various structures that emerged were for the most part transient. They did not give rise to any enduring channels for student participation, and the vast majority of students returned to their studies once their immediate demands were met. The structures that were formed reflect the pragmatic, short-term nature of ordinary students' objectives.

(5) **Means of protest**

Students' preferred means of protest consisted of marching on the streets. Some demonstrations took the form of local or national days of action that were organised in advance by student organisations, political *groupuscules*, trade unions or alliances that were formed. However, many of the street demonstrations were not planned in advance and took on a chaotic appearance. Student 'strikes', the blocking of transport networks and fundraising activities were among the other means of protest used. Occasionally, students adopted more theatrical means of protest such as the staging of giant picnics, which were primarily designed to attract the attention of the mass media. Throughout the protests, students affirmed a strong belief in the effectiveness of mass protest.

(6) **The role of non-student actors**

Student protesters were supported by trade unions, parents' associations, humanitarian organisations, the CPU and political parties on the left and far left. Notably in 1986, 1994 and 1995, student organisations and political groupuscules formed loose coalitions with non-student actors. However, the alliance between the mass of ordinary protesters and the politicised organisations (especially the trade unions) was often fraught with tensions. At best, students tolerated the presence of trade unionists in protests. At worst, students refused to demonstrate alongside trade unionists and other politicised actors and accused them of using the protests to advance their own partisan agendas.

(7) **The responses of local and central government**

On several occasions, the student protests were backed by local councils on the left and far left, which sometimes provided material and logistical assistance. This was even the case when the left was in government. As for the responses of central government, in November-December 1986 ministers' refusal to withdraw the Devaquet bill, a series of tactical blunders, and the heavy-handed policing of demonstrations precipitated the escalation of the protests and resulted in a political crisis for the right in power. In the 1990s, successive governments adopted a more cautious approach in dealing with student protests, although the outcome was almost always the same. Confronted with mass student protest, governments took heed of students' demands by abandoning proposals for reform and drawing up a series of emergency agreements for education. However, ordinary students consistently expressed a profound mistrust of political leaders on the left and right.

Chapter 5

Student protest in France, 1986-1999: an interpretation using theories of protest and social movements

CHAPTER 5

STUDENT PROTEST IN FRANCE, 1986-1999: AN INTERPRETATION USING THEORIES OF PROTEST AND SOCIAL MOVEMENTS

This chapter brings together theories of protest and social movements and empirical research on the student protests. Its aims are twofold. First and foremost, the chapter interprets the student protests using concepts and classifications of protest and social movements, tackling the question of how the protests should be defined. The central question governing my analysis is whether the student protests comprise a social movement. Secondly, by viewing the student protests through the lenses of different theories, the usefulness of those theories can be tested.

The chapter is divided into five parts. To begin with, the student protests are studied in relation to NSM theories. I conclude that the student protests cannot be wholly defined as a NSM, although a minority of students took up what can be broadly described as NSM causes, notably antiracism. The chapter also questions the value of some of the original NSM theories for explaining shifts in the nature of collective protest more generally in France from around the mid-1980s onwards. In particular, the contemporary relevance of a theoretical distinction between 'new' and 'old' social movements is cast in doubt, and it is suggested that in order to understand recent shifts in real events (especially the emergence of the anti-neo-liberal movement) a general conceptual framework of social movements is appropriate.

The second part of the chapter applies some general conceptual frameworks of social movements to the student protests. It provides a critical assessment of two prominent branches of social movement theory. To start with, the student protests are viewed in light of 'political opportunity structure' (POS) theories that explain social movements almost entirely in terms of the political context in which they emerge and evolve (Kriesi, et al., 1995; Fillieule, 1997). The chapter finds some problems with this branch of theory, notably its relative inattention to the 'subject matter' of social movements, that is to say, the ideas, values and identities that create and sustain them. The chapter then turns to theories that focus on the subject matter of social movements. It considers the academivist perspectives of Béroud et al. (1998) and Bourdieu (1998) in France which, in different ways, consider the student protests to be part of a nascent social movement confronting the neo-liberal order. The chapter proposes that this branch of theory is useful, on condition that we view it as part of the phenomenon itself. In other words, it is argued that academivist theories can be best understood as valuable *to* social movements, as opposed to detached analyses *of* them.

The third part of the chapter attempts to settle the question of how social movements can be adequately defined, and in light of this determine which theoretical approaches to social movements are most insightful. It is suggested that there can be no clear-cut definition of a social movement, for two main reasons. Firstly, social movements are not coherent and unified entities, and can therefore be best understood as phenomena that bear 'family resemblances'. Secondly, social movements are multifaceted in nature and, as a result, different conceptual tools are needed

to understand different aspects of them. Following on from this, the chapter proposes that Eyerman and Jamison (1991), Tarrow (1998) and Klandermans (1997) offer helpful analytical tools for interpreting the student protests, and establishing whether they comprise a social movement.

The fourth part of the chapter uses Klandermans' (1997) concept of a collective action frame to interpret the student protests. It shows that the protests are composed of different groups of students (five in all) with different motives for taking part. Two of the groups can be appropriately defined as a social movement. A minority of students defended NSM causes, notably antiracism. A further minority began to question the neo-liberal order, and can thus be adequately viewed as part of the growing anti-neo-liberal movement. However, the majority of student protesters are shown to lack the qualities of social movement actors. This is because they were primarily motivated by individual self-interest, defended the status quo and lacked any enduring goals.

My findings thus prompt a final question, which is how a phenomenon that principally falls short of a social movement can be adequately defined. The fifth part of the chapter observes that, although the question of what *is* a social movement has received ample attention, the question of how to define protests that *are not* part of a social movement has been comparatively neglected. It argues that the student protests fall short of a social movement but cannot be adequately explained within alternative theories of pressure groups, which appear to be problematic for explaining collective protest in general. The chapter suggests that there is a gap in theoretical scholarship, in that it lacks any adequate means of understanding forms of contentious collective action that fall in between social movements on the one hand and pressure groups on the other. It concludes with the proposal that a 'protest group' category might therefore be useful to form a conceptual bridge between social movement and pressure group theories.

(i.) An analysis in light of NSM theories

Chapter 3 explained that the NSM theories (e.g. Touraine, 1981a; Offe, 1985) were developed in response to the peace, feminist, environmental and other movements that emerged in various countries from the 1960s onwards. While diverse, a key assumption guiding such theories is that the NSMs have features that make them fundamentally different from the capital-labour conflict of the 'old' labour movement. Below, I consider whether the student protests possess any of the features commonly ascribed to the NSMs in terms of their support base, content, form and tactics. Sarah Waters describes the November-December 1986 student protests as a 'resurgence of new social movement protest in France' (1998: 172). However, the thesis shows that only a small element of the student protests can in fact be adequately interpreted as such. Furthermore, it calls into question the contemporary relevance of a NSM framework.

Protest participants

The original theories assert that, as I have outlined in Chapter 3, certain types of people are inclined to participate in NSMs. Firstly, they often observe that NSM participants tend to be young (Inglehart, 1977). Secondly, several theories claim that a particular section of the 'new middle class' is highly represented. This is described as the humanistic subgroup of the new middle class

consisting of well-educated professionals employed in the service, welfare and cultural sectors (see Byrne, 1997: 52-54). Thirdly, certain NSM theories stress that, because many participants are well-educated, they have certain intellectual attributes. They portray higher education as having a radicalising influence and posit that, with its continued expansion, the number of individuals drawn to radical causes has grown. Offe for instance asserts that 'higher education increases the capacity to think (and conceivably to act) independently, and the preparedness to critically question received interpretations and theories about the world' (1985: 851). This prompts Offe among others to identify students along with well-educated professionals among the key actors of NSMs (1985: 834).

Student protesters in France between 1986 and 1999 were certainly young and educated but, in crucial ways, the vast majority do not conform to descriptions of NSM participants. To begin with, it is inherently problematic to view students in terms of a class (in an economic sense). Students are in an ambivalent position from the perspective of class because their class of origin (which is determined by the occupational status of their parents) might not be the class to which they aspire to belong, which might also be different from the class that they will ultimately belong to (which is determined by their future occupational status) and, as a result, we might view students' class position as being in a state of suspension. Setting aside the complexities surrounding students' class position, it is instructive here to try to establish whether many student protesters were from new middle class backgrounds and, following from this, fulfil one criteria by which they might be defined as NSM actors. There is unfortunately no systematic data directly pertaining to the class origins of student protesters, but an approximate idea of their class composition can be gained by studying the determinants of academic discipline, institution and geographical location which, as I have shown in Chapter 2, provide a useful indication of social background.

An investigation of student protesters' backgrounds produces three key findings. Firstly, in November-December 1986, October-November 1990 and March 1998 students from the least prestigious disciplines and institutions – and therefore less likely to come from comfortable social backgrounds – were prominent in the initial stages of protests. On these occasions, students in *lycées* and universities in and around the traditionally working class territory of Seine-Saint-Denis were among the first to mobilise. Secondly, it proves more difficult to determine the class backgrounds of protesters in March 1994, October-December 1995 and October 1998, although they appear to be diverse. The March 1994 protests were catalysed by students in IUTs and STS from varied social backgrounds (see Chapter 2). The first university students to stage protests in October 1995 were from the newer provincial universities where conditions were poorest, although their social backgrounds cannot be confirmed. In October 1998, a broad cross-section of *lycée* students was visible in demonstrations, which suggests that their social backgrounds were also diverse. Thirdly, a significant proportion of student activists who took part in the protests (the members of student organisations and political *groupsucules*) may have been from the humanistic subgroup of the new middle class. Research on student activists in the 1990s suggests that around half have one or both parents who are active in associations, political organisations or trade unions, and that more than half of these were employed in the public sector (*Les Cahiers du Germe*, 1999: 18-19). Overall though, the available evidence does not indicate that student

protesters were predominantly from new middle class backgrounds and, in fact, students more likely to come from working class backgrounds were prominent among the ordinary protesters. In brief, the determinant of class background per se does not appear to be central to understanding the student protests although, as I show further below, the issue of class – or, more precisely, status – does come into play, but in a different way than the NSM theories propose.

Finally, the student protests do not bear out Offe's (1985) argument that higher education inevitably has a radicalising influence and is a fertile ground for NSMs. By the mid-1980s in France, universities (as well as *lycées*) were clearly no longer hotbeds of NSM activity. This is in part due to a decline of NSM activity more generally in France in the early 1980s, which is commonly attributed to a change in political circumstances with the arrival of the Socialists in government (see Kriesi, et al., 1995). However, the decline can also be attributed to a relative shift in students' priorities and values towards more material concerns, which becomes clear when we begin to look at the motives and goals of ordinary students who took to the streets between 1986 and 1999.

Motives and goals

Before starting to analyse student protesters' motives and goals in light of NSM theories, it is necessary to clarify what exactly comprises student involvement in NSMs, which takes on two broad characteristics. Firstly, protests about education and student-related issues can be consistent with NSM themes. This was to an extent the case of student protests in France between 1968 and 1976 that demanded greater student representation and rejected the subordination of education to economic priorities although, similar to the protests between 1986 and 1999, students' motives and goals were in fact diverse (Rootes, 1982). Secondly, students can be among the protagonists of broader NSMs, as they were in the late 1960s when opposing the war in Vietnam, for instance. In both cases, students can be viewed as NSM participants.

My investigation of student protests in France between 1986 and 1999 reveals motives and goals that are consistent with NSMs. Yet, a crucial point to retain is that these do not form the core of the protests, but are one component of them[1]. Firstly, there were claims for greater representation and freedom of expression in *lycées*, both in October 1990 and October 1998. However, these came to the fore in the latter stages of protests and were initiated mainly by FIDL activists who did not represent the mass of ordinary protesters. Both in 1990 and 1998, governments responded favourably to such demands with the creation of new student representative councils and guidelines highlighting students' rights and liberties (see Appendix C), but there is scant evidence to suggest that this is what the majority of student protesters was primarily seeking. Secondly, some students took up broader NSM causes, notably antiracism: in December 1986 for instance, protesters expressed antiracist sentiments following the death of Malik Oussekine; in March 1994 university students protested to demand the return to France of Algerian students who had been

[1] Cvejic outlines some useful criteria by which the core of a protest phenomenon might be distinguished. He states, 'The core group, according to our criteria, consisted of demonstrators who participated in the protest from the first day, were there on an almost daily basis and remained from the beginning to the end' (1999: 68). These criteria guide my analysis of the student protests, although it is impossible in this case to adhere tightly to them given the nature of my empirical information.

deported during the mobilisation against the CIP; and in October 1998 *lycée* students in Montpellier protested against the presence of FN members on school administrative councils.

The original theories do not adequately serve to interpret the NSM strand within the student protests. Students' antiracist protests for instance cannot be explained in terms of class actors struggling for the control of social change (Touraine, 1981a) or opposition to the 'inner-colonisation of the life-world' (Habermas, 1987). Although the genuineness of their claims is not in doubt, the minority of students involved in NSM protest between 1986 and 1999 did not appear to be bringing forward anything radically new or advocating alternative lifestyles. They were not striving against the mainstream precisely because by the mid-1980s many of the NSM values and ideas were already part of the conventional political agenda and wider belief systems. As Tarrow among others observes, although the NSMs originated as radical concerns, many of their ideas have over time been institutionalised and 'domesticated', resulting in the appearance of new beliefs among a broader public (1998: 174-5). The student protests indicate that the NSMs had by the mid-1980s evolved, and could therefore no longer be explained by the theories that were initially developed to make sense of them. In brief, the NSMs were by this time no longer all that new or radical.

What can however be observed from an analysis of students and their collective protests between 1986 and 1999 are some important long-term outcomes of the earlier NSMs. Firstly, research on students in general that is surveyed in Chapter 2 shows that an important outcome of the NSMs has been (as Tarrow among others observe) the integration of some of their values and ideas into wider belief systems. Studies of students in the 1980s and 1990s highlight widespread support for NSM causes, especially antiracism and environmentalism. In Galland et al.'s study for instance, over 60 per cent of students expressed a willingness to join an antiracist or environmental association (1995: 244). There appears then to have been broad support among students for NSM causes, although this seldom translated into active participation. Among students, actual involvement in NSMs was limited to small albeit committed networks of activists within traditional associations and more localised groups[2]. However, they did not often succeed in galvanising large numbers of ordinary students into action. As I show below, unpopular proposals for educational reform and poor working conditions proved much more likely to stir students to protest than NSM causes. Nevertheless, NSM protest did not entirely vanish in France in the 1980s and 1990s, contrary to what analysts such as Duyvendak (1995) have suggested.

A second type of outcome of the NSMs that is manifested in the student protests concerns the composition of participants. The student protests have a strong female and multiethnic composition by comparison with the protests of previous decades. There is no precise data here, but several reports suggest that women outnumbered their male counterparts, and were more prominent protest organisers (Dray, 1987; Borredon, 1995). It is also instructive to note that, by the late 1990s, UNEF, UNEF-ID and FIDL had all had female presidents. Furthermore, reports indicate that many students of immigrant descent joined the protests (notably women). As Adil Jazouli remarks, November-December 1986 was perhaps the first time that young people of North

[2] In addition to antiracism, student activists in this period were involved in the pacifist movement (opposing the war in Irak in 1990-1991), anti-nuclear protest (in 1995 against nuclear testing in Mururoa), and other causes. There is little academic work on these mobilisations, but see for instance Mercier (1993).

African origin in particular identified with a wider mobilisation involving French youth as a whole (*Le Monde*, 9th December 1986). The student protests thus exemplify some significant cultural and societal outcomes of the feminist and antiracist movements, although NSM protest per se does not form their core.

Types of organisation and tactics

The original NSM theories view the adoption of decentralised, grass-roots forms of organisation as a distinguishing characteristic of the phenomenon (Gerlach and Hine, 1970; Offe, 1985). The theories argue that such modes of organisation epitomise the goals and identity of the NSMs (Byrne, 1997: 20). They broadly agree that NSM modes of organisation reflect a profound mistrust of centralised, bureaucratic organisations (established trade unions, pressure groups and political parties). Following on from this, some view the prominence of such organisational forms in terms of a constructive search for alternatives to liberal democracy (Inglehart, 1977), while others ascribe an essentially social role to the NSMs, arguing that their modes of organisation signify a search for alternative ways of life and foster the appearance of new identities. In this vein, the NSMs are often viewed as trying to reconstitute a vibrant civil society (or 'life world') that is autonomous from the excessive bureaucratisation and control of the capitalist state (Touraine, 1981a; Habermas, 1987).

The student protests are characterised by the kinds of ad hoc, grass-roots modes of organisation described in the NSM theories. In November-December 1986, a national *coordination* structure was formed that operated according to the principles of direct democracy and involved ordinary students in decisions surrounding the tactics and goals of the protest. Although student protests in the 1990s took on a somewhat different organisational appearance (in part due to the lack of any credible representative structures on a national level), these were also of an informal and localised character that evoked the NSMs. That students adopted ad hoc, decentralised structures does not however automatically make their protests part of a NSM. The adoption of *coordination* structures undoubtedly reflects a widespread rejection of conventional modes of political participation, as NSM theorists such as Inglehart (1977) propose. Ordinary protesters expressed a profound suspicion of mainstream politicians and political parties both on the left and right. Many also suspected trade unions of trying to use the student protests to serve their own aims, especially in March 1994 during the mobilisation against the CIP. There was furthermore widespread mistrust of the traditional student organisations, despite the key role they played in the protests. Yet there is scant evidence to suggest that this rejection was accompanied by a widespread, constructive search for alternatives to the established political order.

Neither is there much evidence suggesting that the adoption of grass-roots modes of participation signified a quest for autonomy from technocratic control and new ways of life, although Alain Touraine briefly argues that one episode of student protest – the October 1998 *lycée* student protests – consists of a fully fledged social movement centred on a struggle for social and cultural rights. He asserts:

This time, the tone has changed, perhaps because the movement's organization is so weak that the conventional discourses of classic union strategies have not immediately drowned out the voices of the lycéen. (....) What they are challenging, quite apart from their material working conditions, which are in some cases unsatisfactory, is their place in the lycée (...) *The lycéens want to be actively involved not only in the education they are receiving, but also in the changes that are occurring at every level from that of the law to that of individual schools* (...) *These are actors who are making their voices heard, with a combination of projects and criticisms, instead of their action being reduced to either a defence of corporatism or a total ideological negativity that would destroy any real action.* (Touraine, 2001: 71-72)

In making such a claim, Touraine mistakenly attributes the qualities of a small group of protesters to the student body as a whole. As confirmed above, my findings suggest that in October 1998 (and also in October-November 1990) only a minority of students from the more prestigious establishments protested to demand greater autonomy within their schools. More seriously however, the 1998 student protests were not, as Touraine's theory maintains, exclusively social in nature and seeking autonomy from the state. In fact, the vast majority of protesters turned directly to the state to demand improvements in educational provision.

How then can the modes of organisation adopted by students between 1986 and 1999 be interpreted, if they are not evidence of a social movement? My suggestion here is that they can be appropriately interpreted in terms of a process of diffusion outlined by analysts such as Kriesi et al. (1995) and Tarrow (1998). To recapitulate, processes of diffusion are defined as the spread of information, ideas, tactics and organisational forms within and between social movements. As I have explained in Chapter 3, these authors focus on the occurrence of intra-movement, inter-movement and cross-national diffusion. However, an analysis of the student protests serves to illustrate that processes of diffusion can also take place between different types of contentious collective action. In the student protests between 1986 and 1999, an organisational form traditionally associated with social movements (notably NSMs) came to be used by other types of groups that were acting contentiously, but not involved in social movement activity. What can be observed in the student protests is the diffusion over time of an organisational form (but not ideas) from one type of contentious collective action to another.

As I have explained in Chapter 4, the *coordination* structure was initially invented (or at least revived) by student activists on the far left in the early 1970s who sought to create a permanent channel for student participation, counteract the declining influence of the two UNEFs, radicalise students and ultimately form links with the workers' movement. In November-December 1986 however, UNEF-ID activists revived the *coordination* structure but abandoned the radical agenda of its originators: there was a borrowing and adaptation of an organisational form, but not a diffusion of ideas. Through the adoption of a national *coordination* structure, UNEF-ID activists were able to exert a discrete but nonetheless considerable influence over the tactics and goals of the mobilisation while at the same time satisfying ordinary students' demand for so-called apolitical and independent action. In other words, the adoption of ad hoc, decentralised modes of organisation in 1986 appeared to derive primarily from short-term tactical considerations rather than any enduring ideological ambitions.

In the 1990s, the use of *coordination* structures further extended beyond the traditional student organisations on the left and far left. The *coordination* structure was borrowed and adapted by groups who wished to assert their independence from traditional organisations such as UNEF and UNEF-ID which, by this time, had exposed deep partisan rifts in the public domain and seriously lacked any widespread credibility as protest organisers. Non-political student associations such as those based in IUTs in March 1994, and also the FAGE in October-December 1995, formed variations of *coordination* structures to organise collective protests. There is also evidence that groups of students with no apparent affiliation to any association or organisation formed local vehicles of participation that were reminiscent of *coordination* structures although, as I have explained in Chapter 4, regrettably little is known about these. As Chapter 4 has shown, students adopted a variety of labels for these - *coordination*, *comité de lutte*, *collectif étudiant, comité de mobilisation*, and so on – which evoked the student protests of May 1968 and the 1970s. It is however clear that by the mid-1980s such labels no longer had the same ideological connotations. The common feature of the diverse structures formed between 1986 and 1999 was that they were transitory modes of organisation that existed solely for the coordination of collective protest, and disbanded immediately afterwards. Through a process of diffusion therefore, an organisational form revived by Trotskyist activists in the 1970s came to be used by a broad range of student groups and associations. Created for the purpose of radical transformation, the *coordination* model was subsequently (and perhaps ironically) borrowed and adapted by students to articulate a desire not to become embroiled in any enduring type of struggle.

What my analysis of the student protests suggests is that we can no longer assume the use of participatory modes of organisation to be unique to the NSMs, or indeed any other type of social movement. Indeed, a brief consideration of other protests and organisations in France from around the mid-1980s onwards shows that different groups with different aims have used variations of the *coordination* structure. While it is beyond the scope of the thesis to study them in detail here, there are on the one hand organisations such as SUD and ATTAC which adopt flexible, decentralised modes of organisation and are experimenting with alternative styles of politics (see Sommier, 2001). On the other hand, the student protests and numerous workplace-based *coordinations* which emerged after November-December 1986 also favoured flexible, participatory structures, but these were used solely for the organisation of short-lived protests (see Denis, 1996). It is therefore necessary to distinguish between attempts to put into practice participatory democracy within permanent or semi-permanent organisations on the one hand, and the adoption of participatory modes of organisation for the coordination of collective protest on the other, that may or may not be evidence of a social movement. What this essentially means is that (new) social movements can no longer be singled out from other types of contentious collective action on the basis of their organisational structure. It has become increasingly difficult to distinguish social movement protest from other types of collective protest in terms of organisation. Consequently, as I argue below in more detail, the singularity of social movements in relation to other forms of contentious collective action appears to lie more than ever in their ideas and values, that is to say, in their content above their form.

The above point brings me to a final issue that merits brief mention and concerns the tactics adopted by student protesters. As Chapter 4 has shown, these consisted mainly of marching on the streets, but to an extent involved other forms of direct action such as sit-ins, fund-raising activities and obstructing transport networks. According to the original theories, a further identifying characteristic of NSMs is their use of 'unconventional' protest tactics. Offe for instance distinguishes in the NSMs:

> *Protest tactics and protest demands* (...) *and other forms of action making use of the physical presence of (large numbers of) people* (...) *intended to mobilise public attention by (mostly) legal though "unconventional" means* (...) *which emphasise the principle and non-negotiable nature of concerns.* (1985: 830)

As numerous analysts observe, it is clearly inaccurate to portray such tactics as exclusive to NSMs, especially in the case of France that has a long history of collective protest. As Tilly for instance affirms:

> *In France, the rise of new social movements did not mean any perceptible increase in unconventional participation. Such action has been part of the standard political repertoire for centuries.* (1986, cited in Duyvendak, 1995: 19)

In brief, that there is protest does not provide confirmation of the existence of a NSM, nor indeed any other type of social movement. The fact that students took part in collective protest does not make them NSM participants. Protest is a defining aspect of many types of contentious collective action, not just NSMs.

Moving beyond a theoretical distinction between 'new' and 'old' movements

Thus far, my analysis has shown that NSM types of activity make up one aspect of the student protests. There were demands for greater student representation as well as opposition to racism, but these were not the main trigger of the student protests and can be appropriately identified as peripheral themes (see Table 5.1, p.155). My analysis has also called into question the utility of the original NSM theories. This is in part due to their historical specificity, but also their tendency to overstate the defining aspects of the phenomenon. My findings therefore add to a broader body of scholarly criticism surrounding the NSM theories (e.g. Scott, 1990). Features that were once assumed to be exclusive to the NSMs – the use of participatory modes of organisation and protest tactics in particular – are either no longer unique to them or never were, which implies that it is more appropriate to identify the NSMs that appeared in the late 1960s and early 1970s as a subgroup of social movements in general (as do both Tarrow [1998: 141-160] and Kriesi, et al. [1995: xvii]) rather than continue to single them out for separate theoretical explanation.

In any case, the appearance since the mid-1990s of a movement (or cluster of movements depending on how we view it) which challenges neo-liberal ideology and practice has generated a shift in the way that social movements are presently being conceptualised. The argument has gained ground that 'new' and 'old' social movements have in recent years fused to produce a 'yet newer' phenomenon, for want of a more suitable expression, that confronts neo-liberal modernisation (Crossley, 2003). This phenomenon is on the one hand akin to the labour

movement because it explicitly challenges capitalist development in its most recent phase; yet on the other hand, it also addresses issues to do with identity, culture and lifestyle that evoke the NSMs. The protests of the *sans* in France from the mid-1990s onwards are a case in point, because they cannot be adequately classified as either new or old movements. The plight of the homeless, unemployed workers and undocumented immigrants is as much to do with material and economic concerns as quality of life aspirations such as human dignity and social recognition. On an international level, one of the key messages of the anti-neo-liberal movement is that conflicts about capital and labour can be intricately tied up with struggles over identity and ways of life. What the appearance of this movement effectively means is that the usefulness of a theoretical distinction between new and old social movements has expired. Recent shifts in real events appear to have led to a theoretical juncture where, as Sommier states, 'La vision antagoniste anciens/nouveaux mouvements sociaux est aujourd'hui dépassée' (2001: 16).

These developments have both practical and theoretical implications for interpreting the student protests. Firstly, they suggest the importance of an investigation of the student protests within a theoretical framework of social movements in general. Secondly, the prominence of protests that appear to challenge neo-liberal modernisation begs the question of whether elements of the student protests can also be interpreted as such. In what follows, I therefore use some general concepts of social movements proposed in the recent literature to investigate whether aspects of the student protests can be suitably defined as a social movement. A possibility I consider is that certain participants might be appropriately viewed as part of the burgeoning anti-neo-liberal movement.

(ii.) A critique of some theories of social movements

Since the mid-1990s, analysts of social movements in France have been both influencing the development of and trying to make sense of the appearance of a movement (or a 'movement of movements') that confronts neo-liberal ideology and practice[3]. The delimitation of the anti-neo-liberal movement – the question of where its boundaries lie – has proved to be a contentious issue, although analysts have seldom applied any rigorous criteria when approaching the subject. In France, there has been an intense debate as to whether or not certain actors, organisations and protest events since the mid-1990s implicitly or explicitly oppose neo-liberal modernisation and can therefore be appropriately conceived as a component of the anti-neo-liberal movement.

Some recent phenomena in France are more obviously a part of the movement than others, not least because the actors identify themselves as such: without entering into a detailed analysis of them here, examples are the ATTAC organisation that was formed in France and advocates a taxation on financial transactions, the trade union SUD, the campaigns organised by the Confédération paysanne spearheaded by the activist José Bové, and a series of protests orchestrated by various anti-neo-liberal groups during the European Summit held in Nice in December 2000 (see Sommier, 2001). It is however more questionable whether other protests and

[3] For the purpose of this analysis I employ the term 'anti-neo-liberal movement' in the singular to denote the phenomenon, but acknowledge that the various groups and causes that challenge the neo-liberal order might also be adequately construed as a cluster of related movements. In France, the term 'mouvement altermondialiste' has recently become prominent and, while appropriate, does not easily translate into English (see *Le Monde de l'Education*, November 2003).

groups in France since the mid-1990s can be wholly identified as a component of the anti-neo-liberal movement, or at least represent an early expression of it. The large-scale public sector strikes and demonstrations of winter 1995 and subsequent workplace-based conflicts, the protests of the *sans* and mass student protests at least since the mobilisation against the CIP are a case in point. Where many advocates of the anti-neo-liberal movement perceive the emergence of a broad struggle against a common enemy (Béroud, et al., 1998; Bourdieu, 1998), others see a series of separate conflicts, some with a clear 'corporatist' element (Touraine, et al., 1996). Attempts to make sense of recent protests and social movements in France are thus marked by a debate about whether certain phenomena lie inside or outside the boundary of the anti-neo-liberal movement.

The question arises as to whether aspects of the student protests can be adequately interpreted as part of the burgeoning anti-neo-liberal movement. This prompts the further question of what exactly we should see as comprising a social movement, having established in Chapter 3 that the phenomenon can be understood in diverse ways. In what follows, these two questions are considered in tandem. By viewing the student protests in light of different concepts of social movements I try to a.) establish whether any activity of an anti neo-liberal nature took place and b.) in doing so, test the usefulness of some of the main concepts, eventually coming out in favour of a particular notion of a social movement.

Working from a political science perspective, Jordon and Maloney (1997) altogether reject the usefulness of a social movement concept. They argue that the social movement literature gives little 'added value' (in their terms) to a traditional political science approach centred on the study of pressure groups (1997: 2). Among the explanations that they advance are, firstly, that the social movement term is too imprecise to have any analytical worth and, secondly, that the tensions between the various strands of environmentalism (that forms the main focus of their study) are too great to be able to discern a coherent entity. The authors maintain that the social movement literature is not very useful because the phenomenon can be largely explained within a theoretical framework of pressure groups. Yet while Jordan and Maloney's concerns are to an extent justified, they are by no means sufficient to completely discard the notion of a social movement. The essential problem with their argument is that it is based upon some rather outdated NSM theories that, as I have shown, have been largely superseded by more sophisticated insights into the phenomenon. In their rejection of NSM perspectives, Jordan and Maloney mistakenly altogether discard the concept of a social movement. In doing so, all that is left for them to explain is the nature of individual organisations such as Friends of the Earth and Amnesty International, those that have come to resemble what they define as large-scale 'protest businesses' which now operate along corporate lines (1997: 72).

One way of underscoring the importance of a social movement concept is to consider how the study of contentious collective action in general would appear if no such concept existed. To oversimplify somewhat, at one extreme there would be revolutions and at the other pressure groups. Without a concept of social movements, there would be no means of explaining one important source of social change that is generated by contentious collective action but clearly situated in between revolutions and pressure groups. Such a phenomenon does not comprise a

revolution because it seldom aims to forcibly overthrow a government or social order (although social movements and revolutions can be intimately connected). Yet, neither can it be reduced to pressure group activity that consists primarily of attempts on the part of more or less established organisations to influence specific public policies (although there is also an interrelation between social movements and certain types of pressure group). The term social movement therefore has meaning if we understand it as an entity that aims to 'move society' in some fundamental way that is not as radical as a revolution, but more far-reaching than individual pressure group activity. Social movements do not just put new concerns on the political agenda but also seek a broader cultural or societal shift in mindset and/ or behaviour concerning a general issue or social group. It becomes apparent however that, if we conceive of social movements in this way, an important branch of social movement theory is perhaps deficient, or at least not very well adapted to the task of investigating whether a phenomenon comprises a social movement.

A critique of 'political opportunity structure' approaches

As Chapter 3 has shown, an important branch of social movement theory emphasises the political context of social movements through the development of 'political opportunity structure' (hereafter POS) models. Proponents argue to varying degrees that the nature of social movements is shaped by opportunities and constraints determined by the political environment. While some place the POS at the centre of their theory of social movements (e.g. Kriesi, Koopmans, Duyvendak & Giugni, 1995; Fillieule, 1997), others (in my view more appropriately) identify the political context of social movements as one of several themes that merit explanation (Tarrow, 1998). I do not wish to suggest that POS approaches are unsuitable for the explanation of social movements, as the political context evidently shapes their nature. No attempt to understand social movements can be complete without a consideration of the political circumstances in which they emerge and evolve. However, an analysis of the student protests points towards some problems with explanations of social movements entirely in terms of political opportunities and constraints.

Firstly, ideas within this area of research about the French political environment tend to be inaccurate. France is frequently portrayed as a 'strong state' with a capacity to dominate the policy process and limit the emergence and influence of protest and social movements. Kriesi et al. for instance assert that:

> *The French situation of exclusion clearly constitutes the most unfavourable setting for social movements* (...) *The strong French state has the means to implement policies* (...) *the government has the capacity to pursue its own policies.* (1995: 43, 213)

An analysis of the relationship between the student protests and the political environment between 1986 and 1999 contradicts notions of France as a strong state. On the one hand, by no means did the French state have the capacity to implement its preferred educational policies in this period. In the wake of student protests, governments were forced to abandon numerous proposals for reform and draw up a series of emergency measures for education (see Appendix C). In the 1990s, successive governments were clearly anxious to avoid the types of political crisis that earlier student protests had catalysed, and did not have the leverage to freely implement desired policies. Kriesi et al. concede that the strategies of political authorities in dealing with movements can in fact

vary in different policy domains. They posit for instance that, in high-salience policy domains such as national education, political authorities are unlikely to respond favourably to the demands of challenging groups (1995: 97). Yet, in this respect also, an analysis of the student protests suggests quite the opposite to be the case. Challengers to authorities in the domain of education wielded considerable power, at least in their capacity to satisfy their demands by way of mass protest.

On the other hand, student protesters clearly did not perceive themselves as acting within the confines of a strong state. If, following Kriesi et al.'s argument, the French state were strong and exclusive, then students would have refrained from involvement in collective protest, deeming any challenge mounted against the political authorities to be futile. In relation to the student protests however, quite the opposite is the case. There is no evidence to indicate that students perceived themselves as lacking political opportunities to act and, as Chapter 4 has shown, there was a widespread conviction among student protesters (which proved to be justified) that direct action gets results. In conclusion to my first point then, the student protests were shaped by the political context and vice versa, but not in the way that Kriesi et al.'s portrayal of France leads us to expect.

This brings me to a second, related point, which concerns Kriesi et al.'s theory of the motivation to participate in collective action that is outlined in Chapter 3. To recapitulate, Kriesi et al. posit that the motivation to participate in collective action (that is, the translation of 'structure' into action) is to a great extent determined by the structural aspects of the political setting. They claim that motivation derives essentially from the perception of concrete political opportunities to act, identifying four factors that influence the way groups and individuals perceive the costs and benefits of collective action (defined as facilitation, repression, success chances and reform/threat) (1995: 37-40). Kriesi et al. are opposed to purely social constructionist theories that view social movements as processes of 'meaning-giving'. Their standpoint is that, while the motivation to participate is partly a result of the 'framing' of issues and events, it is actually much more important to look to the political context to explain the mobilisation of social movements (1995: 162).

It seems to me that, in order to understand the emergence and nature of the student protests (and ultimately define them), it is necessary to reverse the order of importance in which Kriesi et al. situate grievance interpretation on the one hand and political opportunities on the other. The defining characteristic of the student protests is not that participants acted upon perceived political opportunities (although they undoubtedly needed political opportunities to act). Rather, it is found in the nature of the grievances and claims that they articulated. My argument is that, in order to understand the student protests, we must look closely at the grievances and demands that form their core.

It is plausible that key organisers of the student protests (within established organisations) weighed up the concrete political opportunities to act in the way that Kriesi et al. propose, although the thesis cannot offer any evidence of this. The 1986 student protests are often cited as evidence of political opportunities shaping the emergence and development of social movements (Duyvendak, 1995: 47-48; Fillieule, 1997: 55), and UNEF-ID activists who catalysed the protests evidently

profited from the exceptional context of political *cohabitation.* They were able to mobilise against the Devaquet bill in the confidence of obtaining the widespread backing of other organisations (trade unions and associations) that were opposed to various aspects of the government's neo-liberal agenda and, furthermore, the support of both President Mitterrand and parties on the left and far left. However, Kriesi et al.'s theory of motivation has limits in explaining the student protests. To begin with, the theory stresses the importance of political opportunities and constraints, but is inattentive to other non-political factors that facilitate or restrain the emergence of collective action. As Chapter 4 has shown, student activists in 1986 for instance had extensive resources at their disposal that facilitated the spread of the protests. They had a national communication network, premises, established contacts with other non-student bodies such as trade unions and expertise in organising protests and campaigns. Kriesi et al. focus on what can be called 'external' factors in explaining the mobilisation of collective action. However, they overlook the importance of the different 'internal' resources that challenging groups may have at their disposal. On this point, the thesis concurs with Tarrow (1998: 141) among others, who argue that social movements draw on other resources apart from political opportunities, which are cultural, organisational and practical in nature.

Furthermore, the perception of a political opportunity to act was clearly by no means the only preoccupation of key organisers of the student protests between 1986 and 1999 when they gauged the potential for mobilisation. Key activists' accounts of the 1986 protests (Dray, 1987; Assouline & Zappi, 1987) indicate that one of the organisers' main concerns was not so much whether there was a political opportunity to act, as whether ordinary students would mobilise in large numbers. Quite apart from political opportunities, UNEF-ID activists' decision to organise a national protest also stemmed from signals that ordinary students were prepared to take to the streets to oppose the Devaquet bill. It was the unexpectedly large turnouts for the first general assemblies in Paris XIII University– the potential for mass mobilisation on the ground – that ultimately gave UNEF-ID activists the confidence to organise a national protest (see Chapter 4). Hence, if activists were weighing up the concrete political opportunities to act, they were also evaluating (and trying to influence) the potential for mass mobilisation among ordinary students. My findings show that activists tried to maximise the potential for mass mobilisation by eliminating any potential barriers to participation (for example by making sure that lectures were cancelled) and by raising students' expectations of success (for example by convincing students that other students elsewhere were ready to mobilise).

Most importantly, a POS reading of the student protests does not provide adequate conceptual space in which to analyse the crucial interpretive and persuasive work carried out notably by student organisations. This proved essential in the mobilisation of ordinary students, at least in November-December 1986. As I have shown in Chapter 4, activists mobilised students for action by persuading them of the dangers of the Devaquet bill and, through their speeches, leaflets and posters, helped to convince them of the need to take action. Finally, perhaps the most serious drawback with Kriesi et al.'s theoretical framework is that it does not account for the fact that, in the same political context, interpretations of the same issues and events can be highly diverse. In directing attention away from the processes of grievance interpretation that give rise to collective

action, the 'pure' POS theories cannot adequately explain an essential feature of the protests, which is that (as I elaborate below) students developed varied readings of issues and events and had different ideas as to what type of struggle was needed.

Therefore, in order to understand the mobilisation of the student protests and eventually find a definition for them, it is necessary to look at other factors apart from political opportunities and constraints, especially the underlying motives and goals of participants. This is why Fillieule's POS perspective of social movements is perhaps the most problematic of all, because it entirely omits any reference to contentious grievances and claims. Fillieule asserts:

Nous entendrons donc par enterprise de mouvement social toute organisation, ou groupe d'organisations, mettant en oeuvre des stratégies d'action composées de séries d'intéractions avec des cibles et qui comporte, de manière privilégiée, le recours à l'action protestataire. (1997: 37)

In his emphasis upon the strategies adopted by social movement organisations in confrontation with their opponents, Fillieule fails to explain what types of contentious ideas and claims form the bedrock of social movements: they simply exist and do not require explanation. He is imprecise as to whether social movements must have a radical orientation or can be more limited in terms of their motives and goals, thereby implying that any organisation or group of organisations that makes use of collective protest is effectively a social movement. The result is that the very notion of a social movement becomes rather meaningless and, furthermore, comes dangerously close to reducing social movements to a concept of certain types of pressure group that I analyse below. Fillieule's approach thus exemplifies a lack of clarity within certain POS perspectives about the underlying motives and goals of social movements.

The essential point that I wish to make here is that, contrary to what certain POS theories argue, we cannot achieve a global understanding of social movements without a detailed analysis of their subject matter, that is to say, the issues and problems that form the basis of social movements and the way that participants perceive and interpret them. It is important to make sense of *how* social movements emerge and evolve by considering, among other factors, political opportunity structures, but this must not be at the cost of neglecting *what* social movements represent in terms of their grievances, aims, values and identities. It is only by exploring these factors that we can attain an adequate comprehension of what a social movement is. In order to understand the student protests then – to consider whether they comprise a social movement - it is first and foremost necessary to probe the underlying ideas and grievances of those who took part. I thus turn to theorists who stress the centrality of grievances, aims, values and identity to find an appropriate concept of a social movement. Chapter 3 has shown that there are broadly two types of theory that pay close attention to the subject matter of social movements, which I have identified as academivist theories on the one hand, and academic theories on the other.

The student protests from the perspective of academivist theories

Two groups of analysts suggest that the student protests form part of a broader social movement that confronts capitalism in its latest neo-liberal phase. As I have observed in Chapter 2, Pierre Bourdieu argues that the November-December 1986 protests signified a backlash against the logic

of competition within the education system, growing injustices in the workplace and the failure of elites to find a solution to the economic crisis. A decade later, Bourdieu situates the October-December 1995 student protests squarely within the context of a broad social movement confronting neo-liberal policies and ideology (1998: 32). In *Le Mouvement Social en France* (1998), Sophie Béroud, Michel Vakaloulis and René Mouriaux also (albeit briefly) identify student protests in France since the mid-1990s as part of the burgeoning anti-neo-liberal movement, but part company with Bourdieu by adopting an explicitly neo-Marxist stance. They refer to the March 1994 anti-CIP protests as a prelude to the strikes and demonstrations of November-December 1995 (1998: 161). They also view the student and teachers' protests of March 1998 in Seine-Saint-Denis as evidence of the ongoing struggle between capital and labour (1998: 176-9). While diverging on essential issues, Bourdieu on the one hand and Béroud et al. on the other thus view student protests in France in the 1990s as part of a nascent social movement.

The authors' respective interpretations of recent protests in France are open to criticism on several fronts. As I have shown in Chapter 3, Béroud et al. assert that through collective struggle a class-consciousness was developing, and that the short-term demands of various protest participants combined a long-term project for social emancipation. They do not however provide much concrete evidence to back up such an assertion, despite claiming to have carried out extensive empirical research. The authors also refer to 'l'unité du mouvement social', emphasising the solidarity and collective identity that has characterised various protests in France since the mid-1990s (1998: 60). Yet, they fail to stipulate the criteria by which they determine the existence of 'solidarity' and 'collective identity', and it is insufficient to claim as they do that such qualities exist simply because diverse actors converged on the streets. More seriously, Béroud et al. name the 'enemy' as capitalism in its neo-liberal phase, but the key issue they fail to address is whether large numbers of participants in various conflicts explicitly interpreted their own action in the same way, or were at least beginning to do so. Without entering into unnecessary detail here, Bourdieu can be criticised on similar grounds, with the further problem that, as I have explained in Chapter 3, his work lacks any systematic conception of a social movement.

However, to develop an extended critique of the empirical and conceptual gaps in Bourdieu and Béroud et al.'s respective analyses would perhaps miss an essential point. This is the fact that their work, or at least their work pertaining to social movements, can be best understood as academivist as opposed to strictly academic in orientation. As Chapter 3 has explained, academic theories of social movements try to describe and explain events in the past and present. However, academivist theories go beyond this and aim to understand society in order to change it in the future. The observation that aspects of Bourdieu and Béroud et al.'s work lack academic precision is thus rather off the point if we view these authors as essentially trying to bring about social change by mobilising support for a mass social movement. Indeed, both authors portray themselves as such. Bourdieu publicly asserts for instance, 'Ce à quoi nous pourrions rêver, nous chercheurs, c'est qu'une part de nos recherches puisse être utile au mouvement social au lieu de se perdre' (1998: 65). The fact that Béroud et al. propose a neo-Marxist reading of the protests clearly situates them within an academivist perspective because, as the authors remind us, 'Observateur du processus historique du mouvement social, le marxisme en est aussi acteur'

(1998: 34). Hence, theirs are not so much theories *about* social movements as theories that take shape *from within* them and, as such, this makes them a component of the phenomenon itself. In fact, if we adopt Eyerman and Jamison's (1991) concept of a social movement that I come to below, then the academivist scholars can be appropriately considered as contributing to the cognitive praxis of social movements, as key providers of their underlying ideas. Eyerman and Jamison's theory thus poses the important question of where the underlying ideas of social movements come from in the first place, in answer to which they propose that one origin is the intellectual production of analysts such as Bourdieu and Béroud et al.

To come back to the student protests and the suggestion that they form part of the anti-neo-liberal movement, the implication here is that we must acknowledge the academivist orientation of its authors. Bourdieu on the one hand and Béroud et al. on the other can be best viewed as not merely trying to observe recent social conflicts but also to serve them: they offer an interpretive framework of events and issues that student protesters themselves may (or may not) take up. From an academivist perspective then, the essential question that comes to the forefront is whether these authors inspired or strengthened the student protests in any way. Within the scope of the thesis, it is impossible to firmly establish whether this is the case. However, from the available information, I will make the following observations:-

The thesis can provide no evidence that large numbers of student protesters were beginning to interpret their action in terms of opposition to neo-liberal policies and ideology. It is also important to bear in mind that few students believed in the necessity or possibility of the types of radical transformation that the academivist scholars were promoting. This is borne out by attitudinal research on students in general that is surveyed in Chapter 2 (Galland et al., 1995), as well as the diminished support for student organisations and political *groupuscules* with a radical orientation (Morder, 1989; Galland et al., 1995). Finally, Bourdieu and Béroud et al.'s respective orientations on the far left clearly pose a problem given that many students were suspicious of any type of actor with overt partisan affinities (whether politicised activists, politicians or intellectual 'compagnons de route'), whom they widely accused of trying to 'recuperate' their protests. Bourdieu (1998) for instance calls for a revival of extreme left (Gauche de Gauche) activism, but for most students in the mid-1990s such a notion would almost certainly have had very limited appeal. Put together, the available evidence does not suggest that Bourdieu on the one hand or Béroud et al. on the other would have inspired large numbers of students to support the burgeoning anti-neo-liberal movement. It may however be the case that the small minority of student activists on the left and far left who were beginning to articulate opposition to the neo-liberal order took some inspiration from academivist scholars, although the thesis cannot provide any concrete evidence of this.

To sum up, the distinction that can be made between academic and academivist theories and their different approaches to the student protests raise a number of questions that go beyond the remit of the thesis. Suffice it here to observe that there are often tensions between the two groups of theorists as to what the proper role of a social movement researcher should be. On the one hand, academic theorists often accuse academivists of lacking impartiality, of 'interfering' with the object

of study, of denying conflicts within and between movements and trying to create a single voice (c.f. Verdès-Lauroux's [1998] criticism of Bourdieu). On the other hand, academivists accuse academics of claiming impartiality when it cannot exist, of perpetuating unacceptable arrangements of power, of remaining locked in the ivory tower and disconnected from society itself (c.f. Gordon, 2003). My argument here is that both types of theory can help us to understand social movements as long as we recognise what it is that each strives to achieve, and critically evaluate them as such. The distinction between academic and academivist theories is of course not always easy to pinpoint in practice – the line between them is in fact often blurred – but it is nevertheless an important one that is often overlooked. Academivists can therefore be viewed as meaning-givers and agenda setters of social movements (this is of course if they are successful), often providing valuable 'insider' insights that only close involvement with the phenomenon can afford. A key question that they prompt about the student protests is thus, as I have shown, whether students themselves were inspired by and whether they acted upon their respective interpretations of events and the context in which they emerged. This question is not entirely irrelevant to the thesis, as it provides an initial indication of whether the student protests in fact comprise a social movement. However, academic theories seek to investigate and explain social movements 'from the outside' and, given that the thesis adopts an academic stance, it turns to these to find appropriate concepts for making sense of the student protests.

(iii.) Useful social movement concepts for interpreting the student protests

It is necessary at this stage to propose a useful conception of a social movement from which to analyse the student protests. However, when it comes to selecting a definition from those surveyed in Chapter 3, it becomes clear that none can in fact by themselves wholly explain the phenomenon, for two related reasons. Firstly, as Crossley aptly states, there can be no neat answer to the question of what is a social movement because no two movements are ever identical. Social movements are thus better understood as phenomena that bear 'family resemblances' than as coherent, unified entities (2002b: 1-2). In brief, there can be no 'one size fits all' theory. Crossley explains:

> *Each movement shares some features in common with other movements, without any feature being both sufficiently inclusive and sufficiently exclusive to demarcate and identify the set. What all movements share in common they tend to share with things other than movements and yet those characteristics which are unique to some are not shared by all. Even within the same movement we find diversity, and all movements change.* (2002b: 2)

As Crossley observes however, and as I have already pointed out, the 'messy reality' of social movements does not mean that attempts to conceptualise them are worthless. The fact that social movements are prevalent in society and comprise a key source of social change makes them 'an important constituent element in the world that we seek to investigate and explain' (2002b: 8).

A second reason why no single concept can suffice is that all social movements are multifaceted. To try to make sense of social movements from their origins to their decline and the outcomes they produce, different analytical tools are needed to explain different aspects of them. This is a key proposition of both Tarrow (1998) and Klandermans (1997), whose concepts prove particularly

useful for understanding the protests. In what follows, I thus suggest what some of the main family resemblances of social movements are and, following on from this, identify some useful definitions and concepts that can be applied to the student protests.

What are the main family resemblances of social movements, to borrow Crossley's expression? Above I asserted that social movements are entities that aim to 'move society' in some way that is not as radical as a revolution, but more far-reaching than a pressure group, and it is helpful to adopt this assertion as a starting point. As I have shown, Touraine among other NSM theorists views social movements as 'moving society' by turning away from the state through alternative lifestyles and personal change. I would suggest however that social movements commonly pursue both personal and political change. Demands for legislation and policy change do not in fact preclude the existence of a social movement, and it is common (indeed the norm) for movements to be internally diverse, combining radical and reformist goals, or what can also be termed strategies of mainstreaming and disengagement (Stienstra, 2000: 73). Although they may adopt varied strategies for change, the different actors within a social movement often cooperate with one another, forming coalitions and campaigns around specific issues and problems (although of course social movements are prone to fissures because internal conflicts relating to ideology and tactics can arise). The crucial point here is however that, whether they promote alternative lifestyles or legislation, social movements have as common denominator a desire to bring forward something new or reframe an existing issue or situation in a new way, conveying those issues and problems within the public sphere. At least in their early stages, all social movements strive against taken-for-granted ideas and practices and compel us to question the way we think and behave, that is, our assumptions as to how the world is. As Klandermans aptly remarks, crucial to social movements are actors who:

> *dare to stand up and take the risk and pay the costs of striving against the mainstream, the people who demonstrate the strength of mind to go against the force of habit, and to act on their hopes for a better future.* (1997: 3)

Beyond this however, we might perceive social movements as highly diverse in their motivations and goals. Much of the theory that responded to the rise of the NSMs in the 1970s and 1980s emphasised the non-material or post-material goals of social movements and a surpassing of the capital-labour conflict of the 'old' labour movement. I have suggested however that, especially since the emergence of the anti-neo-liberal movement, this conception of social movements is too narrowly focused. If we consider social movements over a much broader time and space, then their tremendous variety comes to the fore. Some social movements might be viewed as positive and desirable for society (surely few would oppose environmentalism, at least in principle), and others as potentially harmful, although obviously not by those who take part in them (certain nationalist movements are a case in point). Some social movements involve a particular section of society (based on gender, ethnicity, nationality, race, sexual orientation, religion, and so on) while others are universal in nature (environmentalism being the prime example). Some social movements are based on 'bread and butter' concerns (the labour movement), while others have essentially non-material goals (the advancement of human rights or peace, for instance) although, as my brief summary of the anti-neo-liberal movement has indicated, material and non-material

issues can often be intertwined. It is instructive to add that conflicts centred on distributive concerns are not automatically social movements, but become so when disadvantaged groups and those acting on their behalf go beyond disputing *what* resources they are allocated and begin to call into question *who* decides what they get and *how* such decisions are made. Hence, a conflict over labour or resources can be appropriately viewed as a social movement if participants begin to question the overarching political and social system in place, and the underlying assumptions and objectives of elites responsible for the creation and perpetuation of that system (the anti-neo-liberal movement is a case in point). This brings us back full circle to the aforementioned point that, whatever their divergences, all social movements aspire to far-reaching transformation.

A further family resemblance of social movements is related to the ties that bind participants together. As Tarrow observes, social movements cannot be formed by 'ordinary citizens who have nothing in common but a temporary coincidence of claims against others' (1998: 5). A necessary condition for any social movement to emerge and endure over time is the pre-existence, reinforcement or creation a collective identity. Social movements can be viewed as creating and shaping collective identities, with the implication that such phenomena are unlikely to emerge if individuals engaged in conflict are purely 'looking after number one'. It is unrealistic to assert that participation in social movements is not to some degree fuelled by self-interest. Surely few individuals would commit to a social movement without some personal incentive to do so (whether an improvement in their lives or a sense of fulfilment in helping others, for instance). What is important however is that, for a social movement to emerge, the interests of one's group or of society in general – the recognition of a common cause - must take precedence over self-interest.

The organisational structure of social movements is varied. A social movement cannot be reduced to a single organisation, and tends to consist of networks of larger, structured organisations on the one hand and more localised, informal, grass-roots groups on the other. A common view of social movements (especially NSMs) is that they are characterised by horizontal, participatory modes of organisation. However, this is not automatically the case as some movement organisations (such as Greenpeace) have over time become bureaucratised and operate along corporate lines (Jordan & Maloney, 1997: 19). The organisational profile of a social movement in fact very much depends on the level of maturity that it has reached. It is also important to point out that one does not have to be affiliated with any type of organisation to be part of a social movement, although it is essentially organisations that decide the main goals and tactics to be pursued.

There are other family resemblances of social movements that I have already mentioned, one being that all social movements engage to some degree in contentious collective action. As I have pointed out however, contentious collective action characterises other phenomena apart from social movements. It is also important to bear in mind that social movements have a sustained existence over time (over years and even decades). Their character evolves, and their orientation and types of organisation transform. As social movements mature, their demands may appear less contentious, or their organisations may come to resemble pressure groups: this is a sign of their success, that their ideas and practices have become widely accepted and adopted by the broader public. A further family resemblance, which is again shared by other forms of collective action, is

that social movements do not occur in a vacuum. The emergence, trajectory and outcomes of social movements both shape and are shaped by their environment: the mainstream political context, the economic climate, the mass media, the responsiveness of the general public, the prominence of other social movements, the development of counter-movements and so on can all have a bearing on the emergence, trajectory and outcomes of social movements. As I have pointed out in my criticism of POS theories however, social movements are not solely determined by exogenous factors, but have an internal logic of their own: their success depends as much on the creativity, perception, resourcefulness and know-how of social movement participants themselves in response to external actors and situations. To sum up, although all of the aforementioned family resemblances can be identified in other collective phenomena, it is the coexistence of several family resemblances *together* that signal the presence of a social movement.

Having outlined the main family resemblances of social movements, it is necessary to set them into workable concepts and, from these, formulate some researchable questions that can be applied to the student protests. Within the remit of this analysis, I propose that four theorists offer useful definitions and concepts of a social movement. These are Eyerman and Jamison (1991) whose theory I have used above, Tarrow (1998), Klandermans (1997) and Diani (1992a,b), all of whom attempt in varied ways to combine the insights of different schools of thought. I do not wish to contend that theirs are the only theories that help to make sense of social movements. However, of the approaches analysed in Chapter 3, they appear among the most useful, especially in their attention to the underlying ideas, values and identity of social movements. Having studied their respective theories in Chapter 3, below I will recall their principle arguments.

To begin with, Eyerman and Jamison's theory of cognitive praxis proves extremely perceptive in that it is one of few to engage with the question of where the underlying ideas that fuel social movements come from in the first place. As I have explained in Chapter 3, their central argument is that social movements are creators and carriers of new thoughts and ideas, and consist of:

a socially constructive force... a fundamental determinant of human knowledge. It is from, among other places, the cognitive praxis of social movements that science and ideology - as well as everyday knowledge - develops new perspectives. (1991: 48-9)

A valuable contribution of Eyerman and Jamison's theory is its elucidation of different types of actors that they term 'movement intellectuals', that is, 'those individuals who through their activities articulate the knowledge interests and cognitive identity of social movements' (1991: 98). The thrust of their argument is that social movements emerge to a great extent out of the activities of 'established intellectuals', both in academia and popular writing, and that their ideas are subsequently taken up by activists or non-established intellectuals such as students, who translate them into concrete strategies for action (1991: 102). As Eyerman and Jamison point out:

Intellectuals as social critics often play a crucial role in articulating the concerns of emergent forms of protest, putting them into broader frameworks, giving specific protest actions a deeper meaning or significance. (1991: 98)

Above, I have been inspired by Eyerman and Jamison's insights to identify the work of both Béroud et al. and Bourdieu as examples of academivism, that is to say, the work of 'movement

intellectuals' influential in the gestation of the anti-neo-liberal movement. This prompted my initial proposal in relation to the student protests that the vast majority of participants (except for a small minority of activists) cannot be adequately interpreted as part of the anti-neo-liberal movement, for the reason that they did not appear to be either translating the ideas of such intellectuals into practice, or at least through their protests trying to convey similar ideas to theirs.

Below, I draw on the insights of three other scholars. Their theories and analytical concepts overlap to an extent, but I have decided to include all three because each brings something valuable to our understanding of the student protests. As I have explained in Chapter 3, Tarrow (1998) offers a broad conception of a social movement that synthesises the insights of different schools of thought. For Tarrow interestingly, a social movement begins where Eyerman and Jamison view it as starting to decline, at the point where political opportunities arise and are seized upon by movement actors. I contend that we can usefully conceive of social movements as originating where Eyerman and Jamison locate them, but ending where Tarrow leaves off, at the point where social movement activity itself enters into decline but produces significant long-term outcomes. Tarrow's main contribution is therefore to offer a general analytical framework for understanding the nature and course of social movements once they enter the public domain. To this end, Tarrow draws extensively on concepts formulated by other prominent social movement scholars (among them Klandermans and Diani) to explain different aspects of the phenomenon. To recap, Tarrow views social movements as:

> *Sequences of contentious politics that are based on underlying social networks and resonant collective action frames, which develop the capacity to maintain sustained challenges against powerful opponents.* (...) *Collective challenges, based on common purposes and social solidarities, in sustained interaction with elites, opponents and authorities.* (1998: 2-4)

Here, Tarrow highlights four essential properties of social movements: collective challenge, common purpose, social solidarity, and sustained interaction with opponents. He perceives collective challenges that are 'marked by interrupting, obstructing, or rendering uncertain the activities of others' as forming the basis of social movements (1998: 5). He stipulates however that collective challenges are not exclusive to social movements, but can also be mounted by interest groups, political parties and other groups (1998: 5). Tarrow thus goes on to identify three further properties of social movements that distinguish them from other types of collective challenge. Firstly, social movements are based on common purposes that arise not only out of class interests but other 'common or overlapping interests and values'. Secondly, they 'tap deep-rooted feelings of solidarity or identity' which are strengthened by the use of potent symbols of struggle. Thirdly, social movements engage in sustained interaction with adversaries, and both shape and are shaped by this interaction (1998: 6).

A key concept Tarrow uses is the collective action frame, which helps to elucidate the fact that different people can interpreted the same events or a situation in different ways, thus inspiring different meanings. Tarrow's version of a collective action frame draws heavily on the insights of Snow (1986, 1988) and his collaborators, who were among the first to use it. In my analysis however, I employ the more recent reworking of a 'framing' approach by Klandermans (1997) because it offers a particularly lucid set of researchable questions for investigating the student

protests. To recapitulate, Klandermans defines a collective action frame as 'a set of action oriented beliefs and meanings that inspire and legitimate social movement activities and campaigns' (1997: 17). Klandermans identifies three components that constitute a collective action frame: a sense of injustice, an element of identity (or consciousness), and an element of agency. He posits that a sense of injustice can arise in three possible situations: when people come to believe that the inequality they are subject to is illegitimate; when they have 'suddenly imposed grievances' following an unexpected event; and when people come to believe that their moral principles have been violated in some way. As for the component of identity, this comprises the development of an oppositional consciousness, a clear sense of 'them and us' (1997: 39-41). Finally, a factor of agency consists of 'the belief that one can alter conditions or policies through collective action', that is to say, the formulation of possible solutions and a sense of what is to be done (1997: 19). Below, I situate the student protests within a theoretical framework of a collective action frame.

Diani offers several useful analytical tools for understanding social movements, but the particular aspect of his work that I wish to reflect on below concerns his interpretation of collective identity and, in particular, the criteria that he recommends for identifying and delineating social movements. To recapitulate, for Diani:

A social movement is a network of informal interactions between a plurality of individuals, groups and / or organisations, engaged in a political or cultural conflict, on the basis of a shared collective identity. (1992a: 13)

Diani's understanding of a social movement in fact complements Klandermans' concept of a frame because the notion of collective identity is central to both. There is however a difference in the respective criteria that they recommend for identifying and delineating social movements and, depending on whose criteria we adopt, our understanding of the student protests might alter. Klandermans' concept lends itself to a nominalist approach, that is, 'one that is based on the researchers' own perceptions and constructs' (see Saunders, 2002: 6). However, Diani recommends that we combine realist and nominalist criteria, that is, rely not only on the objective criteria of the researcher to identify a social movement but also the subjective interpretations of the actors themselves (1992b: 107,112). According to one of Diani's criteria, individuals and groups are part of a social movement if they view themselves as such and, therefore, *if they say they are* (see Saunders, 2002: 5). To be fair, Diani concedes that the criterion of self-definition may not by itself suffice to identify a social movement, but he nevertheless views it as a precondition (1992b: 112). In order to determine whether the student protests are part of a social movement, we must therefore consider how to decide whether this is the case: are student protesters in a social movement if they (or other actors such as their allies and opponents) say they are or, alternatively, if the researcher says they are on the basis of his or her own criteria? In what follows, the question of what students say they are – and how as a researcher to respond to this - is paramount but proves problematic.

A critique of realist criteria for defining the student protests

According to Diani's criterion, a collective action is part of a social movement if those involved think of and assert themselves as such. This proposition is thought provoking, but when we try to apply it to the student protests two essential problems come to the fore. Firstly, Diani's criterion presupposes that student protesters unfailingly mean what they say. It does not allow for the possibility that student protesters may publicly define themselves in one way, but in other circumstances or in private define themselves in quite another way. We know this to have been the case of some (but not all) student protesters because we can compare empirical information about them gathered during the protests as they unfolded on the one hand, and information gathered in the weeks after the protests on the other hand (see Appendix A). Let us take the example of Boumard's interviews carried out in the wake of the November-December 1986 protests, which investigate certain groups of *lycée* students' motives for taking part. His findings strongly suggest that at least one group of *lycée* students in central Paris took to the streets to publicly oppose the Devaquet bill, but in fact had other motives that they concealed during the protests themselves. After the protests, one student who took part concedes:

On avait envie que la classe soit en grève. Il y avait un grand mouvement dans la rue, on n'y connaissait rien, et tout le monde disait qu'il connaissait quelque chose! On avait envie que ça bouge. (1987: 51)

This student said she took to the streets out of curiosity and a desire to be part of a mass collective event, rather than out of any concern relating to the Devaquet bill itself. Yet, during the protests she portrayed herself as having an understanding of the bill. The implication here is that, during the protests themselves, certain students did not say what they really meant.

A second problem with Diani's criterion is that student protesters often use the same expressions but attribute different meanings to them. Particular words that make up the rhetoric of the protests – such as 'movement', 'solidarity' or 'equality' – may have different meanings for different actors involved, which may differ from my personal understanding of them. This is a point that comes to the fore below, but it is useful to begin to illustrate it here. The terms 'movement' and 'student movement' for instance are used pervasively throughout the protests[4]. To my knowledge however, the terms 'social movement' or variations of the term 'anti-neo-liberal movement' seldom crop up. There is thus the possibility that certain groups of participants (with a radical orientation) might actually be appropriately understood as part of a 'social movement' but do not explicitly use the term 'social movement' during the protests. The adoption of Diani's criterion therefore leads us to an impasse, which is that groups who merit the description of a social movement may not say they are part of a movement, whereas groups that do not perhaps deserve the description may call themselves a movement. Crossley neatly sums up this problem, which leads to the conclusion that we can only adequately identify and delineate social movements by imposing our own criteria:

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[4] To take just a few examples here, in 1986 the president of UNEF-ID asserted, 'Le mouvement étudiant est trop fort pour être encadré par qui que ce soit' (*Le Monde*, 28th November 1986); in December 1995 a student claimed, 'Si on continue avec les cheminots et la function publique, notre movement ne sera que plus fort,' (*Le Monde*, 6th December 1995); another student in October 1999 asserted, 'Le mouvement a été étouffé alors qu'il n'y a pas eu de grandes avancées' (*Le Monde*, 8th October 1999).

We cannot define the terms of our definition, other than arbitrarily, because 'collective', 'protest' and other such terms, like 'social movement' itself, belong to our everyday language and derive meaning from their diverse uses in specific contexts. Sometimes they are used this way, sometimes that. (2002b: 2)

We cannot then adopt Diani's realist criterion for analysing the student protests, although it prompts some interesting reflections and, to be fair, Diani himself recommends an integration of realist and nominalist approaches. It is however Klandermans who offers a particularly useful alternative.

(iv.) An interpretation using a 'framing' concept

Below, I interpret the student protests using Klandermans' concept of a collective action frame. This has two main merits. Firstly, it offers some analytical tools to probe beyond what protesters said and identify what they really meant. I acknowledge however that this may not always be achievable: we will ultimately never know what students meant if they did not tell us, or at least leave some clues in their language (although fortunately they often do so). The framing concept nevertheless helps us to get as close as possible to those meanings. The second and most significant merit of Klandermans' concept is that it offers some concrete criteria to help determine whether the student protests comprise a social movement. To recall these criteria, a collective action frame combines a.) a sense of injustice with b.) collective identity and c.) agency, that is, a clear sense of what is to be done and a conviction that desired changes are achievable. If these criteria are met, then a collective action frame is present. Furthermore, I add to Klandermans' concept by stipulating that, if a collective action frame contains a conscious challenge to the established order then it becomes part of a social movement. If however one or more components of the frame (injustice, identity or agency) are lacking, or if desired changes are limited to an isolated issue or policy, then it falls short of a social movement.

By applying Klandermans' concept, it is immediately evident that there is no unified and coherent frame in the student protests. This is because, as Chapter 4 has shown, the protests are composed of different groups of actors with different sets of motives for taking part. In what follows, I thus work from my findings in Chapter 4 to show that the student protests are composed of five collective action frames pertaining to the different groups of participants (see Table 5.1 overleaf). It is instructive to briefly introduce the groups, prior to investigating them in detail. a.) The first group is composed of *lycée* students in the least prestigious establishments who expressed sentiments of injustice at their relegation to the bottom of the education hierarchy. b.) The second group comprises students who aimed specifically to advance or defend their status on the education hierarchy. c.) The third group, which I have already mentioned, consists of students who took up what can be broadly viewed as NSM causes. d.) The fourth group, though extremely small, comprises students who by the mid-1990s were explicitly opposing neo-liberal ideology and practice. e.) The fifth group stands apart from the others in that it comprises mainly *lycée* students whose action was not contentious. Below, I investigate the different collective action frames pertaining to each group, starting with an analysis of *lycée* students in the least prestigious establishments.

TABLE 5.1: THE NATURE OF THE STUDENT PROTESTS

	COLLECTIVE ACTION TYPE	KEY ACTORS	TRIGGER	MOTIVATION	DURATION
1	**PROTEST GROUP A (core group)**	*lycée* students, university students	Devaquet bill (1986); CIP (1994); poor conditions (1990, 1995, 1998, 1999)	desire to promote or defend status on education hierarchy	transient
2	**PROTEST GROUP B (core group)**	students in least prestigious *lycées*	Devaquet bill; CIP; poor conditions (1990, March 1998, October 1998, 1999)	perception of devalued status, fear of social exclusion	transient
3	**NEW SOCIAL MOVEMENT (peripheral group)**	student activists, non-student actors	FN presence (1998); repressive police tactics (1986, 1994); lack of student rights, representation (1990, 1998)	moral opposition to racism and violence demands for more student rights and representation in *lycées*	ongoing movement
4	**ANTI-NEO-LIBERAL MOVEMENT (peripheral group)**	student activists, non-student actors	CIP; poor conditions; economic crisis (1994, 1995)	opposition to the social and economic costs of neo-liberal policies and ideology	burgeoning movement
5	**NON-CONTENTIOUS COLLECTIVE ACTION (peripheral group)**	*lycée* students	presence of other students in the streets (notably in 1986, 1990, October 1998)	curiosity; festive atmosphere; missing classes	transient

a.) *Lycée students in the least prestigious establishments*

The first group that can be identified are students in the least prestigious disciplines and establishments, notably *lycées professionnels* and *lycées* in and around the department of Seine-Saint-Denis. These students took part in all seven episodes of protest. They catalysed the October 1990 protests and staged their own protests in March 1998. Their protests were fuelled by a sense of injustice comprising two key elements. Firstly, students objected to their position at the bottom of the education hierarchy, often perceiving poor investment in their education (and the resulting poor working conditions) as proof of their devalued status. Some students revealed an acute awareness of their 'exclusion from within', that is, their relegation to the bottom of the economic and social hierarchy prior to leaving education and entering the job market[1]. Secondly, linking with the first point, this group of student protesters conveyed a sense of injustice at their negative perception by others, at their stigmatisation as failures. From this perspective, these protesters are reminiscent of the *sans*, except that they can perhaps be more appropriately defined as potential *sans* in the making.

These students' grievances are remarkably consistent throughout the period as a whole. In November-December 1986, students in *lycées professionnels* took to the streets even though the Devaquet bill was unlikely to affect them personally. The protests gave them a chance to publicly voice concerns that they had already been excluded from opportunities that education was supposed to guarantee. One of their posters affirmed for instance, 'Pour nous la sélection a déjà joué, l'université nous est fermée, et nos CAP et nos BEP nous mènent tout droit à l'usine après un petit tour à l'ANPE' (Boumard, 1987: 57). In October 1990, a student in a Seine-Saint-Denis *lycée professionnel* asserted, 'On en a marre d'être pris pour des cons, ignorés, méprisés, relégués dans des bahuts crasseux' (*Le Monde*, 14th October 1990). In March 1998, another student lamented:

La Seine-Saint-Denis a une mauvaise réputation. On veut avoir les mêmes moyens que les autres départements. Quand tu dis que tu viens de Seine-Saint-Denis, tu es forcément mal jugé. On le vit mal. (*L'Humanité*, 27th March 1998)

Throughout the protests, these students began to assert a shared collective identity. To use Klandermans' notion of collective identity, they define a 'we'. The act of taking to the streets enabled these students to come out of their isolation and redefine their individual problems as collective ones. They began to understand that their treatment was not perhaps deserved or due to their own personal failings. A protester in 1986 asserted for instance, 'On avait toujours dit qu'on était des nuls, des cons. Là, on s'est rendu compte qu'on existait' (Boumard, 1987: 54). However, these students did not appear to name a common adversary: they do not collectively define a 'they'. Some were unable to define who or what was responsible for their undesirable situation, expressing a rather undirected and vague sense of 'malaise' or 'ras-le-bol' (*Le Monde*, 24th October 1990). Others blamed ministers of education for the lack of resources granted to poorer establishments, and demanded more money. Notably in October-November 1990, students demanded, 'Du fric, du pognon, de la thune pour l'éducation' (*Le Monde*, 25th October 1990). Hence, these students collectively define a 'we' but not a 'they'.

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[1] The expression 'les exclus de l'intérieur' is taken from Bourdieu and Champagne (1992).

Following on from this, the third component of this group's collective action frame – its element of agency - is also lacking. According to Klandermans, agency is present when a group believes that its demands can be pushed through. Because some of these students did not appear to have any concrete demands, there is thus no agency. They perceived a crisis, but had no idea of what needed to be done to solve it. Others did have a coherent set of demands (centred on the theme of more money for education) which were satisfied at least in part. Despite this however, they cannot be defined as social movement participants. To reiterate a point made above, for actors to be part of a social movement, they must go beyond disputing *what* resources they are allocated and begin to call into question *who* decides what they get and *how* such decisions are made. Because these students did not go beyond demanding a quick fix to their immediate problems, their protests were not part of a social movement.

b.) *Students opposed to the Devaquet bill, the CIP and poor working conditions*

The second group that can be identified is the most visible. It comprises students who perceived themselves as targets of proposed reforms (the Devaquet bill and the CIP), and also students from relatively advantaged establishments who objected to poor conditions and inadequate teaching provision. These students expressed injustice that proposed reforms or poor conditions would prevent them from obtaining a decent education and diminish their future prospects. In 1986, many protesters depicted the Devaquet bill as a move towards the privatisation or 'Americanisation' of the French higher education system, and on the streets they conveyed a sense of moral indignation at the proposals:

Halte aux frics-facs
Non aux facs côtées en Bourse
Les facs, c'est pas Saint Gobain
Contre la fac américaine (*Le Monde*, 29th November 1986)

However, other findings suggest that students were in fact galvanised by other motives that were more to do with individual self-interest than moral concerns. Much of the evidence indicates that many students opposed the Devaquet bill because they believed it would have an adverse affect on them personally. It is no coincidence that the vast majority of participants were in the latter stages of upper-secondary education or the early stages of university education, as they were the targets of planned changes.

Certain analysts were puzzled at many protesters' apparently inadequate comprehension of the Devaquet bill itself. Borredon's study for instance shows that *lycée* students did not have a clear understanding of its content, especially the clauses relating to tuition fees (1995: 30). Analysts were also puzzled that students opposed practices that already existed: selection for instance occurred under the Savary law, both officially and in more or less subtle forms. There is a straightforward explanation, which is that, more than the details of proposed changes, it was the prospect of change itself that triggered students' anxieties. The Devaquet bill and also the CIP that I analyse below were opposed essentially because they generated a climate of uncertainty. Whatever the failings of the existing system, students were at least familiar with it and knew how it operated. In particular, the proposals for change cast many students' expectations in doubt as to

how far they might progress up the education hierarchy. For *lycée* students aspiring to a university education, the bill took away the certainty that the *baccalauréat* alone would secure them a place. For first and second year university students, the bill also removed the certainty that, with a DEUG qualification, they could go on to obtain a degree. Many students were concerned that, with the introduction of variable tuition fees, places on the most prestigious courses would no longer be accessible (even though the proposed ceiling was set at a moderate 800 francs) (see Borredon, 1995: 29).

Many students appeared to recognise that, by obstructing their climb up the education hierarchy, the Devaquet reform would also compromise their future prospects. As Chapter 2 has shown, students in the 1980s and 1990s were acutely aware that diplomas had become the key to social and economic prosperity. This explains why, in an opinion poll of student protesters, only 35 per cent of those asked said they were acting out of opposition to the Devaquet bill per se (although a vast majority stated that the bill was 'unjust' or 'pointless'), while 55 per cent explained their participation in terms of anxiety about employment prospects (*Libération*, 5th December 1986).

While anxiety about the future was in the background of the 1986 protests, it came to the forefront during the mobilisation against the CIP. The key protesters in March 1994 were students who had already achieved a respectable position on the education hierarchy, but feared that their new-found status was about to be devalued by the introduction of the CIP. The CIP extended a sentiment of economic vulnerability to students who had hitherto felt protected by the safety net of diplomas. Students directly targeted by the CIP - those who had obtained or were likely to obtain qualifications up to 'bac+2' level - were the first to join the protests. Le Bart and Merle's (1997) study suggests however that students who did not perceive themselves as targets seldom took part. As I have shown in Chapter 4, protesters highlighted a sense of injustice of being 'sold at cut price' on the job market, and claimed to be defending themselves from becoming a new social category of 'sous-smicards' (*Le Monde*, 12th, 18th March 1994). In targeting young people with qualifications, the CIP seemed to overturn the dominant political discourse of the 1980s which asserted that diplomas were the answer to unemployment. Student protesters feared that the CIP would standardise the social and economic recognition of different diplomas. They were frustrated at having to climb the ladder of education when the ladder was constantly being extended. Moreover, students questioned the usefulness of accumulating diplomas when they were not going to be adequately rewarded for their efforts.

During protests against poor conditions and inadequate teaching provision, students again expressed a desire to pass their exams and secure a decent future. During the October-December 1995 protests for example, protesters argued that poor conditions and staff shortages were compromising both their education and their future position on the job market. Many claimed that they wanted better working conditions in order to improve their prospects. This is reflected in the following university students' assertion that, 'Nous sommes motivés, déterminés, c'est notre vie. C'est pas pour le plaisir qu'on est ici. C'est pour nos études, notre avenir, notre boulot. Enfin, on voudrait bien' (*Le Monde*, 17th October 1998). To sum up here, these students shared the

perception that proposed reforms or poor conditions were compromising their position (or the position that they aspired to) on the education hierarchy and, consequently, their eventual chances on the job market. To come back to Klandermans' concept of a collective action frame, these students were galvanised by a sense of injustice.

However, cracks and strains become apparent in their collective action frame when we try to find a collective identity, a 'we' and a 'they'. On the one hand, these students had little difficulty in articulating a 'they', defining numerous ministers as adversaries. In 1986 for instance, students unanimously targeted Higher Education Minister Devaquet who, at least up to December 4th, was the main object of their slogans and chants. In 1994, Prime Minister Balladur was the principle adversary; in 1995 it was Higher Education Minister Bayrou; and in 1998 and 1999 it was Claude Allègre, the minister of education. On the other hand, these students failed to collectively define a 'we'. This is because students often compared themselves with similar students, essentially defining *each other* as adversaries. We catch a glimpse of this in November-December 1986, when arts and humanities students expressed concerns that, with the implementation of the planned reform, they would be worse off than economics and science students (*Le Monde*, 28th November, 1986). Students' propensity to compare themselves with each other is however much more visible in the protests of the 1990s, especially in October-December 1995.

As Chapter 4 explains, in October 1995 the Balladur government allocated an extra budget to Rouen University following a local student protest. This triggered a wave of student protests in other universities and IUTs demanding similar measures. Many students were angry that their counterparts in other universities had obtained more funding, while they had lost out. Students essentially perceived themselves as competing with other, similar students for the government's funding. The 'they' comprises not only the government, but students themselves in conflict with other students. For example, many students were upset that Rouen had 'won' while they had not obtained any concessions. One student remarked, 'Rouen a gagné, Toulouse gagnera' (Bauby & Gerber, 1996: 256-257), and another lamented, 'C'est Toulouse qui rame et c'est Rouen qui empoche' (*Libération*, 4-5th November 1995). These protesters often explained their participation in terms of 'solidarity', but in fact the term often thinly disguises individual self-interest. This is evident in the following comment of a protester in Sceaux:

Nous, on est une université assez privilégiée, le plan que veut le gouvernement, c'est de prendre nos profs pour les mettre dans les facs désavantagées. Nous, on deviendra une fac désavantagée, c'est pourquoi on manifeste par solidarité avec les autres facs. (Le Bart & Merle, 1997: 275)

This student was clearly anxious that an extra budget granted to the poorest universities would translate into a loss of funding for his own, despite claiming to be acting out of a general sense of altruism. It is of course unlikely that anyone would readily admit to 'looking after number one' during the protests themselves, even if this was the case. During the protests however, the fact that these students were essentially competing with each other and trying to promote or defend their own status is evident. There is too much internal conflict within this group to refer to a collective identity.

As for agency, these students certainly believed that they could satisfy their demands by taking to the streets. Their protests indeed resulted in the withdrawal of the Devaquet bill and the CIP, as well as the announcement of several emergency agreements for education (see Appendix C). This does not however make the protests a social movement. There was widespread recognition among students of a crisis in education, as well as an economic crisis. Especially in the mid-1990s, students questioned the value of diplomas on an increasingly adverse job market. However, their protests ultimately fall short of a social movement because, while participants acknowledged problems with both the education system and the economic system (and especially the treatment of young people on the job market), they did not appear to want any enduring type of transformation. In other words, there is recognition of a 'system failure' but no apparent desire to change the system. This group of protesters (and also those from the most disadvantaged establishments) essentially opposed far-reaching change and strove to maintain the status quo. They wanted to remove what they perceived to be immediate barriers to passing their exams and securing a decent future and, on removing those barriers (or at least having tried to do so), their protests rapidly faded away. These students held successive governments responsible for specific proposals for reform and funding crises, but did not appear to blame them for systemic failings in education or the economy. This sets them apart from two further groups that I identify below, whose collective action frames can be interpreted in terms of a social movement.

c.) *New social movement participants*

There are small groups of student protesters who took up what I have tentatively called NSM causes. Having discussed them earlier in the chapter, I will briefly draw on Klandermans' concept here to summarise their main characteristics. I focus on antiracism, because this was the most salient NSM theme in the protests. In 1986 and 1994, student protests took on an antiracist dimension following the authorities' unjust treatment of students from immigrant backgrounds. Antiracist sentiments were often tied up with accusations of repressive police tactics, and the apparent toleration of such tactics by (right wing) governments. This was particularly evident during sympathy demonstrations in December 1986 following the death of Malik Oussekine. It was also evident in late March 1994 when university students protested against the arrest and deportation of two Algerian students. In October 1998 also, *lycée* students in Montpellier protested against the presence of FN members on school administrative councils.

These protests were fuelled by an unequivocal sense of moral indignation at racism and violence. My findings indicate that students protested out of solidarity towards ethnic minorities, expressing a sense of injustice at the unfair treatment of others. Furthermore, these students appear to have protested out of genuine respect for universal values. As one student asserts, 'On n'est pas d'accord avec le FN. Ces gens remettent en cause les valeurs de la République' (*Le Monde*, 9th October 1998). Unlike the two aforementioned groups, the language of these students does not give away any hidden agenda based on self-interest. Furthermore, the group defined a collective identity, although the 'we' often comprises not only students but a much broader cross-section of actors. Those most committed to antiracist (and other) causes within the student organisations were able to form loose coalitions with other actors. In December 1986 for instance, the death of

Malik Oussekine brought diverse groups into the streets, including students, trade unions, parents' associations, human rights groups and political parties on the left and far left (Assouline & Zappi, 1987). Furthermore, although specific events and issues triggered the protests, the overarching enemy (the 'they') is the ideology and practice of racism. As one student put it, 'On n'aime pas le racisme, il faut lutter' (*Le Monde*, 15th October 1998). This particular group of students can therefore be interpreted as part of a broader NSM although, for reasons stated above, I use the NSM label to denote a particular cluster of movements that have been active for some time.

d.) *An 'anti-neo-liberal' frame in the process of construction*

A small group of protesters highlighted a crisis in the education system as a whole, as well as failings in economic and employment policies. They defended the interests of students in general and other social groups, rather than (or in addition to) their own interests. This group is visible in the November-December 1986, March 1994 and October-December 1995 protests, although not in the protests that exclusively involved *lycée* students. While composed mainly of activists from organisations on the left and far left, it may also include students with no links to established organisations, although there is not enough evidence to establish this for certain.

In November-December 1986, students within organisations such as UNEF-SE and JCR expressed a sense of injustice at the government's apparent move to dismantle the public education system and subordinate it to the laws of the market. Many of the posters and leaflets that announced opposition to the 'Fac Coca-Cola' and the 'Fac américaine' were in fact drawn up by these organisations, although as I have shown their message was subsequently taken up by larger numbers of protesters who did not necessarily share the same objectives. These posters suggest that student organisations and political *groupuscules* on the far left opposed the neo-liberal logic behind the Devaquet bill. However, undoubtedly for tactical reasons, these organisations pushed solely for the withdrawal of the bill and did not explicitly oppose the government's policies in general, at least until December 5th.

In March 1994, student activists and non-student actors (trade unionists, human rights activists and so on) argued that the CIP translated into greater economic vulnerability for all workers, and not just those directly affected. Certain protesters argued that workers should have equal rights irrespective of age, and were shocked at the proposal to exploit young people by taking away their entitlement to the minimum wage. Numerous banners claimed for instance, 'A travail égal, salaire égal' (*Libération*, 4th March 1994). They also feared that the CIP would generate unemployment in older age groups and extend the risk of social exclusion to larger sections of the population. One participant explained, 'Je crois que le CIP, c'est virer des vieux pour prendre des jeunes à moindre prix. On risque de prendre du travail à ceux qui sont déjà en poste' (*Libération*, 4th March 1994). Furthermore, the CIP was interpreted as placing the needs of employers before those of workers. According to one student, 'Le Smic-jeunes est une mesure profondément injuste: elle profite trop aux enterprises, et nous, on va payer' (*Libération*, 4th March 1994). Carine Seiler, the vice president of UNEF-ID, echoed this point by portraying the CIP as a move to create 'des jeunes Kleenex' and a 'main-d'oeuvre malléable' (Bauby & Gerber, 1996: 166).

In the latter stages of the October-December 1995 protests, some students pushed for a widening of demands beyond student-related issues, calling for student-worker unity. For these students, the university funding crisis exemplified the state's abandon of the public services as a whole. They expressed anger with the government and President Chirac for trying to cut back investment in the public services. One student claimed, 'Je manifeste pour la défense des droits sociaux qui sont aussi bien ceux des salariés que ceux des étudiants'; another expressed sympathy for 'les salariés qui en ont marre de payer pour les conneries du gouvernement' (Bauby & Gerber, 1996: 274). A platform of demands drawn up by a *coordination* composed primarily of UNEF, LO and LCR activists in early December was entitled 'La défense du service public' (Bauby & Gerber, 1996: 245).

In March 1994 and November-December 1995, a student-worker identity emerged. Both in 1994 and 1995, activists from student organisations and political *groupuscules* formed coalitions with non-student actors. In 1994, over forty organisations ranging from trade unions to human rights groups mobilised against the CIP and held joint demonstrations (*Le Monde*, 15th March 1994). In 1995, teachers' unions and student organisations formed an *intersyndicale* to organise demonstrations, and numerous local contacts were formed between student activists and rail workers in particular (*Le Monde*, 27th November 1995). In various towns and cities, students and workers held joint demonstrations, with banners claiming 'Cheminots, étudiants, tous unis contre le plan Juppé' and 'Etudiants, salariés même combat!' (*Le Monde*, 1st December 1995; *Libération*, 1st December 1995). In Marseille, students and rail workers marched behind a banner asserting 'Cheminots, étudiants, ensemble pour les besoins sociaux, l'éducation, la culture, le service public' (Bauby & Gerber, 1996: 274-5). One student asserted, 'Si on continue avec les cheminots et la fonction publique, notre mouvement ne sera que plus fort' (*Le Monde*, 6th December 1995). On these occasions, students did not pitch themselves against other students or workers, but identified with each other.

As for agency, a key difference emerges between the first two groups (analysed above) and this particular group. All of them highlighted failings in the education and economic systems. However, only students in this group pushed for a more enduring type of struggle. They protested against the dismantling of the public services, rising levels of unemployment, social exclusion and the type of mindset that puts profit before people. They essentially highlighted the harmful effects of neo-liberal policies, although to my knowledge without actually using the term 'neo-liberal'. While this group did not come up with any concrete plan for systemic change, they clearly believed that the way forward was to join forces with other actors such as trade unionists.

It is instructive here to note that in the wake of the 1994 and 1995 protests some new (albeit extremely small) student groups and associations were formed on certain university campuses, which have an explicitly anti-neo-liberal orientation (SUD-étudiant is one example). By the late 1990s, many of the established student organisations (UNEF, FIDL and JC for instance) had also come to identify themselves as part of a broad struggle against economic globalisation and the neo-liberal order (see Appendix B). In retrospect, the 1994 and 1995 protests appear to mark the point in time when certain groups of student activists began to articulate an anti-neo-liberal

consciousness. Towards the end of the 1990s, it seemed that certain organisations were starting to overcome their traditional rivalries and were more willing than in the past to cooperate with one another (the year 2000 marked the reunification of the two UNEFs, for instance). The protests formed a space in which a new collective action frame began to take shape, one that subsequently fed into a much broader social movement. This frame combines a sense of injustice at the harmful effects of neo-liberal practice and ideology; the formation of a collective identity around opposition to the neo-liberal order; and a belief that an alternative order is possible. Given that these students were active in the construction of this frame, they can be appropriately understood as part of the nascent anti-neo-liberal movement.

e.) *Students without a contentious agenda*

This group comprises mainly *lycée* students who took to the streets once the protests were underway. They can be singled out from the other groups because they do not appear to be galvanised by any credible sentiments of injustice. Often, such students were not inclined to concede to a lack of any contentious agenda during the protests, but did so afterwards. This is evident in Boumard's interviews with students from a privileged *lycée* in central Paris that were carried out just after the 1986 protests. One student who took part states for instance, 'On était forts. C'était la fête' (1987: 51). Another asserts, 'Il y avait un grand mouvement dans la rue, on n'y connaissait rien, et tout le monde disait quelque chose! On avait envie que ça bouge' (1987: 51). Both statements suggest that certain students took to the streets out of curiosity, and a desire to be part of the events that were unfolding. In October 1990, some students said they were taking part purely 'pour le fun' (*Le Monde*, 26th October 1990). Some students claimed to be taking part as a gesture of solidarity towards their counterparts in less disadvantaged establishments. This was the case both in 1990 and in October 1998. In an opinion poll carried out in October 1998 for instance, 75 per cent of participants said they were taking part 'out of solidarity' (*L'Humanité*, 20th October 1998). In this instance however, the use of the term 'solidarity' appears to lack genuine empathy and is simply employed as a pretext to take to the streets. Some students claimed to be participating out of solidarity, but provided no further information during interviews as to why this was the case. Given the lack of any genuine sense of injustice, it naturally follows that this group did not manifest a collective identity (at least, in the way that Klandermans interprets identity), nor an element of agency. One question that this particular group of students prompt, that I consider in the concluding chapter, is whether the nature of their action can be put down to their youth.

A convergence of collective action frames

To sum up, the student protests are characterised by different actors with different motivations, although it is instructive to point out that certain grievances and demands are prevalent throughout the period. Firstly, the majority of protesters revealed a profound mistrust of politicians, claiming that they were hypocritical, reneged on their promises and treated young people unfairly. In March 1994 for example, student protesters appealed, 'Eh Balladur, pourquoi pas 80 pour cent de ton salaire?' (*L'Humanité*, 11th March 1994), and in November 1995, a protester observed, 'Depuis toujours à Matignon, on prend les jeunes pour des cons' (Bauby & Gerber, 1996: 266). Secondly,

protesters consistently stressed that they wanted to pass their exams and secure a decent future. In October 1990 for instance, *lycée* students asked for 'Des sous, des profs, du travail. Des actes, pas des promesses' (*L'Humanité*, 5th October 1990). In October 1998 they asserted, 'Donnez-nous des moyens, nous sommes les actifs de demain' (*Le Monde*, 14th October 1998). Thirdly, many protesters acknowledged failings in both the education and economic systems, especially concerning the link between qualifications and employment prospects. Anxiety about the economic utility of diplomas was at the heart of the March 1994 protests, when students highlighted a sense of injustice at being 'sold at cut price' on the job market (*Le Monde*, 12th March 1994). This aspect of the protests confirms a key finding of research on students in general that is surveyed in Chapter 2, which is that students widely recognised the importance of diplomas but were at the same time anxious about their diminishing value on the job market.

Beyond these perceived injustices however, the similarities between different groups of protesters end. My findings suggest that the vast majority of participants were motivated by individual concerns about status: students at the bottom of the education hierarchy were angry that their status was devalued; those climbing the hierarchy opposed changes that might obstruct their continued ascent; students who had already reached a respectable position blocked any move to diminish their new-found status. The status quo, however imperfect, seemed preferable to the uncertainty that change would bring. However, these students contrast with a much smaller group of participants who also opposed poor working conditions and proposals for reform, but advocated change. Here too, my findings confirm studies of students' attitudes and values in general in the 1980s and 1990s (e.g. Galland, 1995) which show that very few believed in the possibility or necessity of far-reaching transformation. Most had become, as Chapter 2 suggests, contenders in a race for diplomas and future jobs, 'consumers' of education who perceived their studies mainly in terms of preparation for a career. Although a minority of activists challenged the logic of competition governing the education and economic systems, most students simply wanted to get ahead in the race. In other words, a minority of students between 1986 and 1999 was susceptible to involvement in social movements, but the vast majority's values and concerns were elsewhere.

The absence of a unified collective action frame in the protests is most evident when we try to seek out a collective identity. My investigation of collective identity is in fact edifying for scholars of students in general who in recent years have puzzled over the question of whether a unified and coherent student identity exists (see Chapter 2). A study of the student protests suggests that, while students indeed share an official and legal status, there are no strong affective or ideological ties binding them together as a whole. Rather, the student body in France appears to be characterised by multiple identities. In the protests, students seldom defined themselves as part of the same group, with the notable exception of in November-December 1986 when, at least for a short time, students unanimously condemned the Devaquet bill, racism and repressive police tactics. In the 1990s, the protests were a site of conflicts both within and between the five groups that I have outlined.

Three particular conflicts can be identified, the first arising from students' propensity to pitch themselves against similar students and define *each other* as adversaries. In October-December 1995 for instance, university students engaged in a 'race for funding' with students in other universities. On first consideration, it appears puzzling that university students did not apparently perceive any injustice at their situation compared with much more privileged students in the *grandes écoles*. To my knowledge, student protesters made no reference to the *grandes écoles*. The explanation for this is perhaps found in social psychology, which shows that individuals tend only to compare themselves with other similar individuals. This explains why university students compared themselves with one another but did not collectively weigh up their situation in relation to their counterparts in the *grandes écoles*. It is plausible that university students perceived the latter as forming an altogether separate league, or viewed inequalities between them to be legitimate and so did not view them as an adversary (see Klandermans, 1997: 39).

A second conflict arises between ordinary students (in the first two groups identified above) and politicised activists from established organisations and political *groupuscules* (in the fourth group). This can be viewed as a clash between social movement and 'non-movement' actors. Many ordinary protesters perceived politicised activists as the adversary, equating them with politicians and the trade unions. Ordinary students often eschewed activists' attempts to lead protests. They were also unimpressed by what they saw as petty disputes within and between the different organisations, which prompted them to stage separate demonstrations and create separate decision-making structures. In November 1995 for instance, students from La Rochelle university formed an 'apolitical' *coordination* structure, claiming, 'Avec des syndicats on n'aurait pas été tous ensemble' (*Libération*, 30th November 1995). Ordinary students also viewed their action as 'pragmatic' by contrast with the unrealistic and broadly focused proposals of activists. In November-December 1995, many students rejected activists' calls for a widening of demands and student-worker unity, stating that it was not students' role to become embroiled in a broader struggle (*Libération*, 23-24th November, 1995). On numerous occasions, ordinary students also accused activists of trying to conceal their organisational and partisan affinities. In November-December 1986, many students were surprised to learn that many of the so-called 'independent' representatives of the national *coordination* structure were in fact politicised activists (*Le Monde*, 5th December 1986).

The lack of any legitimate organisers on a national level makes the student protests of the 1990s somewhat difficult to explain within the theoretical literature on protest and social movements. This is because most approaches are based on the assumption that movements begin with a group of key activists who promote a set of ideas, devise an agenda and set out to galvanise as large a number as possible of potential supporters into action. Tarrow's theory for instance stresses the key importance of 'movement entrepreneurs' who 'exploit political opportunities, create collective identities, bring people together in organisations and mobilise them against powerful opponents' (1998: 3). Furthermore, despite its usefulness, even Klandermans' framing approach assumes that a coherent group of activists generates consensus and mobilises a large group of potential adherents for action. This overlooks the possibility that mass protests in particular can be a site of

multiple, competing frames. A key reason for the internal fragmentation of the student protests is precisely that the only activists with sufficient skills and resources to organise a mass movement had very limited credibility among the mass of ordinary students. From the outset, the prospect of many students identifying themselves with committed activists was unlikely.

A third conflict concerns the tensions that arose within and between the different student organisations and political *groupuscules* that aspired to lead the protests. As Chapter 4 has shown, in the protests of the 1990s different groups on the left and far left became embroiled in partisan disputes and formed competing organisational structures. It is however important not to overlook the fact that these organisations were able to cooperate with each other. They also formed loose coalitions with non-student actors such as trade unions and human rights organisations. In March 1994 for instance, student organisations formed part of a network of groups and organisations opposed to the CIP. Furthermore, at least some of the organisations appeared by the end of the 1990s to be articulating a collective identity around opposition to the neo-liberal order, albeit a fragile one.

To conclude here, the student protests are characterised by a convergence of different collective action frames. One frame, if we can call it this, can be distinguished from the others in that it lacks any contentious agenda. Two of the frames can be adequately interpreted as a social movement. A minority of students defended ongoing NSM causes. A further minority began to question the neo-liberal order and can be appropriately viewed as part of a burgeoning social movement. Two further frames - those which form the core of the protests and concern the majority of participants - clearly fall short of a social movement. This is essentially because most protesters ultimately strove to uphold the status quo and opposed the very notion of change. My findings thus give rise to a final problem, which is how a phenomenon that falls short of a social movement can be adequately defined.

(v.) Defining the student protests

The quest for a definition of the student protests gives rise to a problem, which is that the phenomenon at their core falls short of a social movement, but cannot be adequately explained within alternative theories of pressure groups. The attempt to define the student protests thus leads us into a theoretical 'no mans land'. Some social movement scholars observe that not all protest is evidence of a social movement, recognising that there are protests (or strands within them) that do not comprise social movement activity. On the whole however, references to such phenomena within the social movement literature tend to be brief and somewhat vague. To cite some examples, Eyerman and Jamison very briefly acknowledge the existence of 'action groups' or 'single-issue protest organisations' that can be distinguished from social movements (1991: 55). Byrne (1997) refers to 'protest campaigns' which may or may not be part of a social movement. Tarrow observes that, within the 'broader universe of contentious politics', there are protests that do not warrant the definition of a social movement, although he stops short of suggesting how we might define them (1998: 2). There is thus no means of adequately categorising the student protests within recent theories of social movements (which are after all conceived to explain social

movements, and not related entities). The question of what a social movement *is* has received ample attention, but the question of how to define a protest that *is not* part of any social movement is comparatively neglected.

Chapter 3 has observed that collective protest tends to be theorised within two literatures, pertaining to social movements on the one hand and pressure groups on the other. Given that the student protests cannot be wholly identified as a social movement, the question arises as to whether aspects of them can be appropriately interpreted within prevailing theories of pressure groups outlined in Chapter 3 (I set aside for now a consideration of theories relating specifically to France, which I come to below). However, the student protests cannot be adequately interpreted as a pressure group because the main theories tend to give a somewhat outdated explanation of collective protest in general (but see Coxall [2001]). The student protests in fact challenge some key arguments of pressure group theorists about the nature of collective protest, suggesting that a rethinking of those arguments is needed.

At a push, we might categorise the student protests within the pressure group literature as 'outsiders by choice'. As I have explained in Chapter 3, the main pressure group theories distinguish between 'insider groups' on the one hand that enjoy a close, long-standing relationship with government, and 'outsider groups' on the other that do not pursue insider status either because they are unable to do so, or because they reject a close state-group relationship on ideological grounds. There are however drawbacks with defining the student protests as a pressure group, even if the 'outsider' label at first seems attractive. General definitions of pressure groups tend to evoke more or less homogeneous, established organisations with a defined membership. Grant's analysis of pressure groups for instance is centred on 'organized entities that have characteristics such as a defined membership, stated objectives in relation to public policy and, often, a paid staff' (2000: 8). According to Coxall's definition, 'A pressure group is any organisation that aims to influence public policy by seeking to persuade decision-makers by lobbying rather than by standing for election and holding office' (2001: 3). Pressure group theorists seek primarily to explain the nature of state-group relations, looking at how pressure groups seek to influence decisions taken by the executive, the legislature, and increasingly by local government and the European Union (Grant, 2000: 15). If we try to study the student protests within such theories, they tend to guide our attention towards organisations such as UNEF and their lobbying activities, rather than the broader phenomenon of collective protest. Given their focus upon organisations, pressure group theories can in the end only offer a partial understanding of more transient entities such as the *coordination* structures, and are even less equipped to explain the occurrence of collective protest.

The student protests are in fact at odds with key assumptions about collective protest within the pressure group literature. A common assumption is that collective protest is predominantly a last resort or selective weapon used by groups with few other channels available to them. According to Baggott for instance, 'Most observers agree that a close and harmonious relationship with government is advantageous in terms of achieving influence over policy' (1995: 122). However, collective protest was the preferred course of action taken by French students, most of whom

rejected conventional lobbying in favour of taking to the streets. A second assumption is that pressure groups naturally desire and veer towards an insider status, evolving into established organisations with a close state-group relationship. Although they acknowledge the existence of 'outsiders by choice', pressure group theories appear in the end to be much more at ease when explaining insider groups. Grant for instance claims that, 'in the longer run, most groups tend to veer towards an insider strategy because of the potential gains it offers' (2000: 15). Yet, far from desiring inclusion in the political process, the vast majority of student protesters tried to maintain a distance from it, rejecting any form of permanent representation. A third assumption guiding many pressure group theories is that collective protest is for the most part a risky and ineffective strategy. Baggott states that protests, even if well organised and peaceful, can rarely be effective on their own, and often backfire (1995: 177, 180). He may well be correct, but the student protesters in France nevertheless satisfied many of their demands by way of collective protest and their show of strength in numbers (although whether these 'victories' significantly improved their situation is debatable).

To be fair, as I have shown in Chapter 3, some pressure group theorists make a concerted effort to explain the growing salience of collective protest (or what they tend to label 'direct action') over the last few decades. Coxall in particular tries to explain a wave of direct action protests and campaigns in the U.K. since the1990s (such as anti-road protests and the anti-poll tax protests). He sums these up as offering a broad contrast to the groups that are generally dealt with in pressure group theories, mostly comprising 'outsider groups involved in a wide variety of public campaigning and protest activity' (2001: 110). However, his attempts to make sense of such phenomena are at odds with his (and indeed most) general definition of a pressure group. Several theorists appear to want to explain the growing prominence of collective protest, but are held back by what appear nowadays to be somewhat outdated assumptions as to what exactly a pressure group is. In brief, contemporary pressure group scholars are trying to explain occurrences that do not match their overall definitions and theoretical frameworks, which suggests that those definitions and frameworks need to adapt to a changed environment.

The problem of defining the student protests can be summed up as follows. If on the one hand we define them as a social movement, then the notion of a social movement is overstretched. At the core of the student protests are groups that did not in any way strive to challenge the dominant order, and thus I have argued that (while comprising an element of social movement activity) they cannot be wholly identified as a social movement. If on the other hand we define the student protests as a pressure group, then the general (i.e. non-French) notion of a pressure group in terms of organised interests is also overstretched. On the whole, recent pressure group theories appear much more apt at explaining conventional lobbying activities and established patterns of state-group relations than the type of protest-oriented phenomenon that is the subject of the thesis. What my analysis thus exposes are gaps in the social movement and pressure group literatures, in that both fail to adequately account for the increased prominence of protest-oriented, loosely structured, issue specific, transitory entities such as the student protests. In order to define the student protests and comparable phenomena, it is thus necessary to try to reverse their neglect

within both literatures. Below, I suggest two possible ways in which our theoretical understanding of the student protests (and other comparable phenomena) might be improved. I will not resort to generalisations from the example of the student protests, but put forward some hypotheses that require further testing.

My first overall suggestion, which follows on from my criticism of pressure group theories, is that these theories need to respond to a changed environment. I propose that they generally understate the degree to which collective protest is now used by a wide range of pressure groups. From this perspective, pressure group theories would in fact greatly benefit from incorporating the findings of recent studies carried out from a protest and social movement perspective. Dalton for instance, whose survey of protest in the United States, Britain, Germany and France between 1974 and 1990, shows that, 'Protest is becoming a more common political activity in advanced industrial democracies' (1996: 75, quoted in Tarrow, 1998: 204). To this, Tarrow adds that, 'In addition to being more frequent, contentious politics appears to be employed today by a wider variety of organisations and by a broader range of people than was the case thirty years ago' (1998: 205). Pressure group theories thus need to pay more attention to the fact that collective protest is now a strategy used by all kinds of established pressure groups, 'insiders' and 'outsiders' alike.

More significantly for this thesis however, I propose that pressure group theories might also benefit from an entirely new category that I call a 'protest group'. It is with some reluctance that I recommend this, because my initial intention was not to add to the plethora of concepts and definitions that already exist within both the pressure group and social movement literatures. There is however a real problem which is that, as I have explained, the student protests and other comparable phenomena fall into a theoretical no man's land between the two literatures. There is then a strong case for a new category, in order to explain the growing salience of protest-oriented, loosely structured, short-lived groups centred on specific issues. From this perspective, the phenomenon at the heart of the student protests can be appropriately called a protest group. My hypothesis for further testing is therefore that a range of comparable phenomena in France and elsewhere might be appropriately understood as protest groups.

Interestingly, the introduction of a protest group category would bring general theories of pressure groups much closer to pressure group theories pertaining specifically to France proposed by, among others, Wright (1983) and Wilson (1987). The prevailing argument relating to French pressure groups has been that, given the more frequent and widespread use of collective protest in France than elsewhere, the country represents an exceptional case. As I have discussed in Chapter 3, Wilson for instance introduces a 'protest politics' model to account for the peculiarities of France and, what is immediately striking in his elucidation of that model is the extent to which it resonates with the student protests. In describing protest politics, Wilson in fact describes some key qualities of student protesters, such as:

the alleged proclivity to resort readily and frequently to protest politics (...) *a disinterest in a positive role in policy making* (...) *a desire to avoid compromising their ultimate right to whatever the state adopts.* (1987: 39-42)

Wilson's description of protest politics almost perfectly matches the student protests, except perhaps for his assertion that collective protest in France is seldom an effective strategy for groups or is viewed as such. The student protests do not confirm Wilson's statement that, 'interest groups expect to get little from their actions and thus are defeatist in outlook' (1987: 42). Overall though, it is tempting to explain the student protests as a classic case of exceptionalism, fitting into a model of pressure group politics designed exclusively for France.

However, such a conclusion would be inappropriate for two reasons. Firstly, it appears inadequate to fall back on the notion of French exceptionalism to explain the student protests. This is in part because in the same period there were mass student protests in other countries apart from France over similar issues, in Spain (see Zirakzadeh, 1989) and in Belgium (see Balcaen, 1995) for instance, albeit less frequently. Only an extensive comparative study would establish this for certain, but existing research on those protests tends to indicate that at least some of their characteristics are similar to the French student protests. It is furthermore quite possible that a detailed comparative study of different countries would in fact reveal the U.K. to be exceptional for its relatively low levels of student protest in the 1980s and 1990s, despite the salience of similar student-related problems towards the end of the period such as rises in tuition fees and the devaluation of qualifications.

The 'exceptionalist' argument also appears inadequate because, if we briefly look beyond France and the student protests and consider broader trends in the nature of protest, it is relatively easy to identify recent protests in other countries that bear resemblances to the student protests in France (that I outline below). All in all then, there does not appear to be a very strong case for interpreting the student protests in terms of French exceptionalism. Even if we concede that France remains exceptional in certain ways given its unique historical origins of contentious politics, a preliminary survey suggests that other countries might in fact be 'catching up' where their proclivity for collective protest is concerned. In other words, France does not appear so much to be converging with other countries in this respect, as other countries converging to an extent with France.

To come back to theories of pressure groups, what Wilson (among others) deem to be features exclusive to France appear to be visible elsewhere. The suggestion that I am making is that one way of updating general theories of pressure groups might therefore be to integrate some key insights from the French protest politics model, especially the notion of protest as a normal and accepted channel of political participation. According to one description of the French model for instance:

> *Groups form and dissolve freely. Often the principal motive for creating a group is to organise collective protest* (...) *They avoid entanglements in institutional links with the government* (...) *They see protest, demonstrations, marches, and strikes as normal means of blocking unwanted government policies and frequently engage in such activities.* (Wilson, 1987: 40-41)

Not all aspects of the French model could be transposed to a general theory of pressure groups. The historical reasons for the salience of protest in France indeed do not apply to other countries. However, a brief analysis suggests that general theories would benefit from a further integration of the idea that collective protest is 'normal', as has long been the case in France. My first overall

suggestion is then that the introduction of a protest group category to prevailing theories of pressure groups might be a way forward.

Prior to suggesting a second way in which our theoretical understanding of the student protests might be enhanced, it is instructive to try to identify the main family resemblances of protest groups and offer some examples of this type of activity. My proposal, which offers a starting point from which to develop a theoretical model rather than any definitive statement, is that protest groups share all or a combination of the following family resemblances:-

(1) **Protest participants**
Both professional and non-professional categories (such as students and local residents) can form protest groups.

(2) **Motives for participation**
Protest groups pursue a single, specific goal. This often comprises the creation or withdrawal of a government policy. Participants do not have a common worldview or explicitly set out to challenge the dominant order (this distinguishes them from social movement actors); neither do they seek to influence a range of public policies within a specific area (this separates protest groups from pressure groups).

(3) **Duration**
Protest groups are transient. They do not exist over years or decades as tends to be the case of social movements and pressure groups. Protest groups do not aim to transform into any enduring channel of participation. Once their goal is achieved (or deemed to be unachievable by participants) protest groups disband.

(4) **Decision-making structures**
Protest groups commonly adopt grass-roots, horizontal modes of organisation, as opposed to the hierarchical structures of established trade unions and political parties. Such decision-making structures reflect a desire among participants to actively shape strategies and goals.

(5) **Types of action**
Groups are protest-oriented and readily adopt public demonstrations and strikes as a course of action. Public protests are often of a festive and spectacular nature and aim to gain the attention of the mass media.

(6) **Relationship with government**
Protest group participants believe that they can be more effective by operating outside the political system, rejecting a close, routinised relationship with government. The emergence of protest groups poses a problem for governments as they do not respect established political practices and often have non-negotiable demands.

(7) **Relationship with existing pressure groups and social movement organisations**

Certain protest groups are unconnected with any type of pressure group or social movement. It is not however uncommon for individual members of trade unions to join protest groups within the workplace, although it must be stressed that protest groups are separate entities from trade union organisations. Protest groups may also link up with social movement participants and organisations in the pursuit of specific goals, although their underlying motivations differ. This is often the case of local environmental protests which bring together 'nimby' (not in my back yard) and social movement participants.

Some examples can be given of protest group types of activity in France and the U.K. since the mid-1980s, although it would take a separate study to explore these in depth. To begin with, the public sector workers' *coordinations* in France bear strong resemblances to the student protests, although the latter were the most short-lived. Immediately after the anti-Devaquet protests, rail workers went on strike and staged public protests in opposition to the introduction of a new pay scale. Independent of the main trade unions, rail workers formed *coordination* structures that were similar to the one used by students (Denis, 1996). The formation of short-lived *coordination* structures by public sector workers continued into the mid-1990s and involved nurses, inland revenue officers and Air France personnel (Hassenteufel, 1993; Polac, 1993; Denis, 1996). Other protest groups have been formed by truck drivers and agricultural workers both in France and the U.K. In the autumn of 2000 for instance, there were European-wide protests against high petrol prices. In the U.K., hauliers, farmers, taxi-drivers and other workers blocked oil refineries and oil distribution depots and used convoys of lorries to stage go-slow protests on motorways. Their direct action protests were highly reminiscent of those traditionally used by French farmers and hauliers (Guardian, 16th September 2000).

Outside the workplace, the so-called nimby element of protests to stop airport expansion, road-building and waste disposal sites for instance have many qualities of protest groups. Such protests are staged by local residents within the vicinity of proposed sites who are often motivated by concerns about reductions in house values (rather than the broader, long term environmental implications of proposed changes). One collection of empirical surveys carried out in the 1990s highlights the increased prominence of protest-oriented, loosely structured, short-lived and issue specific cause groups and campaigns, suggesting that this is a 'growth area' (Ridley & Jordon, eds., 1998). Examples given are the 1996-1997 Snowdrop campaign to ban handguns and the nimby element of protests against the construction of a second runway at Manchester airport. Echoing my analysis of the student protests, Ridley and Jordon observe that these recent occurrences in the U.K. do not easily match descriptions of pressure groups or social movements, falling somewhere in between the two.

This brings me to a second overall suggestion as to how the student protests and comparable phenomena might be better understood. In delineating a protest group category, it turns out that I am identifying exactly the same phenomenon described by Eyerman and Jamison (1991) and Tarrow (1998) within the social movement literature. There thus appear to be two literatures trying (both with some difficulty) to describe and understand the same phenomenon, that I have called

protest groups. My final proposal is therefore that, for the purpose of explaining protest groups, the pressure group and social movement literatures should merge.

The adequate explanation of protest groups lies not in tagging them onto one literature or the other, but in combining the theoretical insights of both. It is not a question of one literature being able to do a better job of explaining what lies at the core of the student protests than the other, because in fact neither offers a complete set of theoretical tools for understanding them. From one angle, the core group of student protesters is a pressure group because it brought pressure to bear on successive governments to abandon specific proposals for reform and increase education budgets. In line with prevailing definitions of a pressure group, student protesters sought to influence policy making (even though the vast majority rejected a close state-group relationship). However, because they did so by means of collective protest, a pressure group perspective proves inadequate. It is in fact the social movement literature that provides insightful analytical tools for understanding collective protest. In the student protests, social movement activity per se was peripheral. Nevertheless, as my analysis has shown, the social movement literature offers a range of analytical tools for making sense of protest and collective action more generally, Klandermans' concept of a frame being a case in point. What aspects of the social movement literature serve to remind us is that protest amounts to more than a purely political phenomenon[2]. To fully understand it requires thinking about how people come together, why they behave the way they do, as well as their attitudes, emotions and beliefs. The social movement literature is on the whole much better equipped to explain collective protest because it draws on the insights not only of political science but also of sociology, social psychology, history and other disciplines. It is therefore through a merging of the two literatures that we can seek out a suitable definition and corresponding set of analytical tools to fully understand the phenomenon at the core of the student protests.

My findings contribute to a much broader, ongoing debate as to whether the social movement and pressure group literatures should come together more, or even merge to produce a single paradigm. As I have already observed, Jordan and Maloney (1997) are (in my view mistakenly) in favour of altogether abandoning the social movement concept. In recent years however, Burstein (1997) for instance has argued for a complete merger of the two literatures, given that social movement organisations and pressure groups are identical phenomena. Tarrow (1998) appears to be in favour of closing the gap between the two literatures by adopting a general framework of 'contentious politics', but distinguishes between the broader phenomenon of social movements on the one hand and more established pressure groups on the other (he argues that, as social movement organisations mature, they tend to evolve into pressure groups). It is not my place to try to draw a line under this debate that is presently gaining ground. However, my study of the two literatures and the student protests prompts me to make some tentative suggestions. To begin with, there indeed appear to be specific areas of research where the pressure group and social movement literatures could effectively merge, where they describe exactly the same phenomenon

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[2] The exception is of course political opportunity structure theories, which are very similar to pressure group theories and have their origins in political science.

but use different labels. As I have argued, this is the case of protest groups that are situated in the interface between social movements and pressure groups. To take another example, as Burstein (1997) suggests, it is also the case of social movement organisations and pressure groups, which are essentially the same thing.

This does not mean however that a social movement is the same as a pressure group, or that the two literatures should merge in their entirety. All in all, perhaps the best way forward is indeed to work towards a general theoretical framework of 'contentious politics' or 'contentious collective action' that is presently being developed by Tarrow and his associates. As I pointed out in Chapter 3, Tarrow's theory of social movements adopts contentious collective action as the basic unit of analysis and reminds us that:

> *Contention is not limited to social movements, though it is their most characteristic way of interacting with other actors. Interest groups sometimes engage in direct challenges, as do political parties, voluntary associations and ordinary citizens who have nothing in common but a temporary coincidence of claims against others.* (1998: 5)

Tarrow and Meyer also point out that social movements now increasingly combine disruptive and conventional activities and forms of organisation, while established interest groups and political parties are increasingly engaging in contentious behaviour (1998: 25). What this essentially means is that it is becoming increasingly difficult to distinguish between social movements and other types of contentious collective action by looking purely at their tactics and modes of organisation. They assert that:

> *Much of the contention in contemporary societies does not come from movement organizations as such but from campaigns organised by parties, interest groups, professional associations, citizens groups, and public servants.* (1998: 20)

A recent study carried out by McAdam, Tarrow and Tilly develops this proposition further by exploring 'how different forms of contention – social movements, revolutions, strike waves, nationalism, democratization, and more – result from similar mechanisms and processes' (2001: 4). The overall message is that, rather than treating these entities as entirely separate within different fields of theory and research, we should begin to appreciate their interrelatedness. A general theoretical framework of contentious politics is at this stage very much a work in progress, and at present its proponents are working on understanding the linkages between social movements and revolutions. What I would like to see in the future however is a much closer study of phenomena at the opposite end of the spectrum, that fall below social movements in terms of the transformations they bring about but are as much a part of the world that we seek to describe and explain.

My analysis of the student protests therefore contributes in a small way to a deeper understanding of this area of contentious politics. Recent episodes of contentious politics in France that might be appropriately defined as protest groups are certain public sector workers' strikes and demonstrations that have taken place since December 1986. Denis (1996) situates these under the heading of *coordinations* (he includes the November-December 1986 student protests) and understands them as a new phase in the development of social movements. The way forward that

I propose is however that the various *coordination* structures developed by students and other social groups can be better understood under the separate (but related) heading of protest groups.

In addition, my analysis of the student protests draws attention to the commonly hybrid nature of mass protest. I have argued that the student protests are characterised by a coalescence of social movement and protest group entities (the latter being predominant), but do not wish to maintain that this hybridity is unique to the student protests. It almost certainly characterises the November-December 1995 workers' protests in France, although this could only be confirmed through further research. In the wake of the protests, scholars and other observers considered whether they amounted to the mere defence of vested interests, or comprised a social movement. René Mouriaux and Françoise Subileau ask for instance:

> *Les grèves françaises de l'automne 1995: défense des acquis ou mouvement social?* (...) *Représentaient-elles un simple mouvement de défense, catégoriel et limité, des intérêts acquis ou l'expression d'un mécontentement diffus et profond remettant en cause la société globale et son inscription dans le cadre libéral européen?* (1996: 300)

The thesis prompts an interpretation of the 1995 workers' protests not in terms of one entity or another. It suggests that, similar to the student protests, they may be better understood as a convergence of different types of contentious collective action, essentially comprising involvement in the burgeoning anti-neo-liberal movement on the one hand and protest group types of activity on the other.

(vi.) <u>Summary</u>

Two overall conclusions can be drawn from the above analysis, the first relating to the different theories employed. My investigation of the student protests has permitted a critical evaluation of the respective merits and drawbacks of different theoretical approaches to social movements and pressure groups. It suggests that theories of social movements proposed by Eyerman and Jamison (1991), Tarrow (1998), Klandermans (1997) and Diani (1992a,b) are among the most useful. While none of these can single-handedly explain social movements, each has a valuable contribution, notably when it comes to understanding their underlying ideas, values and identities. As for pressure groups, the chapter suggests that some of the key assumptions guiding pressure group theories make their attempts to explain collective protest in general quite problematic. Finally, the chapter proposes that there is a lack of conceptual space for understanding protests and campaigns that fall short of a social movement but do not adequately pass as a pressure group. This prompts me to suggest that a 'protest group' category might be useful and effectively merge the social movement and pressure group literatures (although I suggest this with some caution, for reasons stated above).

Secondly, and more importantly, the meeting of this area of theory with empirical research on the student protests has helped to tease out and make sense of their complexity as a form of collective action. By tackling the question of how the student protests can be defined, they have been brought within the scholarship on protest and social movements. This has facilitated an understanding of the multifaceted nature of the student protests that can, in fact, be appropriately

interpreted as a junction of different types of collective action. The overall conclusion that the thesis draws is therefore that, in answer to the question of how the student protests can be defined, they comprise different entities at once.

To sum up, the student protests can be best understood as a convergence of three types of collective action. At their heart are what I call protest groups. These comprise groups of students who tried to achieve their aims by way of collective protest but did not explicitly set out to challenge the dominant order. Because they were primarily motivated by individual self-interest and did not have any long-term objectives, they cannot be adequately interpreted as a social movement. However, my analysis shows that a minority of student protesters were involved in social movements. On the one hand, a minority took up ongoing NSM causes (especially antiracism) throughout the period between 1986 and 1999, although my key argument here has been that in fact such causes were no longer all that new. On the other hand, the anti-CIP mobilisation of March 1994 seems to mark the point in time where a small number of activists began to articulate their protests in terms of a counter-offensive to the neo-liberal order and its damaging consequences for education and society more generally. As such, the latter group can be adequately interpreted as part of the growing anti-neo-liberal movement. The third type of collective action that can be identified in the student protests differs from the others in that it lacks any contentious agenda. This concerns mainly *lycée* students who took to the streets but did not have any particular grievances to air. The essential question that they prompt, which I take up in the following chapter, is whether they took part for reasons that can be attributed to their youth.

Chapter 6

Conclusions

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSIONS

This concluding chapter reviews the main findings of the thesis and offers some suggestions for future research. Firstly, it provides a summary of the main student protests between 1986 and 1999. Secondly, it reviews the interpretation of the student protests in light of theories of protest and social movements. Thirdly, the chapter offers an assessment of the theories that were used, and the usefulness of a protest group category of contentious collective action is again suggested. Fourthly, it considers what the student protests tell us about the education system in France, as well as the broader political and economic context of the 1980s and 1990s. The chapter then reviews the question of the student condition, assessing whether any of the qualities common to students that distinguish them from other social groups shaped the nature of their collective protests. Finally, it suggests some avenues for future investigation.

(i.) A historical account of the main student protests in France between 1986 and 1999

This thesis provides a historical account of the main student protests in France between 1986 and 1999 by drawing on existing empirical research and, notably, newspaper sources. It identifies the following seven episodes of protest and explores the actors, content, form and immediate outcomes of each. In November-December 1986, students in universities and *lycées* protested against the Devaquet bill that proposed, among other changes, greater selection at university entrance, selection between university courses, and the introduction of variable tuition fees. Students interpreted the proposals as an attempt by the government to compromise their chances of going on to higher education. Activists from the main student organisation UNEF-ID played a pivotal role in the protests by creating a national *coordination* structure, and organised some of the largest demonstrations seen in France since the events of May 1968. When a student protester of Algerian origin died at the hands of a motorcycle police brigade, the central theme of the protests shifted from the Devaquet bill to a denunciation of racism, repressive police tactics and the right wing government's policies in general. Confronted with mass opposition from students, political parties on the left, trade unions and various other associations, and facing a conflict within the government, Prime Minister Chirac announced the total withdrawal of the bill. A series of public sector workers' strikes and demonstrations ensued, which adopted modes of organisation similar to the one used by students.

In October 1990, there was a wave of protests in *lycées*. This started with protests in and around the working-class area of Seine-Saint-Denis, where students demanded better conditions and tighter security. Some students also voiced fears of social and economic exclusion. The protests extended nationally, and a broader cross-section of students became visible in the streets. There were calls for more democratic representation and freedom of expression in *lycées*, which came mainly from students in the more prestigious establishments. Others claimed to be participating out of solidarity towards those in more difficult circumstances. In terms of organisation, the student

protests of the 1990s took on a more chaotic appearance than the 1986 mobilisation. In October 1990, competing student organisations and political *groupuscules* based in Paris formed rival *coordination* structures and exposed deep partisan rifts in the public domain. Ordinary students contested activists' attempts to coordinate the protests, and some tried to form separate representative structures on a local level, which were highly diverse in nature. Others bypassed formal and informal organisations altogether and took to the streets in an ad hoc manner having learned about the protests via word of mouth and the mass media. The protests ended in mid-November when the Socialist government pledged more funding for education, new teaching and administrative posts, and more authentic channels of student representation in *lycées*.

In March 1994, students thwarted attempts by the Balladur government to introduce the Contrat d'Insertion Professionnel (CIP). This was dubbed the 'Smic-jeunes' by students because of its proposal to remunerate qualified young people below the official minimum wage, most controversially those with advanced technical diplomas in IUTs and STS. The prospect of the CIP ignited fears among students that the value of their qualifications on the job market would diminish. Trade unions and various other associations also opposed the scheme, and on two occasions they staged national days of action with students. The government responded by proposing a series of amendments to the original decree. However, faced with the prospect of a further extension of the protests, Prime Minister Balladur finally declared its total withdrawal.

In October-December 1995, there were student protests which overlapped with the workers' strikes and demonstrations. These were triggered by science and technology students in Rouen University who protested against cutbacks in funding. When after three weeks the government proposed an agreement for Rouen, students in other provincial universities staged strikes and demonstrations to demand more funding, often with the support of university staff and presidents. The protests were centred on local grievances concerning poor conditions and staff shortages, although students also voiced concerns about employment prospects. From late November, some students (notably activists on the left and far left) took part in joint demonstrations with workers to protest against the state's abandonment of the public services in general. However, the student protests were largely in decline as the workers' protests gained momentum.

There were three further episodes of student protest in *lycées* that took place between March 1998 and October 1999. In March 1998, students, parents and teachers in Seine-Saint-Denis protested against the status of their department as the poorest in France in terms of education provision. They demanded greater equality for young people, and highlighted the stigma of studying in the least prestigious establishments. In October 1999, students mainly in *lycée professionnels* took to the streets to air similar grievances. In October 1998, finally, a diverse cross-section of *lycée* students took to the streets throughout France. They protested against poor conditions, staff shortages and, in some areas, the presence of FN members on school governing boards. Many also claimed to be participating out of sympathy for other students. On October 15th, an estimated half a million students took part in a national day of action (*Le Monde*, 17th October 1998). The protests ended when the minister of education unveiled an agreement which included extra funding and further measures to improve the democratic representation of *lycée* students.

(ii.) An interpretation of the student protests using theories of protest and social movements

The principal goal at the beginning of this thesis was to study the student protests in light of theories of protest and social movements, in order to find a suitable definition for them. The conclusion reached is that the student protests are defined by the presence of different groups of actors with different motives for taking part, and can therefore be best understood as a junction of three types of collective action. The most prevalent type of collective action consists of what I call 'protest groups', that is, groups of protesters who had a pragmatic concern for their own interests, upheld the status quo and rejected the prospect of a prolonged struggle. (I come back to the notion of a protest group below.) I identify two protest groups, one comprising *lycée* students and university students who opposed proposals for educational reform and poor working conditions. These students took to the streets to defend or advance their position on the education hierarchy, and were anxious about the social and economic utility of qualifications. A further protest group comprised mainly *lycée* students in the most disadvantaged establishments (notably in Seine-Saint-Denis) whose plight was much more urgent. These students voiced fears of social and economic exclusion that are reminiscent of the protests of the *sans* of the mid to late 1990s.

Participation in social movements is the second type of collective action that characterises the student protests. This type of activity mainly involved a minority of committed activists on the left and far left who went beyond defending their own personal interests and expressed concerns about developments affecting students in general, indeed society as a whole. They believed that profound change was desirable and possible, and could be brought about through an enduring collective struggle. Broadly two types of social movement activity can be identified. On the one hand, a minority of students took up NSM causes throughout the period, notably antiracism. On the other hand, from 1994 onwards groups of activists began to articulate opposition to neo-liberal policies and ideology, promoting joint actions with non-student bodies such as trade unions and human rights organisations. The thesis argues that this component of the protests can be appropriately interpreted as part of the burgeoning anti-neo-liberal movement.

A third type of collective action can be identified, but differs fundamentally from the others in that it lacks any contentious agenda. The thesis therefore refers to it as uncontentious collective action, and concedes that it cannot be adequately understood from a theoretical perspective of protest and social movements. This type of action was common among groups of *lycée* students who took to the streets once the protests had gathered momentum. Among their motives were curiosity, the chance to miss classes and a desire to join the festivities. My findings suggest that (as I discuss below) these students joined the protests for reasons that can be attributed to their youth.

The overall conclusion of this thesis is therefore that the student protests can be best understood as a convergence of three types of collective action, comprising: a.) protest group activity, b.) participation in broader social movements and, c.) uncontentious collective action. Such a classification does not of course perfectly mirror the 'messy reality' of the student protests on the ground, but it does enable us to make adequate sense of them. The actual boundaries between the three types of collective action are blurred, and there is evidence for instance of students

'converting' from one type of collective action to another in the course of a protest. This was the case following the death of Malik Oussekine in December 1986, which contributed to a radicalisation of protesters' grievances and demands.

Furthermore, defining the student protests did not prove to be straightforward because the thesis finds that not all participants publicly said what they really meant: students within protest groups tended to cover up the fact that they were motivated by self-interest; participants in uncontentious collective action often tried to conceal the lack of any serious agenda on their part; and activists also tended to play down their radical orientation in a bid to represent ordinary students. The thesis tackled this problem of 'concealed meanings' in two main ways, and was able to gain an insight into students' underlying motives. Firstly, it draws on information gathered both during and after the protests, which affords different observations of the actors' motives. It turns out that certain students were more willing to divulge their genuine reasons for taking part once the protests had passed, or confidentially through interviews and questionnaires (see Appendix A). Secondly, the thesis pays close attention to students' use of language, which offers important clues as to why they took to the streets. To this end, the analytical concept of a collective action frame proved extremely useful for teasing out the diverse meanings that often hid behind students' rhetoric.

(iii.) <u>An assessment of theories of protest and social movements</u>

This thesis shows that many aspects of the student protests can be appropriately explained by using theories of protest and social movements. However, it also indicates a number of drawbacks with some of the main perspectives, which are as follows:-

Firstly, the original NSM theories (Touraine, 1981a,b; Offe, 1985) which developed in response to feminism, environmentalism and other movements from the late 1960s onwards are problematic when explored in light of the student protests. One reason for this is related to the modes of organisation that students adopted. An analysis of the student protests serves to illustrate that flexible, grass-roots modes of organisation were by the mid-1980s no longer exclusive to the NSMs, as the original theories maintain. From 1986 onwards, similar modes of organisation were being used by actors (notably students and public sector workers) who did not share the goals commonly ascribed to NSMs. Furthermore, an analysis of the student protests shows that, by the mid-1980s, the NSM causes were no longer all that radical or new, and had largely entered the political mainstream. The small minority of students who advocated NSM causes between 1986 and 1999 were not agents of profound transformation. Finally, the character of the anti-neo-liberal movement calls into question the assumption guiding early NSM theories that the traditional labour movement with its predominantly material and distributive concerns was fundamentally different from the NSMs with their post-material orientation. The anti-neo-liberal movement exemplifies the fact that material and 'quality of life' concerns are often intrinsically linked. The thesis therefore proposes that the outdated and inherently problematic distinction between 'new' and 'old' social movements be abandoned.

Secondly, the thesis identifies drawbacks with political opportunity structure (POS) theories that try to explain social movements entirely in terms of the political context in which they emerge and

evolve (Kriesi et al., 1995; Fillieule, 1997). A key problem with Kriesi et al.'s approach is its portrayal of France as a 'closed state' with a propensity to disregard the demands of protest and social movements. The authorities' response to student protests in the 1990s is in fact at odds with views of the French state as strong and exclusive. In the years after the political crisis of December 1986, successive governments were acutely aware of students' capacity for disruption and responded with caution to their demands. Another more serious problem with 'pure' POS theories is their neglect of the contentious ideas, values and identities that create and sustain social movements. In omitting any analysis of the content of social movements, POS theories imply ideas, values and identities to be irrelevant to their explanation. They also come close to portraying almost any type of protest as a social movement, thus rendering the concept nearly meaningless. The thesis advocates theories of social movements that situate ideas, values and identities at the centre of analysis. Following Eyerman and Jamison (1991) and Tarrow (1998) among others, it opts for a fairly broad definition of a social movement as an enduring, collective struggle for profound political, social, economic and/or cultural transformation. The fact that social movements both shape and are shaped by their political environment should be given serious attention, but, in line with Tarrow, the thesis views it as one of several aspects of the phenomenon that require explanation.

Thirdly, the thesis recommends that a more clear distinction be made between two types of theory in terms of the analyst's stance towards his or her object of study. It distinguishes between academic theories on the one hand that try to adopt a neutral stance towards the object of study, and academivist theories on the other which aim not only to explain social movements, but to inspire potential adherents and galvanise them into action. The thesis stresses that the former are theories *about* social movements, while the latter evolve *from within* them. The need to distinguish between the two stances became apparent from an analysis of Bourdieu (1998) and Béroud et al.'s (1998) respective observations on the student protests that, in different ways, they portray as part of the burgeoning anti-neo-liberal movement. If on the one hand we evaluate their work as academic in orientation, then both Bourdieu and Béroud et al. come in for severe criticism. They portray numerous collective protests in France since the mid-1990s as part of a growing social movement (or a cluster of related movements) but offer little concrete evidence to back up their respective claims. If on the other hand we view their work as examples of academivism, then the question of whether they inspired the growing anti-neo-liberal movement must be addressed. The thesis proposes that such authors were only likely to have been influential among a tiny minority of student activists who were susceptible to involvement in the anti-neo-liberal movement. It also proposes that both academic and academivist theories are valuable, as long as we understand that they are different in orientation and assess them accordingly.

(iv.) Towards a protest group category of contentious collective action

The most conspicuous problem when it came to seeking a definition for the student protests was the lack of any adequate means of understanding and classifying collective protests that fall short of a social movement on the one hand, but do not fit easily into alternative theories of pressure groups on the other hand. The vast majority of student protesters cannot be adequately viewed as

social movement participants because they opposed far-reaching change. Yet, neither can they be easily accounted for within prevailing theories of pressure groups (Baggott, 1995; Grant, 2000) which, with the notable exception of theories pertaining specifically to France, tend to play down or misrepresent the status of collective protest in advanced democracies today. Theories of pressure groups tend to assume that collective protest is used as a last resort when all other channels of influence are closed. They also tend to describe pressure groups as more or less permanent organisations that automatically seek a close relationship with the state. The vast majority of student protesters do not fit easily into prevailing theories of pressure groups because they favoured transient protest, and because they eschewed any type of relationship with the state. What an analysis of the student protests thus exposes is a gap in between social movement and pressure group theories, in that neither provides any adequate conceptual space for understanding the occurrence of transient protests which pursue a single objective.

By way of solution, the thesis proposes that a protest group category of contentious collective action would be useful. This would form a conceptual bridge between social movement and pressure group theories, effectively merging the two literatures. My proposal for further testing is that the main family resemblances of protest groups are: transience; a narrow, issue-specific focus; the adoption of grass-roots, horizontal decision-making structures; a readiness to resort to collective protest; the rejection of a close, routinised relationship with the state; and disbandment once the specified goal is achieved, or deemed to be no longer achievable.

(v.) <u>The student protests and the education system</u>

My findings on the student protests largely confirm research surveyed in Chapter 2 in terms of what they tell us about the French education system and students' outlook on education in the period between 1986 and 1999. To begin with, the protests reflect the heterogeneity of the student population. Not all sections of the student population took part, and students in the *grandes écoles* were conspicuous by their absence. As I have shown however, different types of students were involved and their motives were varied. In addition, the thesis confirms that there is no collective identity or solidarity uniting the student body as a whole, but diverse communities of students centred on academic discipline, establishment and geographical location. Chapter 5 shows that the student protests were a frequent site of conflict between the different communities of students, who revealed a propensity to pitch themselves against one another and jostle to protect or promote their position on the education hierarchy. In October-December 1995 for instance, university students clearly saw themselves as competing with students in other universities for education funding.

The education system had indeed by the mid-1980s become a highly competitive environment, and an analysis of the student protests reveals widespread acceptance of the economic function of education. Students in this period were primarily concerned with passing their exams and securing a decent future, and any notion that they might have had of education as intellectually or culturally enriching was barely perceptible. To reiterate a point made in Chapter 5, students were contenders in a race for diplomas and future jobs, and perceived their studies as preparation for

the workplace. This was after all the function of education being promoted by successive governments in the 1980s and 1990s, with the promise that the further students progressed up the education hierarchy, the better their prospects would be.

Students' widespread acceptance of the economic function of education explains why so many were anxious at the prospect of devalued qualifications. Concerns that the value of qualifications either had diminished or was at risk of diminishing in the future are at the heart of the protests. Students at the bottom of the education hierarchy (in *lycées professionnels* and disadvantaged geographical locations) protested that their diplomas were already irreversibly devalued, and expressed credible fears of social exclusion. Those further up the hierarchy opposed changes that they feared would obstruct their continued progression. In November-December 1986 for instance many *lycée* students were anxious that greater selection at university entrance would prevent them from going on to higher education. Finally, students who had already attained a respectable position on the education hierarchy were keen to block any move to diminish their newfound status. This was the case of IUT and STS students who opposed the CIP in March 1994. An analysis of the student protests shows that concerns about the devaluation of qualifications gradually extended to a broad cross-section of the student population, and were most widespread in the mid-1990s. To sum up, student protesters in this period clearly recognised the importance of education and took action to promote or defend their position on the education hierarchy. At the same time however, many of them began to cast doubt upon the function of education as a guarantee of social and economic promotion.

(vi.) <u>The student protests within the broader political and economic context</u>

The student protests both reflect and contribute to shifts in the nature of political participation in France between 1986 and 1999. They exemplify disaffection with mainstream politics across French society as a whole, which is manifested in growing scepticism towards politicians, partisan dealignment, voter apathy and increased use of the protest and single-issue vote in the 1980s and 1990s (Perrineau, ed., 1994; Muxel, 1996; Mossuz-Lavau, 1997; Gaffney, ed., 2004). The majority of student protesters were clearly disillusioned with electoral politics. They expressed a deep mistrust of successive governments on the left and right, repeatedly accusing ministers of thinking solely in terms of their own careers and being out of touch with ordinary people. Students criticised politicians for reneging on their promises and making vague propositions that never came to fruition, repeatedly claiming to be 'Ras-le-bol de belles paroles' (*Le Monde*, 23rd November 1995). They also protested that governments on the left and right no longer offered any real choices, which is a criticism that became more frequent from the mid-1990s onwards following the experiences of *cohabitation* and changes of government. In March 1998, *lycée* students in Seine-Saint-Denis asserted for instance, 'On n'a plus confiance. C'est toujours la même chose, parce que rien ne change' (*Le Monde*, 29th September 1995).

The student protests also exemplify shifts in the nature of political participation in the broader sense that encompasses involvement in collective protest, social movements and other associative types of action. Three closely related shifts can be observed, the first being the continued decline

of traditional types of organisation with hierarchical structures and card-holding membership. Membership of UNEF and UNEF-ID for instance reached record lows in the 1980s and 1990s, and an analysis of the student protests confirms widespread hostility or indifference towards any type of group or organisation with a partisan orientation. Along with the decline of 'top-down' modes of organisation has come a rejection of the cult of the leader. This is manifested in students' patent opposition to the emergence of strong leaders during the protests, and their dislike of being spoken for by others. The fate of Isabelle Thomas, who became a prominent spokesperson in the media during the 1986 protests but was subsequently eliminated from the national *coordination* structure, is telling in this respect.

Secondly, the student protests reflect an ongoing shift towards ad hoc, grass roots modes of organisation. As I have mentioned above, such modes of organisation were from the mid-1980s onwards adopted by a wide range of groups with varied aims. On the one hand, groups with an enduring radical orientation such as SUD experimented with participatory modes of organisation. These groups were in fact seeking viable alternatives to the prevailing system of political representation and, as such, conform to the notion of a social movement that is promoted in this thesis. On the other hand, protest groups used transient, flexible modes of organisation with the sole aim of coordinating a one-off protest or campaign.

Thirdly, the student protests reflect a shift towards pragmatic, issue-specific concerns. The focus on specific issues is not in itself a new trend. Almost all social movements are centred on single issues, which can be further divided into particular concerns. However, the period from the early 1980s onwards is characterised by a marked tendency to decontextualise issues from the broader circumstances that formed their setting. In the student protests, only a minority of participants (the social movement actors) sought to understand the Devaquet bill, the CIP and the education-funding crisis within the wider context that had given rise to them. The vast majority (the protest groups) treated the same issues as a series of concrete problems needing rapid solutions, and disconnected those problems from the broader circumstances that had given rise to them. This new emphasis upon pragmatism coupled with a propensity to decontextualise is touched upon in research on youth in the 1980s and 1990s as well as studies of political participation in general (Muxel, 1994, 1996; Mossuz-Lavau, 1997), but is particularly noticeable in the student protests.

Through an analysis of the student protests some underlying causes of the aforementioned shifts can be explored, as well as the process by which they occurred. A crucial observation that can be made is that, by way of collective protest, ordinary students developed a mode of action and style of reasoning that they believed to be more effective than existing channels of political participation. To simplify somewhat, they took all of their dislikes about existing styles of politics and tried to create their opposite, although this was a 'spontaneous' process that did not result from any premeditated strategy on their part. For instance, ordinary protesters clearly mistrusted any type of organisation with a partisan orientation, whether mainstream or radical. They widely suspected political parties, trade unions, student organisations and political *groupuscules* of trying to use the protests to advance their own political aims. Notably, they accused the student organisations and

groupuscules of trying to divide students rather than unite them by engaging in factional disputes and forming rival *coordination* structures. By way of response, ordinary students eschewed any type of action that could be construed as partisan, and tried to organise what they called 'apolitical' and 'independent' protests. As one representative of an 'independent' *coordination* structure in 1995 put it, 'Avec des syndicats, on n'aurait pas été tous ensemble. On serait divisé. Etre ensemble, c'est ce qu'on voulait et c'est ce qu'on a' (*Libération*, 30th November 1995). Disillusionment with partisan politics thus led to the widespread demand for non-partisan means of contentious collective action.

Furthermore, ordinary protesters clearly felt that lengthy discussions would get them nowhere. They were not interested in negotiating with politicians, asserting, 'Pas de bla bla. Il n'y a rien à négocier'; 'Stop au bla bla, on veut du concret' (*L'Humanité*, 16th November 1995; *Le Monde*, 15th October 1998). Neither were they interested in a broadening of debates beyond their personal, student-related concerns. In November 1986, student organisations planned debates about the government's overall policy agenda, but these were very poorly attended. In November 1995, activists also called for a debate about the state's abandonment of the public services in general, but this was largely ignored. The preponderant view among ordinary protesters was that debates and negotiations led to vague, convoluted propositions and detracted from the 'real' issues at stake. They repeatedly asserted that they did not want discussions, but concrete results: 'Pas de promesses, on veut des résultats'; 'Des actes, pas des promesses'; 'Finies les propositions, on veut des solutions' (*Le Monde*, 10th October 1998, 30th September 1999). Ordinary protesters adopted what they saw as a pragmatic approach, which consisted of identifying concrete problems with simple solutions: the withdrawal of proposals for reform, more money, more teachers and so on. In their emphasis upon pragmatism however, ordinary protesters were prone to decontextualise specific issues from the broader circumstances that had given rise to them. In this respect, my findings support Muxel's observation on young people in general in the 1980s and 1990s, which is that, 'Les idées sont "désidéologisées" au nom de l'efficacité et de la compétence' (1996: 82). What an analysis of the student protests reveals is that this drive for efficiency and competence is rooted in the belief prevalent among young people that mainstream politicians, as well as radical activists, had grown inefficient and incompetent.

Finally, to understand the student protests requires a consideration of the economic circumstances of the period. A key finding of the thesis is that, as I have mentioned, many protesters were anxious about the utility of qualifications and their prospects on the job market. This confirms other research surveyed in Chapter 2 (Borredon, 1995; Erlich, 1997) which highlights widespread concerns among students about future prospects. However, the thesis and other research show that few students explicitly called into question the economic system in place or challenged the economic function of education. There is a straightforward explanation for students' acceptance of the established order, which is that they saw no viable alternative to it. As Muxel (1996) points out in her study of youth, young people growing up from the mid-1980s onwards had only experienced economic recession; all of the mainstream political parties were by this time committed to a largely similar (neo-liberal) economic agenda and stressing the unavoidability of austerity measures; and

the global decline of socialism meant that the market-led economic model was dominant. In these circumstances, it is hardly surprising that few students perceived or believed in radical alternatives.

An analysis of the student protests serves to illustrate that, arguably, the majority of students supported an economic system that contributed to many of the ills they faced. On the one hand, students expressed anxiety about social exclusion and the diminished utility of qualifications. Yet on the other hand, the vast majority did not attribute their problems to a failure of the economic system in place: they accepted a largely market-led economy and were preparing themselves for a future within it (Galland et al., 1995; Borredon, 1995). In this respect, the thesis again draws a similar conclusion to Muxel, who observes from her study of young people that, 'Ils dénoncent, au nom de la morale, les perversions et les dysfonctionnements engendrés par les rouages d'une économie de marché à laquelle ils souscrivent pourtant' (1996: 58). We might deduce that the causal link between various social problems and the economic system was not obvious to most young people because the workings of that system were complex, or its sources of power elusive. The thesis observes for instance that some student protesters (from the least prestigious establishments) began to see that their personal problems were not perhaps deserved or due to their own failings, but were however unable to define precisely who or what was responsible for their undesirable situation. Because the vast majority of protesters did not identify the neo-liberal order as their common adversary, the thesis therefore rules out any interpretation of them as part of a broader social movement.

The political and economic circumstances of the period were not then conducive to high levels of student involvement in social movements, as most students did not believe that profound, systemic change was either necessary or viable. This of course leaves the puzzle as to why, in the same circumstances, a minority of students did believe in the need for change and were involved in social movement types of activity. The thesis shows that while most students accepted the dominant order, some stepped outside their own personal situation to look critically at the broader scheme of things, questioning the neo-liberal economy and successive governments' upholding of it. Although not conclusive, the available evidence suggests that family background at least partly determines students' propensity for involvement in social movements. Between half and two thirds of student activists according to different studies have one or both parents who are members of voluntary associations and/ or trade unions (*Les Cahiers du Germe*, 1999 11/12: 18-21). In addition, Le Bart and Merle's (1997) research indicates that certain universities (or departments within them) have a more deep-rooted tradition of student involvement in social movements than others. Rennes-II University, which has a reputation as a bastion of political activism on the far left that dates from the 1960s, is a case in point.

(vii.) The student condition

Chapter 2 discussed the qualities common to students that distinguish them from other social groups. It identified four components of the student condition, which are youth, transience, exemption from certain social obligations and an ambivalent occupational status. It also proposed that aspects of the student condition might influence the nature of the student protests. This thesis in fact prompts numerous interesting reflections surrounding the student condition and its relevance

in explaining student protests and movements in general. Below however, I focus on two salient ways in which the student condition shaped the nature of the protests in France between 1986 and 1999, but stress that this does not make them fundamentally different from the mobilisations of other social groups that took place in the same period.

Firstly, my findings show that many students (within protest groups) were aware of their ambivalent occupational status. Chapter 2 explained that, on the one hand, students have a legal status as students and their given 'occupation' is to study. Yet on the other hand, student life is a period that largely determines one's occupational status *in the future*. Between 1986 and 1999, students protested both about their situation as students and future workers. The CIP in particular triggered anxiety among students that the position they had envisaged for themselves on the job market was no longer attainable (*Le Monde*, 12th March 1994). Students also revealed an acute awareness that their position on the education hierarchy replicated their future economic status. This was notably the case of students in *lycées professionnels* who objected to their relegation to the bottom of the economic and social hierarchy prior to leaving education and entering the job market. Furthermore, students protested that poor working conditions were jeopardising their chances of succeeding on the job market, saying for instance, 'Donnez-nous des moyens, nous sommes les actifs de demain' (*Le Monde*, 14th October 1998). In this period therefore, the underlying question on many protesters' minds was, as one student put it, 'Qu'est-ce que je vais valoir sur le marché du travail?' (*Le Monde*, 1st November 1995).

Secondly, the fact that students were young shaped the nature of the protests to an extent. A key finding of this thesis is that uncontentious collective action was prevalent among *lycée* students, but uncommon among the older students who took part. *Lycée* students were much more likely to take to the streets for reasons that might be put down to their age: a chance to miss lessons; a desire to enjoy the festive atmosphere; or curiosity due to having no previous experience of collective protest. A type of aging effect can thus be identified in that, as the age of student protesters increased, their propensity to engage in uncontentious collective action diminished. From this perspective, my findings support other research (Borredon, 1995; Erlich, 1997) which indicates that students in upper-secondary education are more 'juvenile' in outlook and behaviour than their older counterparts in universities.

From another perspective however, the fact that students were young does not appear to have influenced the nature of their collective protests. In relation to the protest groups on the one hand and participants in social movements on the other, my findings do not record any substantial differences in maturity between older and younger students. The fact that no substantial differences are noted is of course not proof of their absence. Nevertheless, older protesters who were nearing the threshold of adulthood did not perceptibly demonstrate any greater level of maturity than their younger counterparts in *lycées*. Borredon suggests that *lycée* students in general are fundamentally different from students in higher education on account of their age. He argues that, because *lycée* students are political novices who have not reached the legal age of majority, they can only resort to collective protest to publicly assert their presence. He states:

nous avons affaire à des adolescents dont le statut social est celui d' un non-acteur et (...) *par conséquent, manifester, c'est aussi montrer qu'on existe* (...) *Les manifestations visent implicitement à cette reconnaissance sociale dans un agir constitutif de l'être lycéen.* (1995: 146)

My research calls into question Borredon's argument on two grounds. Firstly, Borredon asserts that *lycée* students in general took to the streets out of a desire for social recognition. My findings indicate that this was only the case of students in the most disadvantaged establishments and geographical locations: it was not so much age that appeared to trigger the demand for social recognition, as the perception of being relegated to the bottom of the education (and future economic) hierarchy. Secondly, Borredon places emphasis upon the differences between *lycéens* and *étudiants.* However, the thesis observes that the most marked differences between students in fact cut across the boundary between upper-secondary and higher education. The divide between participants in protest groups on the one hand and social movement activists on the other perfectly illustrates this point. In this respect then, the thesis supports Chamborderon's (1991) argument that the sharpest divisions between students now tend to cut across the divide between upper-secondary and higher education (and, consequently, cut across different age groups).

Other aspects of this thesis warn against overstating the importance of youth in explaining the student protests. Several analysts implied student protesters lacked maturity compared with adults, pointing out that many of them oversimplified issues, had little concrete knowledge of proposals for reform, did not understand the policy process, had poor communication skills, were impatient and acted emotively (Boumard, 1987: 19; Borredon, 1995: 30). However, surely the assumption that young people are automatically less mature than adults is incorrect. Two areas of research discussed in this thesis in fact advise against making assumptions about individuals' maturity on the basis of age.

To start with, available research on political competence in France in the 1980s and 1990s proves highly instructive for the thesis around the issue of students' aptitudes and knowledge. Favre and Offerlé's (2002) research on the political competence of first-year university students in the late 1990s highlights considerable variation in levels and types of knowledge, identifying social origin as a key determinant (see Chapter 2). Furthermore, Perrineau's (1985) earlier investigation of political knowledge within the population as a whole allows a comparison of different age cohorts. Perrineau singles out young people aged between 18 and 25 as one of the least politically informed groups, along with women and agricultural workers (1985: 78). However, his study also highlights considerable variation within similar age groups, identifying such factors as cultural level, social level, the position held in the division of labour and, notably, the proximity of individuals to political issues as key determinants of political knowledge (1985: 89). The conclusion that can be drawn from available research is that age shapes political competence, but does not turn out to be the single, most decisive determinant of it.

Furthermore, studies of social psychology demonstrate that people in general have shortcomings in the way they understand and respond to issues. As I have noted in Chapter 3, Klandermans' (1997) social psychological perspective of social movements draws attention to limitations in the way that many people process social and political information. Inspired by Wyer and Ottati's

(1993) study of cognitive social psychology, Klandermans observes for instance that 'people do not usually evaluate new information carefully' and 'can have strong attitudes about an issue without having much detailed information' (1997: 57-58). He explains that:

Quite often, people content themselves with a rapid form of reasoning by the use of peripheral cues that function as shortcuts that reduce complex issues to simple judgmental operations. Examples of peripheral cues are the credibility of the source of information, or message features such as the printing or the narrative in which it is couched. (1997: 59)

We do not need to go much further into the details of cognitive social psychology and research on political competence to understand that the student protests exemplify types of reasoning and behaviour that are not unique to students, but inherent to people in general regardless of age. Student protesters (at least, those with genuine grievances) did not automatically lack maturity or competence because they were young.

On the question of youth, two conclusions can therefore be drawn depending on which groups of participants we look at. In one way, the age of participants clearly shaped the nature of the student protests. An aging effect can be identified, in that the younger students were, the more 'juvenile' (and uncontentious) were likely to be their motives for taking part. In another way though, the impact of age on the nature of the student protests is less evident. It is far from given that student protesters with credible grievances (within protest groups and social movements) were any more or less sophisticated than adult actors, or thought and behaved much differently from other social groups on account of their youth[1].

The other features common to students (namely, transience and exemption from certain social obligations) do not seem to influence the nature of the student protests as much as one might expect. In relation to transience, scholars have traditionally observed that social movements which solely involve students tend to be ephemeral and highly changeable (Martinelli & Cavalli, 1972; de Groot, 1998: 5). Student movements have also often been singled out as special, as the precursors of social movements rather than social movements per se. Traditional Marxists commented upon students' capacity to anticipate, amplify and catalyse major social conflicts (see Weber, 1988). In the wake of May 1968, Touraine (1968) among others portrayed the student movement as the midwife to the NSMs of the following decade. More recently, Tarrow has identified students among the actors that recur in the vanguard of social movements (1998: 144, 156). The various descriptions of student movements as the forerunners of broader conflicts confer them a special but transient role.

The student protests in France between 1986 and 1999 cannot be understood as transient in the aforementioned ways. The continuous renewal of the student population did not produce highly changeable and ephemeral protests and movements. The actors changed of course, but the content and form of their protests remained fairly constant. Student participation in the antiracist

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[1] The theme of youth prompts further questions relating to the long-term outcomes of the student protests. Because the actors were young, were the protests a fleeting moment that did not leave any lasting impact? Or, was the experience of collective protest a defining movement that impacted on participants' attitudes and behaviour later in life? A longitudinal investigation of the possible biographical and societal consequences of the student protests would however be needed to try to answer such questions.

movement was steady throughout the thirteen-year period and, although the anti-neo-liberal movement only emerged in the mid-1990s, the evidence suggests that student involvement in it (albeit small) continued into the following decade (see Appendix B). Moreover, students were not perceptibly in the vanguard of the main social movements that unfolded in the 1980s and 1990s, but one of several actors involved. If at all, it is the protest group element of the mobilisations that most deserve the 'precursor' label. This is because the series of public sector conflicts that immediately followed the November-December 1986 protests and continued into the 1990s adopted modes of organisation based upon those used by students.

As for student participation in protest groups, this was of course transient in the sense that each mobilisation lasted only a few weeks. Students had specific reasons for advocating short-term action. Many clearly did not want to bear the consequences of a prolonged struggle, and were keen to return to their studies once immediate gains were secured (*L'Humanité*, 21st October 1998). However, this thesis identifies transience as one of the defining characteristics of protest groups as a whole. In the period between 1986 and 1999, students were not alone in their preference for short-lived protests and campaigns, and a key point that I have made in Chapter 5 is that the student protests reflect the much broader character of collective protest in France in the 1980s and 1990s. This thesis posits that protest group types of activity comprise a general phenomenon, and do not solely concern students.

Finally, students' exemption from certain social obligations does not appear to have significantly influenced the nature of their collective protests, at least not in the way that analysts have conventionally proposed. The traditional view is that students' freedom from the ties of family and working life makes them naturally rebellious, and gives them the time and energy to reflect and act upon issues that others may avoid confronting (see Weber, 1988). In its embracement of radical politics and revolutionary ideals, the student world in France in the 1960s at least partly conformed to such a view (see Fischer, 2000). Today, analysts observe that students in France continue to have a special relationship with time and space. Erlich (1997) for instance points out that students have a particular lifestyle, and remain one of the few social groups with sufficient time to engage in cultural, recreational and intellectual pursuits. Yet, students' exemption from certain obligations clearly no longer led them to mass involvement in radical causes, if it ever did, for the simple reason that the vast majority of them were faced with the relatively new obligation to pass their exams in order to secure a decent future. By the mid-1980s, to be a student in France was clearly no longer primarily an intellectual adventure, but a prerequisite for a respectable social and economic status: it was not an end in itself, but a means to an end.

viii.) Perspectives for future research

This thesis intends to begin to reverse the neglect of student protests in France between 1986 and 1999 by tackling the question of how they can be defined. It breaks new ground by a.) systematically describing the main characteristics of the student protests b.) interpreting the student protests in light of theories of protest and social movements and c.) in doing so, proposing how theories of protest and social movements might be further enhanced. Here I suggest some

avenues for future research. The need for a closer investigation of the student condition and its relevance in explaining student protests and movements has already been underscored. In addition, I recommend further research in the three following directions.

Firstly, a broader historical perspective of student protests and movements in France is needed. Students in France have protested as long as they have existed, and the protests between 1986 and 1999 took their place in a long line of precedents that can be traced back to the Middle Ages (Dupille, 1969). However, the existing literature on student protests and movements in France is dominated by an ongoing concern with understanding students' role in May 1968 and the period surrounding those events. Even if we accept May 1968 as the defining moment of all student protests and movements in France, the various other episodes of student conflict that have occurred should not be overlooked. The insights of existing research on specific periods in the history of student conflict (e.g. Dupille, 1969; Rootes, 1982; Gueslin, ed., 1993; Sabot, 2000) could for instance be combined to produce a general historical overview of the phenomenon, which, to my knowledge, does not yet exist. One possibility would be to situate the history of student conflicts in France in relation to theories which try to explain how contentious collective action has both shaped and been shaped by its broader environment over centuries (Tilly, 1986; Tarrow, 1998).

A broader historical perspective would also need to include student protests in France since October 1999, which may reveal a shift in their character. There have been no mass protests over student-related issues in the last five years up to December 2004 and, interestingly, what Belden Fields describes as 'environment-oriented' protests have been more prevalent (1970: 4-5). In April 2002 for instance, large numbers of students took to the streets when Jean-Marie Le Pen took second place in the first round of the presidential elections (*Libération*, 25th April 2002). The question arises as to why the orientation of student protests appears to have shifted. Did the economic upturn from the late 1990s onwards serve to allay students' concerns about unemployment and the devaluation of qualifications? Or, have governments over the last five years simply not dared to implement extensive educational reforms for fear of triggering mass student protests? It is telling in this respect that proposals for university reform (the so-called Ferry proposals) were put back on two occasions in 2003 following protests staged by teachers' unions and student organisations (*Le Monde*, 10th May, 3rd June, 25th November 2003). Another significant development since October 1999 has been the growing use of mobile phones, email and the internet by protest participants in France, which calls for an investigation of how advances in communications and technology may have shaped the character of the more recent protests that have taken place.

Secondly, more comparative research is needed on contemporary student protests and movements. Since the mid-1980s, mass student protests have occurred in Spain (Zirakzadeh, 1989) and in Belgium (Balcaen, 1995), for instance, which address similar issues to those in France. Only Zirakzadeh has to my knowledge attempted any kind of cross-national comparison, which he draws between the 1986 protests in France and student protests in Spain in the same period. There are collections of work that facilitate cross-national comparisons of student protests

and movements in the period between the mid-1960s and the late 1980s (e.g. De Groot, ed., 1998). As yet however, no extensive comparisons have been carried out between student protests and movements that have taken place in various countries from the late 1980s onwards. One possibility would be to try to pinpoint the specific reasons why mass student protest recurred with regularity in France in the 1990s and yet was so uncommon in the U.K. (notably in high schools), despite the salience of similar issues such as the devaluation of qualifications, the 'massification' of post-compulsory education, and the problem of tuition fees.

Finally, it is necessary to make closer comparisons between the student protests and the protests of other social groups that occurred in France between 1986 and 1999, with a view to testing the usefulness of a protest group category of contentious collective action. Only a detailed study would establish the validity of this for certain, but the student protests between 1986 and 1999 appear in many ways similar to the transient protests of diverse groups. These range from so-called 'nimby' protests of residents' groups to stop airport expansion and proposed motorways in France and the U.K. in the 1990s, to the workplace-based protests of rail workers, nurses, airport staff and other public sector workers that occurred after the 1986 student protests and adopted *coordination* structures (Fillieule, ed., 1993; Denis, 1996). Denis, among others, portrays such conflicts as a new phase in the development of social movements in France. The main proposal of this thesis is however that the student protests (and other comparable protests) cannot in fact be adequately interpreted as a new phase in the development of social movements, but make up a separate though related category of contentious collective action in the form of protest groups.

Appendices

APPENDIX A

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

A key objective of the thesis is to produce (in Chapter 4) a detailed account of the main student protests that took place between 1986 and 1999. This will be used to interpret the protests, as well as serve as a basis for future research. Answering the overall question governing the thesis – that of how the student protests can be defined – requires an investigation from a number of angles. To try to define the student protests as a form of collective action, information is needed about the participants, their motives and goals, modes of organisation and so on. The gathering of such information in fact proves no easy task, as the empirical study of protest and social movements in general is challenging. The common problems of studying protest and social movements and ways of tackling them are analysed elsewhere (see Diani, M., Eyerman, R. eds., 1992; Staggenborg, S., Klandermans, B., 2002) and will not be discussed at length below. However, the following overview of my research methodology will indicate the specific problems that arose when I tried to produce a coherent description of the student protests, and explain how I dealt with them.

Broadly two types of information can be obtained about a collective protest: information gathered during protests themselves; and information obtained after protests subside. As becomes apparent in the thesis, it is useful to gather and compare both types of information as they can give different slants on events, especially concerning the underlying motivations of participants. To begin with, my research focused on obtaining information about the student protests *as they unfolded*, with the aim of getting as close to the events as possible and recording their main characteristics. A method particularly suited to this objective is the collection of data during demonstrations by means of interviews and questionnaires. These are useful for obtaining data around issues such as the profile of participants (in terms of age, gender, background, values and so on) and their motives and goals (at least, those perceptible during demonstrations). In France, Favre, Fillieule and Mayer (1997) have carried out such projects, although of course for me it was impossible to directly investigate the student protests in this way because the events in question had already passed. Suffice it to state here that there is scope for this kind of research in the future.

The only means of coming up with a detailed account of the student protests was therefore to view them through the eyes of others, although there are some sources of primary information that give us a direct sense of what was happening. The thesis draws to an extent on archival information comprising posters and leaflets, most of which relates to the November-December 1986 protests and is found on the Germe website[1], as well as in Assouline and Zappi (1987) and Boumard (1987). In addition, the thesis uses first-hand accounts of the protests published by key activists, the most detailed being Dray (1987) and Assouline and Zappi (1987). These afford a unique insight into the organisation of the 1986 protests that, unfortunately, cannot be obtained on later episodes of student protest. The thesis also draws on research carried out during the protests by academic

[1] See *www.germe.info/dossier* (dated 20/12/02) for posters produced during the November-December 1986 protests.

analysts. One example is Borredon's (1995) study of *lycée* student protests between 1986 and 1994. This is based on observation of and interviews with representatives of the protests in Limoges, as well as questionnaires completed by students (both participants and non-participants) at the time of the protests.

While extremely valuable, the aforementioned sources do not alone suffice to build up a coherent account of events on the ground, given their focus upon particular episodes of the student protests and/ or dimensions of them. The thesis therefore supplements their insights with information found in the French national press. Since the pioneering research of Tilly (1978) among others, press sources have been used extensively by protest and social movement researchers, some of whom have developed highly sophisticated methods of empirical investigation using press samples (see Rucht and Ohlemacher, 1992). There are both advantages and drawbacks with using the press as a source of information about the student protests. The main advantages are that the national press is a rich, easily accessible and hitherto untapped source of information about them. National student protests in France are particularly suited to newspaper-based research because they consistently make the news. The national newspapers in France extensively covered the main student protests between 1986 and 1999, and provide day-to-day accounts of different aspects of the protests in various locations throughout France. However, the use of the national press comes with two particular drawbacks. Firstly, press sources (as well as other secondary sources used in the thesis) are subject to bias and selectivity. Secondly, overlapping with the first drawback, mass media are themselves objects of study by protest and social movement scholars. Individuals and groups involved in protests and movements try to influence media discourse and, inversely, the media influence the nature of protests and movements. As Calhoun observes, mass media are not external to movements, but 'help movements to happen' (1994: xiii). The thesis tries to get round these drawbacks in three ways:

Firstly, it operates a distinction between two types of information found in the press. There are on the one hand interpretive articles that comprise editorials and opinion articles, which are excluded from my research. These can be defined as 'news discourse' (Klandermans, 1997: 46-48) or 'those articles which are primarily in the process of constructing meaning' (Gamson, 1988: 229). There are on the other hand reports of protest events, which form the basis of my newspaper research. These comprise reports of the more tangible aspects of student protests (their official goals, modes of action, turnouts for demonstrations, responses of political authorities and so on) as well as the less tangible elements (such as interviews with participants by reporters, which offer an insight into students' attitudes and motivations at the time). Secondly, to try to eliminate the bias that even the latter are subject to in their reporting of events, my research is based on more than one newspaper. Sources used are *Le Monde* (the most reputed of the main national newspapers), the more left wing *Libération*, and the Communist *L'Humanité* (given the time constraints of the thesis, an analysis of other newspapers was unfortunately ruled out). Thirdly, the use of the other aforementioned sources of information helps to counterbalance any possible bias or selectivity within the national press.

The thesis thus draws on four types of information pertaining to the protests as they unfolded: primary sources in the form of leaflets, posters and so on; first-hand accounts completed by activists involved; available academic research; and, in particular, the national press. However, it also uses information gathered in the weeks *after the events*, in the form of interviews and questionnaires. The thesis draws on the research of Boumard, (1987), Borredon (1995) and Le Bart and Merle (1997) in particular, which was carried out in the wake of student protests. This research helps to verify and add to information collected as the protests took place. More crucially, it affords an insight into participants' motives, attitudes and emotions that, for various reasons, were not easily perceptible during the protests themselves. A key finding of the research is in fact that, while it proves relatively easy to make out what student protesters said and did, in the act of protest they did not always seem to say what they really meant. Some students were in fact much more willing to divulge their underlying reasons for taking part once the protests had ended. To try to fully understand students' motives then, available research carried out in the weeks after the protests proves extremely valuable.

My original intention was in fact to conduct my own interview-based investigation of former participants. On carrying out some interviews however, I realised that this type of research would not prove very instructive for a number of reasons: of the dozen or so students I initially interviewed, most were affiliated to traditional student organisations; within the limits of the project, there was no means of interviewing a representative cross-section of student protesters; the rapid turnover of the student population meant that it was only possible to trace former participants dating back to the 1994 protests; and furthermore it became evident that, once a certain amount of time has lapsed, the memory of protests can significantly diverge from real events (see Ross, 2002: 1). My analysis thus makes some use of the interviews that were carried out, but these are secondary to the other types of evidence. Although unfeasible on this occasion, an interesting research project for the future (but a challenging one given the transient nature of the student body) would be to try to trace the trajectories of former student protesters, with a view to evaluating the possible impact of participation on their attitudes and behaviour later in life.

To sum up, the thesis draws on several sources of information about the student protests in the aim of producing as systematic and reliable an account of them as possible. It is of course not viable to describe the phenomenon in its entirety, and the central question of how the student protests can be defined calls for a focus upon particular aspects of them. There are furthermore some unavoidable gaps in the final account of the student protests, which are highlighted in the main body of the thesis. On the whole however, the findings collated on the student protests confirm broader studies of students in general that are surveyed in Chapter 2, which suggests an adequate degree of reliability and consistency.

APPENDIX B

STUDENT ORGANISATIONS AND POLITICAL GROUPUSCULES, 1986-1999

Chapter 2 observes that very few students were members of student organisations and political *groupuscules* in the 1980s and 1990s. It also observes that most students either ignored or mistrusted the organisations that existed to represent them. Even so, various organisations and political *groupuscules* in upper-secondary and higher education shaped the nature of the student protests, and an overview of them is required.

The two most influential student organisations in higher education at the time of the November-December 1986 protests were UNEF-SE (Solidarité Etudiante) which had close ties to the Communist Party, and its rival UNEF-ID (Indépendante et Démocratique) which was composed of diverse political factions[1]. Following a major restructuring in April 1986, the dominant faction within UNEF-ID was Convergence Socialiste, comprising former Trotskyist activists from the Parti Communiste International (PCI) who had transferred to the Socialist party. There was also a number of minority factions on the far left: a group of Trotskyists who had not defected from the PCI; a second Trotskyist minority known as Luttes Etudiantes-Actions Syndicales (LEAS) with links to Jeunesse Communiste Révolutionnaire (JCR); and activists from Lutte Ouvrière (LO). A further faction within UNEF-ID was known as Questions Socialistes (QS). At the centre of QS was Julien Dray, a political supporter of François Mitterrand, founding member of SOS-Racisme and lecturer at Paris XIII University where the anti-Devaquet protests originated (Masson Report, 1987: 103-7; Chambraud, 1988: 45). The 1986 protests were in fact catalysed by minority factions within UNEF-ID (mainly QS and LEAS) on the university campuses of Paris XIII and Caen.

Apart from the two UNEFs on the left, there were (and remain) student organisations and political *groupuscules* on the right, the most influential being the Cercle Etudiant des Libéraux de France (CELF) and Union Nationale Interuniversitaire (UNI). While in the 1970s UNI had promoted an ultraliberal agenda which included the privatisation of the universities, from the early 1980s onwards the organisation gradually shifted towards the moderate right and supported the election campaigns of Jacques Chirac. There were also (and remain) numerous groups on the far right, such as Renouveau Etudiant (a satellite organisation of the FN), Groupe Union Défense (GUD) and Troisième Voie (Crettiez & Sommier, 2002: 234, 244-5)[2]. During the 1986 protests, organisations on the right and far right attempted to stage a counter-mobilisation, but this was poorly supported. By studying the results of the April 1986 student elections, an idea can be obtained of the balance of power between the different organisations in higher education around the time of the anti-Devaquet protests: UNEF-ID obtained 37% of votes, UNEF-SE 23%, UNI 7.6% and various others 29% (*Le Monde de l'Education*, January 1987).

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[1] For a broader historical background of student organisations in France on the left and far left, see Belden Fields, A.B (1970) Student Politics in France: a study of the Union Nationale des Etudiants de France (Basic Books); Monchablon, A (1983) Histoire de l'UNEF (PUF); and Fischer, D (2000) L'Histoire des étudiants en France: de 1945 à nos jours (Flamarrion). For a historical background of student organisations on the right and far right, see Sirinelli, J.-F (ed.) (1992) Histoire des Droites en France Vol.3 (Gallimard).

[2] An analysis of GUD is provided in Wayne, L (ed.) Disturbing Alliances: the organised Right on campus (Syracuse University).

In the 1990s, the profile of student organisations and political *groupuscules* in higher education grew increasingly heterogeneous. UNEF-ID activists became embroiled in a series of internal disputes, which enabled UNEF-SE to make a relative comeback. However, during the March 1994 and October-December 1995 protests neither organisation had the widespread support of ordinary students. In 1989, the Fédération des Associations Générales des Etudiants (FAGE) was created. This new organisation brought together non-political associations based in universities which were known as the 'corpos'. During the 1995 protests, the FAGE backed the platform of demands proposed by the Conférence des Présidents d'Université (CPU) (*Espace Universitaire*, 1996: 29).

The profile of student organisations and political *groupuscules* in the different institutions of higher education varies considerably. Claude Leneveu lists some of the student organisations and political groups based in Nantes University in the mid-1990s, which are mainly on the far left and/or promote environmental causes (examples given are Action Solidarité Jeunesse, JCR-RED, Pouvoir Ouvrier, PCF, UEC, Retour à Marx, Ecologistes de Nantes and Environnement Bretagne Démocratie). According to Leneveu, the orientation of student organisations in Nantes grew more radical after the anti-CIP protests, and such as Virus-Mutinérie (that attempts to revive situationist themes) and Université-Critique (that promotes 'une réflexion plus vaste sur les traits spécifiques des politiques néo-libérales') were formed (1998: 150).

In some of the newer universities, the profile of student organisations and political *groupuscules* is different. On the campuses of La Rochelle and Marne-la-Vallée for instance, student organisations and political *groupuscules* appeared in the mid-1990s to have very limited influence (*Le Monde*, 22nd November 1995; *Libération*, 30th November 1995). It is also instructive to note that the established student organisations (such as the UNEFs) were not very influential in IUTs and STS, although many students in the technical sector joined non-political associations. Finally, two particular universities are reputed as strongholds of the far right: in Lyon III and Paris II, organisations such as Renouveau Etudiant, GUD and Troisième Voie have consistently done well in student elections (Crettiez & Sommier, 2002: 230, 234).

As Chapter 2 observes, SOS-Racisme was the only organisation to enjoy widespread credibility among students, especially in upper-secondary education (Joffrin, 1987)[3]. It is however important to note that student-related issues were not the association's main concern, which begs the question of why it played a key role in the 1986 protests. The Masson Report offers a number of explanations as to why SOS-Racisme became so closely involved: many *lycée* students called upon local branches of the organisation to help organise protests; many SOS-Racisme leaders were also UNEF-ID activists; SOS-Racisme did not wish to leave a clear field for other student organisations, notably in *lycées*; and the organisation wanted to raise awareness about its campaign against planned reforms concerning the acquisition of French citizenship (1987: 112-3).

In November 1986, SOS-Racisme was not the only organisation to facilitate the extension of the protests to the *lycées*. According to the Masson report, in some *lycées* the Union Nationale des

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[3] In addition to SOS-Racisme, there were (and remain) other antiracist associations with some influence in upper-secondary and higher education, examples being Ras l'Front and No Pasaran (Crettiez & Sommier, 2002: 250-7).

Comités d'Action Lycéens (UNCAL, or CAL) galvanised students into action. Although its influence was by the 1980s extremely marginal, this was the most long-standing student organisation in the *lycées* and had close links to UNEF-SE. The Masson Report also notes that a further minority of LO activists in *lycées* were key protest organisers (1987: 108, 111-114).

After the 1986 protests, the main development in upper-secondary education was the creation of Fédération Indépendante et Démocratique Lycéenne (FIDL). This became the most influential student organisation in *lycées* from 1987 onwards. FIDL was created by activists with links to SOS-Racisme, UNEF-ID and the student branch of the Socialist party. One of its pioneers was Julien Dray, whose aim was to forge a national structure representing *lycée* students. In addition, Jeunesse Communiste (JC) still had strongholds in the Paris area, Pas de Calais, Les Alpes Maritimes and Le Gard (notably in Nîmes) and JC activists often organised protests in these regions (*Le Monde*, 16th October 1998). A further organisation, the Union Nationale des Lycéens (UNL), was created in 1994 in the wake of the protests opposing the revision of the Falloux law. While many FIDL activists were based in Paris, UNL's support base was mainly provincial (*Le Monde*, 14th October 1998). UNL was originally linked to the Mouvement des Jeunes Socialistes, but subsequently affirmed its independence (*Le Monde*, 16th October 1998). There was also SL-UNEF (connected to UNEF-SE). As in higher education, the influence of the different organisations and *groupuscules* varies considerably in different establishments and geographical locations. According to one report, JCR for instance was by the late 1990s very much in decline in *lycées*, but still had some strongholds in southern cities such as Marseille and Toulouse (*Le Monde*, 16th October, 1998)[4].

From the mid-1990s onwards, several student organisations on the left and far left (in addition to more localised groups such as those mentioned above) defined themselves as part of the anti-neo-liberal movement. FIDL's website currently asserts, 'Nous sommes passés à une autre phase de la mobilisation contre la mondialisation libérale. L'organisation de forums sociaux permet de structurer un réel mouvement pour une autre mondialisation' (*www. fidl. org*). The reunified UNEF declares itself to be, 'Contre la privatisation de l'Education nationale et pour une autre mondialisation' and 'contre la mondialisation libérale' (*www. unef.asso.fr*). The student branch of the PCF also claims to be 'pour une altermondialisation' (*www.mjcf.asso.fr*). The main student organisations thus emphasise that, beyond their interest in student and education-related issues, they are active in broader social movements. A further development since the November-December 1995 protests has been the creation of SUD-étudiant, although its influence appears to be marginal. SUD-étudiant is modelled on and linked to Solidaires, Unitaires et Démocratiques (SUD), a radical trade union which advocates anti-neo-liberal activism. Sud-étudiant also has links with a minority group of anarchist students from the Confédération Nationale du Travail (CNT).

[4] There are also some far right organisations based in *lycées*, one being Renouveau Lycéen (a satellite organisation of the FN), although their influence appears to be marginal.

APPENDIX C

PROPOSALS FOR REFORM AND AGREEMENTS

i. THE 1986 DEVAQUET BILL

The Devaquet reform was designed to replace the Savary law introduced two years previously under the Socialist government. Students contested the following four aspects of the reform:-

a. Selection at university entrance

The 1984 Savary law stated that, 'Le premier cycle est ouvert à tous les titulaires du baccalauréat'. In article 31 of the new proposals, the word 'tous' is omitted and the following statement added:

Les établissements publics d'enseignement supérieur déterminent chaque année les conditions d'accès aux différentes formations en tenant compte des caractéristiques de celles-ci, des aptitudes requises des étudiants et des capacités d'accueil de l'établissement.

For student protesters 'déterminer les conditions d'accès' amounted to the official introduction of selection at university entrance.

b. Selection between stages of university courses

Article 30 of the Devaquet bill states that individual universities would also be granted the right to introduce selection between stages of courses:

Chaque établissement d'enseignement supérieur fixe les conditions de passage d'un cycle à l'autre.

c. Tuition fees

In the 1986-1987 academic year, tuition fees were set at a national rate of 450 francs. In fact, students in many universities were charged additional 'fees' for the use of sports facilities, administration and so on. The Devaquet bill proposed to grant individual universities the autonomy to set their own tuition fees up to a ceiling of 800 francs.

d. Nationally recognised diplomas

Article 29 of the bill states that all diplomas must state the title of their university of origin:

Chaque diplôme porte le nom de l'établissement dans lequel il a été délivré.

This generated concerns among students that employers would evaluate qualifications on the merit of where they came from, although this was almost certainly already the case.

ii. RENE MONORY'S PROPOSALS FOR LYCEES IN 1986

In the wake of the November-December 1986 protests, René Monory insisted that there had been no concrete plans for reform in upper-secondary education. Some important changes were nevertheless in the pipeline. In early November 1986, Monory had sent a letter to all head teachers in *lycées généraux* and *lycées techniques* which identified a number of proposals for change and solicited remarks and suggestions. The minister proposed to submit a final statement in support of reform to the Council of General and Technical education by December 18th (*Libération*, 9th December 1986).

Monory put forward two key proposals. The first was to change the titles of the various types of *baccalauréat* on offer (the science-based *baccalauréats* would be renamed *baccalauréats es sciences*, and so on). Much more far-reaching however was a planned reduction from 18 to 8 available options in the *baccalauréat technique*, as well as a new ceiling of 30 hours per week allocated to teaching and practical lessons. According to Monory, the aim of such changes was to improve continuity between technical education in upper-secondary and higher education (*Le Monde*, 4th December 1986).

Monory also proposed a significant reduction of teaching hours in *lycées généraux* with the aim of granting students more time for personal study. This measure included a reduction in hours allocated to optional subjects in the different *baccalauréat* sections. The natural sciences, economics, music and some languages were among the options to be discontinued in certain sections.

The main trade unions (SNES, FEN, SGEN-CFDT, SNLC-FO and SNI-PEGC) opposed the proposed changes, mainly fearing job losses. Among many *lycée* students, the planned reductions in teaching hours and course options triggered concerns about the devaluation of qualifications.

iii. THE 1990 AGREEMENT FOR LYCEES

During the 1990 protests, Michel Rocard unveiled the following agreement:-

a. *the creation of a renovation fund for the lycées to the sum of four thousand million francs.* Half of the fund would take the form of a loan granted to regional councils, the remainder being allocated from the national budget for education. The fund would be used for four main purposes: the improvement of security and hygiene levels; the replacement of prefabricated buildings; the creation of documentation and information centres in every establishment, as well as a meeting room at students' disposal; the renovation of boarding schools.

b. *the recognition of new rights for students.* These included the right to form an association, publish a student magazine, have meetings and display posters. Each establishment would receive an average sum of 30 000 francs, for use by the new student representative councils. The agreement promised to replace the *foyers socio-éducatifs* with *maisons des lycéens* to be run by students. It also proposed the creation of an identity card for *lycée* students.

c. *measures to reduce class numbers and improve supervision.* For the ZEP (Urban priority zones), the agreement promised to limit class numbers to 25 in *lycées professionnels*, and to 30 in *lycées généraux* and *lycées techniques.*

d. *a commitment to consult with lycée students on the subject of future plans for reform*

e. *the creation of a new social fund for lycée students.* This aimed to improve the social protection of students undertaking work experience. (*Le Monde*, 16th,18th November 1990)

iv. THE 1994 CONTRAT D'INSERTION PROFESSIONNEL (CIP)

The CIP formed part of the Balladur government's new five-year plan for employment. It was designed to replace measures put in place by previous governments to reduce levels of youth unemployment (such as the Travaux d'Utilité Collective). The first version of the contract was voted by parliament in December 1993. It stated that the CIP would apply to all young people under 26, and consist of a fixed contract, renewable once, for a period of six to twelve months. The two decrees announcing the creation of the CIP were published on February 23rd.

The CIP incorporated two options. In the first option, the recipient would not receive training and be remunerated at 80 per cent of the minimum wage (this amounted to 3700 francs net per month). In the second option, 15 per cent of the recipient's working hours would consist of a training scheme carried out under the supervision of a designated tutor in the workplace. In this case, the recipient would receive 30 per cent of the minimum wage up to the age of 17; 50 per cent between the ages of 18 and

20; and 65 per cent between the ages of 21 and 26. The decrees published on February 23rd also stated that young people qualified to 'bac + 2' level and above must be registered as unemployed for at least six months in order to be eligible for a CIP.

Following its publication, the CIP attracted the criticism of trade unions, student organisations and various human rights' associations. As a result, on March 3rd the prime minister announced some modifications to the original decrees:-

a. The CIP would no longer apply to young people educated beyond bac + 2 level.

b. Recipients with bac + 2 diplomas would no longer be paid below the official minimum wage. They would either receive the minimum wage, or at least 80 per cent of the equivalent wage in their profession.

c. The other categories of young people eligible for the CIP would be decided following discussions with trade unions and management.

d. For young people with no qualifications, the original version of the CIP would still apply.

e. The nature of the tutorate system would be defined more clearly in a new decree.

On March 9th, Michel Giraud (the minister of employment) unveiled a further modification. All young people with technical and professional qualifications (CAP, BEP, *baccalauréat professionel, baccalauréat technologique*) would benefit from the concessions extended to bac + 2 graduates on March 3rd. Furthermore, the new version stated that 20 per cent of working hours would be allocated to practical training in the workplace.

On March 18th, Giraud announced that a new version of the CIP would be drawn up following consultations with trade unions. After consultations with trade union leaders and student representatives, the prime minister declared on March 28th that the CIP would be suspended for eight days pending a new version. When the student protests continued despite successive modifications of the decrees, the prime minister announced the total withdrawal of the proposals. He also unveiled a new scheme to combat youth unemployment. This took the form of a monthly sum of 1000 francs for the duration of 9 months, to be paid to any company which employed a young person under 26 for a minimum duration of 18 months.

(*Le Monde de l'Education*, April 1994; *Le Monde*, 5th March 1994, 1st April 1994).

v. FRANCOIS BAYROU'S AGREEMENT OF DECEMBER 3RD 1995

On December 3rd, Bayrou unveiled an agreement for universities which included the following:-

a. *the creation of 2000 teaching and research posts.* 1150 posts would result from a redeployment of secondary school teachers, 249 of which were allocated to IUTs.

b. *the creation of 2000 non-teaching posts.* Several hundred of which would be financed by funds transferred from the budget for secondary education.

c. *an extra budget of 369 million francs.* This would ensure that all universities obtained at least 80 per cent of their allocated budget.

d. *an investment of 2 thousand million francs to improve security.* This money would not be available immediately.

e. *a consultation concerning extensive reforms to be carried out in 1996.* Among the government's plans was an overhaul of the various types of financial assistance available to students (*la réforme sur*

le statut social de l'étudiant) and an extensive reform of first and second year university courses (*la réforme du premier cycle*).

(*Le Monde de l'Education*, January 1996; *Le Monde*, 5th, 20th December 1995)

vi. **CLAUDE ALLEGRE'S AGREEMENT OF OCTOBER 1998**

On October 21st, the minister of education unveiled a series of emergency measures for the *lycées*, which he viewed as 'une victoire pour les lycéens, pour le lycée et pour la réforme':-

a. *a fund for the development of lycées* with the aim of improving everyday life for students. This amounted to 4 thousand million francs over a four year period in the form of an interest free loan to regional councils.

b. *an extra budget of 700 million francs* allocated to the employment of a further 3000 supervisors, 10000 *emplois-jeunes* (a government scheme introduced by the PS) and 1000 conscripts called up for national service.

c. *measures to improve the democratic representation of lycée students.* These had been included in the minister's original plans for reform. Following the creation of a new student representative council (Le Conseil de la Vie Lycéenne), new guidlines would be published underlining students' rights and liberties (La Charte des Droits et Libertés). The budget allocated to representative councils would be doubled to 140 million francs.

d. the launch in January 1999 of a scheme to recruit 3000 boarding school housemasters and supervisors.

e. The recruitment of 1000 foreign language assistants

Allègre also emphasised the need for reforms of a pedagogical nature. His recommendations fell in line with his overall ambitions for reform as set out in the 1997 Meirieu Report:-

a. *A revision of teachers' length of service.* Allègre's original objective was to extend teachers' service in order to improve support for students. Subsequently however, he talked of allocating an extra 2 to 3 hours per week to student support. Teachers' unions were asking whether the extra hours would be reflected in salaries.

b. *A reduction of certain aspects of the curriculum.* Allègre promised that no optional subjects would be withdrawn.

c. *A consultation on the theme of students' timetables.* Allègre proposed a maximum of 26 teaching hours per week in *lycées généraux*, and 29 to 30 hours in *lycées techniques* and *lycées professionnels.* The reduction of teaching hours and timetables was somewhat problematic since Allègre planned to allocate an extra hour per week to *La morale civique, juridique et politique* and also increase personal support for students. He planned to achieve this by altering the status of some optional subjects.

g. *On the question of teacher shortages*, Allègre promised that all vacant posts would be filled after the Toussaint holiday. He did not promise to recruit more teachers, stressing that the difficulties would be solved with more effective management and the devolution of responsibility for teaching allocation to regional authorities.

h. *The reduction of class sizes.* Allègre promised that by 1999 class numbers in the third year would be reduced to 35.

(*Le Monde*, 22nd, 23rd October 1998; *L'Humanité*, 22nd October 1998)

APPENDIX D

CHRONOLOGY OF EVENTS

NOVEMBER-DECEMBER 1986: THE ANTI-DEVAQUET PROTESTS

March 1986: The first period of *cohabitation* begins. A right coalition with a neo-liberal agenda gains a narrow parliamentary majority. Plans for reform include the privatisation of several state-owned companies and the prison system, the introduction of stricter regulations for the acquisition of French citizenship and more stringent controls on illegal immigrants.

May 1986: Protests in the universities of Montpellier, Brest and Marseille concerning the *avant projet de Jean Foyer*, the precursor of the Devaquet bill.

October 30th: the Senate adopts the Devaquet bill.

November 13th: In a general assembly held in Paris XIII University (Villetaneuse), students vote for strike action to begin on November 17th.

November 22nd: UNEF-ID organises an *Etats Généraux de tous les étudiants.* A general strike is voted, and a national demonstration announced for November 27th. Plans are also made to galvanise *lycée* students into action.

November 23rd: Around 200,000 teachers and some activists from student organisations demonstrated in Paris against proposals for reform in upper-secondary education.

November 24th: General assemblies multiply and around thirty universities vote in favour of strike action. *Lycée* students in central Paris join the protests.

November 25th, 26th: Local student demonstrations take place throughout France.

November 27th: The discussion of the Devaquet bill in the National Assembly is postponed for a day. Approximately 200,000 students demonstrate in Paris and 400,000 in around fifty provincial towns and cities. The first national *coordination* is held, where plans are made for a second national demonstration to take place in Paris on December 4th.

November 28th: The Devaquet bill is referred to the Committee of Cultural Affairs for further discussion.

November 30th: During a televised debate, Jacques Chirac suggests that the three most contended articles of the bill – tuition fees, selection and the national validity of diplomas – may be amended..

December 1st: During general assemblies students vote massively to continue the protests.

December 2nd: A second national *coordination* is held. The message to continue the protests is relayed from the local general assemblies. A motion is passed condemning any move by delegates to negotiate with ministers. Students engage in various forms of direct action and fundraising campaigns to provide transport to Paris on December 4th. A conflict within the government is becoming increasingly evident.

December 4th: An estimated 500,000 students demonstrate in Paris, and 300,000 in provincial towns. Discussions between student delegates and ministers reach a deadlock. Violent confrontations take place between police and protesters, three of whom are seriously injured.

December 5th: Students demonstrate throughout France to denounce repressive police tactics. The possibility of broadening the protests to involve the population as a whole (including political organisations and trade unions) is endorsed in the local general assemblies. The minister of educaton René Monory declares publicly that he alone is in charge of university reforms and announces the withdrawal of the three most contended articles of the bill. Alain Devaquet announces his resignation as minister in charge of higher education.

December 6th: A student protester of Algerian descent (Malik Oussekine) is killed at the hands of a motorcycle police brigade. The national *coordination* meets again, with the involvement of several trade union representatives and observers from other associations. The involvement of non-student actors is endorsed, and a further national

day of action is planned for December 10th. Several trade unions plan to stop work for an hour on Monday December 8th. By this point, several ministers are recommending the total withdrawal of the proposals.

December 7th: Students, teachers, parents, intellectuals and various politicians on the left and far left take part in a wave of sympathy demonstrations. In the night, there are confrontations between police and around 2000 rioting demonstrators.

December 8th: Jacques Chirac announces the withdrawal of the Devaquet bill and Monory's proposals for upper-secondary education. This follows Mitterrand's recommendation that the proposals be abandoned and a sudden drop in share prices on the Stock Exchange.

December 10th: A march is held in Paris in memory of Malik Oussekine. Around 250,000 take part, with representatives from trade unions and other associations such as SOS-Racisme heading the march.

December 11th: The national *coordination* is dissolved. A conference to discuss the future of French universities is planned for March 1987. A wave of strikes begins in the public sector.

OCTOBER - NOVEMBER 1990: LYCEE STUDENT PROTESTS

October 1990: In early October, there is a wave of violence in the large housing projects of Vaulx-en-Velin near Lyon. Following a series of violent incidents on the premises of *lycées* in Seine-Saint-Denis, students stage a protest to demand stricter security measures. *Lycée* students in Le Mans also protest about poor conditions and teacher shortages.

October 20th: Several thousand members of teachers' unions demonstrate in Paris prior to parliamentary discussions concerning the education budget.

October 22nd: Around 5000 *lycée* students, mainly from Seine-Saint-Denis, demonstrate in Paris to demand better security and working conditions. The demonstration is organised by FIDL. There are also protests in Mande (Lozère), Dinan (Côtes d'Armor) and Sable (Sarthe). The minister of education Lionel Jospin meets a delegation of students from Seine-Saint-Denis, and promises more stringent security measures.

October 24th: Around 8000 *lycée* students join a march organised by Jeunesse Communiste. A student delegation meets politicians from five parties (UDF, RPR, UDC, PS, PCF). Activists hold a meeting in Paris VII University (Jussieu). Students also demonstrate in the provinces.

October 25th: There are demonstrations in several provincial towns (6000 participants in Saint-Etienne, 5000 in Strasbourg, 5000 in Lille, 5000 in Angers). Lionel Jospin announces the recruitment of 100 supervisors.

October 26th: Around 15,000 *lycée* students demonstrate in Paris, and also in provincial towns. A national turnout of 100,000 is estimated. A student delegation meets Michel Rocard and Lionel Jospin, who announce the recruitment of a further 1000 administrative personnel. Activists meet in Jussieu, but fail to construct a unified national *coordination* structure. This is due to a rift between activists from JC on one hand and FIDL (together with SOS-Racisme) on the other.

October 27th: On the first day of the Toussaint holiday, students demonstrate in several provincial towns and cities (around 2000 in Nancy, 1500 in Colmar, 1000 in Strasbourg). FIDL activists hold a meeting in Paris I (Panthéon-Sorbonne) and create the *Coordination national provisoire*. A committee of representatives from around 20 *lycées* from the Paris region and the provinces is formed. This *coordination* calls for further demonstrations on November 5th before regional boards of education, and on November 12th before the National Assembly. It demands a *plan d'urgence* and new rights for *lycée* students. A further Parisian *coordination* (comprised mainly of communist militants) arranges a meeting for October 31st.

October 30th: The government decides to bring forward the parliamentary debate on the education budget by a week to November 5th (the end of the Toussaint holiday). The two student *coordinations* meet separately. Both call for demonstrations on November 5th and 12th.

November 4th: Mitterrand declares during the annual conference of the MJS (Mouvement des jeunes socialistes) that 'les jeunes doivent être entendus'.

November 5th: Between 15,000 and 20,000 students take part in a day of action in central Paris. Student delegates meet with parliamentary groups. There are confrontations between the police and groups of young people. Over 100,000 demonstrate in large provincial towns. In many towns, students present registers of grievances to education offices and regional councils.

November 7th: Students demonstrate throughout France. The two national *coordinations* meet separately to plan for the demonstration of November 12th. FIDL demands the recruitment of 40,000 teachers.

November 8th: Further demonstrations take place throughout France (between 10,000 and 15,000 participants in Toulouse, 12,000 in Brest, 2000 in Paris). The two *coordinations* agree on an itinerary for the demonstration of November 12th. Several trade unions and associations announce their support for the demonstration.

November 9th: Demonstrations take place in several towns and cities. Provincial students arrange transport for the demonstration in Paris through fundraising activities and direct action. Many local authorities offer financial and material assistance. The two *coordinations* meet to finalise plans for November 12th and form a delegation.

November 10th: In Paris I University (Panthéon) a group of provincial *lycée* students attempt to create a third *coordination* structure.

November 12th: The *Marche Nationale pour l'Education* is held in Paris. 300,000 *lycée* students take part throughout France (100,000 in the capital), with the participation of teachers, teachers unions and parents' associations. Hundreds of rioters and looters cause widespread damage to shops and property in Paris. Student delegations are sent to Matignon, the Elysée palace and the National Assembly.

November 14th: Rocard unveils an agreement.

November 15th – 16th: Negotiations (baptised the 'Grenelle des lyceens') are held between Jospin and student delegates in order to finalise the agreement. A group of *lycée* students representing the MAL (*Mouvement Apolitique Lycéen*) demands a place around the negotiating table, but is refused.

November 16th: A poorly attended sit-in on the Champ-de-Mars organised by the two national *coordinations* marks the decline of the protests.

November 26th 27th: Six *lycée* student representatives from the two national *coordinations* meet a government official in charge of implementing the agreement for the *lycées*. A group of students occupy the education offices in Paris to contest the legitimacy of the representatives.

JANUARY - MARCH 1992: PROTESTS AGAINST PROPOSALS FOR REFORM

University students oppose successive versions of a proposal by the Minister of Education Lionel Jospin to reform first and second year courses (*Le projet de rénovation universitaire*). This includes a reduction in lecture hours funded by the state and the creation of *troncs communs de DEUG*. Students fear that such measures might devalue their individual disciplines. They also criticise a lack of information about the proposed changes. Among the most active universities are Paris XIII (Villetaneuse), Paris I (Saint-Charles), Paris XI (Orsay) and Paris X (Nanterre). *Lycée* students also oppose plans to reduce the number of *baccalauréat* options. Both plans are abandoned.

OCTOBER - DECEMBER 1993: PROTESTS AGAINST THE REFORM OF RENT REDUCTIONS AND POOR CONDITIONS IN UNIVERSITIES

At the start of the academic year, students in several universities (Nantes, Aix en Province, Tours, Poitiers, Toulouse and Bordeaux) protest against poor working conditions.

Confronted with growing discontent in the universities, the government abandons plans to reform the ALS (*L'Allocation de Logement Social*) that had also triggered student protests.

MARCH 1994: THE ANTI-CIP PROTESTS

February 23rd: Two decrees creating the CIP (Contrat d'insertion professionnel) are published in the *Journal Officiel*, in the context of the five-year law on employment. Trade unions, student organisations and other associations immediately oppose the scheme.

March 3rd: Trade union leaders attend a social summit in Matignon related to the CIP. Student activists and the CGT demonstrate outside. CGT leaders stage a walk-out and join the protests. The prime minister Edouard Balladur proposes a modification to the CIP. IUT and STS students create a *Coordination des bac+2*.

March 9th: Students demonstrate throughout France. There are violent confrontations between police and youths in Garges-les-Gonnesse. A further amendment of the CIP is unveiled.

March 10th: UNEF-ID organises a national student demonstration. Around 12,000 students take part in Paris and there are large turnouts in the provinces (3000 in Strasbourg, 2500 in Besançon). There are clashes between police and youths after the march in Paris. Partial strikes begin in some IUTs.

March 11th: *Lycée* students take to the streets in the provinces (around 20000 in Nord-Pas-de-Calais). There are further clashes between youths and police in Stains and Saint Denis.

March 12th: A national day of action organised by the CGT is held with the participation of UNEF-ID, the *Coordination des IUT et STS*, FCPE and various human rights organisations. In addition to the CIP, protesters raise concerns about social exclusion and unemployment. The police estimate turnouts of 26,000 in the capital and 20,000 in Marseille.

March 15th: Students demonstrate in the provinces.

March 17th: The main trade unions (with the exception of CGC-CFE), students and diverse associations take part in a day of protest organised by the CFDT. This is the first time in thirty years that the main trade unions march together in Paris. Turnouts in the provinces exceed those in the capital (between 30,000 and 50,000 in Paris, compared with 180,000 to 200,000 elsewhere). There are violent incidents in Paris and several other provincial cities (notably in Nantes, Bordeaux, Montpellier and Lyon).

March 18th: *Lycée* students and university students demonstrate in the provinces. There are violent clashes between police and youths in Lyon. The government announces that a new version of the CIP will be drawn up following a consultation with trade unions and students.

March 19th: There are further student demonstrations. The *Coordination des IUT et STS* proposes a national day of action for March 25th.

March 20th: The first round of the cantonal elections is a relative success for the majority in power.

March 21st -25th: Student demonstrations take place throughout France. In Lyon, students protest against the deportation of two Algerian students following a confrontation with police. In Nantes, there are protests over the arrest of student protesters. Many IUT students are on strike. Growing numbers of *lycée* students and university students take to the streets.

March 25th: The *Coordination Nationale des IUT et STS* holds a national day of action, with the backing of other student organisations and trade unions. Around 30,000 march in Paris and turnouts in many provincial towns are large (20,000 to 30,000 in Lyon). In addition to the CIP, students in many towns protest against police repression and the use of on-the-spot legal procedures.

March 27th: The second round of the cantonal elections produces less encouraging results for the majority in power.

March 28th: The prime minister meets with trade union and student representatives, and announces the suspension of the CIP decrees for eight days. Strike action begins in several universities, and there are further demonstrations throughout France.

March 30th: Faced with the prospect of an extension of the protests, the prime minister announces the total withdrawal of the CIP.

March 31st: Students march throughout France to celebrate their victory (around 30,000 in Paris). Turnouts in the provinces are much smaller than in previous days except in Nantes where 20,000 student protesters demand the liberation of detained students and the return of students deported to Algeria.

April 1st – 7th: The protests end in the IUTs and STS. Strike action continues in some universities such as Rennes II and Nantes, where students demand the liberation of arrested students and the resignation of Charles Pasqua. On April 6th, the two deported Algerians obtain permission to return to France.

OCTOBER - DECEMBER 1994: A SERIES OF LOCAL PROTESTS

November: Students in francophone Belgium oppose plans to rationalise the higher education system.

October and November: Students in Paris X University (Nanterre) take strike action against the enrollment of students in oversubscribed subjects (psychology and history of art). Students also oppose the construction of a new private university with public funds (L'Institut Léonard-de-Vinci, dubbed the 'Fac Pasqua') near Nanterre.

December: Arts and humanities students in Nice University stage demonstrations, strikes and an occupation to protest against enrollment delays. Students also hold a two week strike in Evry-Val-d'Essonne University.

December 20th: Around 2000 students and lecturers protest in Paris against the transfer of lecturer posts to universities with staff shortages. Many are from Pierre et Marie Curie (ParisVI); Didérot (Paris VII) and Orsay (Paris VI).

FEBRUARY 1995: STUDENT OPPOSITION TO THE BARDET CIRCULAR AND THE LAURENT REPORT

STS and IUT students protest against the Bardet circular that recommends that DUT and BTS graduates be prevented from enrolling at universities and encouraged to take up immediate employment. The circular also proposes a reduction of teaching hours in the *lycées techniques* to create opportunities for personal study. Many students are concerned that such measures might trigger a devaluation of diplomas.

University students oppose a report drawn up by Daniel Laurent, the president of Marne-la-Vallée University. This promotes greater financial autonomy for university departments. It also recommends an increase in tuition fees and the creation of regional universities with a professional vocation. A protest that started in Limoges University on January 30th extends to other provincial towns such as Rennes, Pau and Grenoble. Neither the Bardet circular nor the Laurent proposals are pursued any further.

THE OCTOBER-DECEMBER 1995 PROTESTS

October 9th: Science and technology students in Rouen University begin a strike against teacher shortages and poor conditions, demanding 12 million francs.

October 10th: A national day of action is held to oppose a freeze in public sector wages. The main teachers' unions participate and many lessons are cancelled.

October 13th-19th: UNEF-SE and UNEF-ID activists in Paris and Rennes protest against the reform of the ALS (*l'Allocation de logement social*) due to budgetary constraints. When university presidents and the Minister of Education François Bayrou voice opposition to the proposals, they are abandoned.

October 16th -17th: Meeting with UNI, UNEF and UNEF-ID leaders, Bayrou unveils the launch of a consultation on the theme of 'le rôle, la place des étudiants à l'université'. In doing so, he delays reforms promised by Chirac during his election campaign (which included the introduction of a new social status for students, the reform of first and second year courses, and a revision of certain clauses in the Savary Law).

October 19th – 24th: Students continue to protest in Rouen. Maths students in Paul-Sabatier University in Toulouse begin a strike, demanding the recruitment of 200 teacher-researchers. In Paris X University (Nanterre), physical education students also protest to demand better conditions and the recruitment of teachers. Some students in Nanterre continue to protest against the Pôle Léonard-de-Vinci.

October 25th: Students occupying the education offices in Rouen are evicted by police. The SNCF holds a 24 hour strike against the government's plans to rationalise the railways.

October 26th: Chirac announces on national television that the reduction of budgetary deficits is an economic priority. Students in Rouen protest against the use of heavy-handed police tactics the previous day. The third nuclear test is carried out in Mururoa.

October 27th: The junior minister for higher education, Jean de Boishue, nominates a mediator to negotiate with students and staff in Rouen.

October 30th: The CGT, CFDT, FO, CGC, CFTC, FEN, FSU and UNSA sign a common declaration on the future of the social security system. Students in Rouen reject an extra budget of 6 million francs.

November 1st: Violent confrontations take place between police and youths on several large housing estates, notably in Vigneux-sur-Seine.

November 2nd: Rouen University is allocated an extra budget of 9 million francs and the recruitment of 188 teacher-researchers over a four-year period. Students vote to end the strike.

November 7th: Strikes begin in the universities of Aix-en-Provence, Montpellier, Toulon and Nice. Following a cabinet reshuffle, entire responsibility for higher education is transferred to Bayrou.

November 9th: The higher education budget is discussed in the National Assembly. Bayrou unveils an emergency plan for the poorest universities. The majority of teachers' unions, parents' associations and many students participate in a national day of protest organised by SNES-Sup, UNEF and UNEF-ID. 5000 students take part in Metz, and 4000 in Paris, Aix-en-Province and Toulouse respectively.

November 10th: Students in Toulouse-Paul-Sabatier and Metz begin an indefinite strike. Protests begin in the Universities of Marne-la-Vallée and Orléans.

November 13th: Orléans University obtains an extra budget of 15 million francs over a four year period and 60 new teaching posts.

November 15th: Students demonstrate in the Universities of Caen, Saint-Etienne and Pau.

November 14th -20th: Representatives from the ministry of education meet university presidents to finalise an agreement. Many declare their satisfaction.

November 16th: Students in Paris-VIII (Saint-Denis), Paris-X (Nanterre) and Paris-I (Tolbiac) begin a protest, as do students in the schools of architecture. In Metz, students detain a government mediator for several hours until Bayrou promises to resume negotiations. Students in Nancy II University vote for an indefinite strike and occupation. Alain Juppé unveils plans to overhaul the social security system.

November 17th: Students in approximately fifteen universities are on strike.

November 19th: Students in Toulouse, Nice, Perpignan, Metz and Paris VIII join an *Inter-fac coordination*. They demand an extra budget of 2 thousand million francs and the recruitment of 6000 lecturers.

November 20th: Students in Paris VI (Pierre et Marie Curie), Paris VII (Jussieu) and Cergy-Pontoise vote for a strike.

November 21st: 100,000 students demonstrate throughout France, with the support of teachers' unions. Students in *lycées* and IUTs also take part. Students in the universities of Avignon, Nancy and Rennes go on strike. A structure baptised the *Coordination nationale étudiante* is formed.

November 22nd: Bayrou unveils a further agreement. He promises to send a government representative to each of the 90 universities, an immediate extra budget of 200 million francs, the creation of 260 teaching posts and further consultations prior to future reforms. He also promises a parliamentary consultation concerning the funding and resource management of universities.

November 23rd: SNCF workers begin an indefinite strike.

November 24th: Public sector workers hold a first national day of protest. The national *coordination* calls for students to take part.

November 28th: FO organises a second day of workers' demonstrations.

November 30th: Students hold a further national day of protest, coinciding with further workers' demonstrations. Total participation is estimated at around 160,000. Students are on strike in around 40 universities.

December 1st: A disorderly meeting of the national *coordination* is held in Paris.

December 3rd: Bayrou meets representatives of trade unions, student organisations and the national *coordination*. He unveils a new agreement for the universities that includes the creation of 4000 posts and an extra budget of 369 million francs. Students vote to end the protests in Orléans University, but strikes begin in the science faculties of Montpellier and Aix-Marseille. The protests are also extending to numerous *lycées*.

December 4th: In general assemblies, Bayrou's agreement for the universities is rejected.

December 5th: Workers' demonstrations take place throughout France, with participation estimated at between 500,000 and 800,000. Fewer students take part than on November 30th.

December 6th: UNEF-ID activists walk out of a national *coordination* meeting in Paris.

December 7th: Further workers' demonstrations take place throughout France, with participation estimated at 700,000 by the police and 1.3 million by organisers. Few students take part despite calls from the national *coordination* to do so.

December 12th: Further workers' demonstrations are held, with participation estimated at 985,000 by the interior ministry and 2.2 million by trade unions. The largest turnouts are in Paris, Marseille and Toulouse. Few students appear to participate, except in Lyon, Nantes, Rouen and Bordeaux.

December 13th: The national *coordination* meets in Tours University, but the student protests are on the wane.

December 16th: The last national day of workers' demonstrations is held, joined by students in Paris.

December 21st: A social summit is held. Only the main trade unions participate.

MARCH-APRIL 1998: PROTESTS IN SEINE-SAINT-DENIS AND DEMONSTRATIONS AGAINST THE FRONT NATIONAL

Teachers, parents and students in *lycées* and *collèges* in Seine-Saint-Denis stage strikes and demonstrations to highlight their status as the department with the poorest education provision in France. Repeatedly, several thousand teachers, parents and students take to the streets in central Paris. On one occasion, students from Seine-Saint-Denis demonstrate outside the prestigious *lycée* Louis-le-Grand in central Paris that had obtained a sum of 300 million francs from the regional council.

On March 28th, forty-five organisations stage a national protest against the FN. The turnout in Paris is estimated at 50,000, and many young people join protests throughout France.

OCTOBER 1998: LYCEE STUDENT PROTESTS

1997: The minister of education Claude Allègre circulates a questionnaire to all *lycée* students and teachers requesting comments and ideas about the future of the state school system.

September 1998: Teachers unions oppose proposals to reduce rates of overtime pay. There are protests in some *collèges* against teacher shortages and poor conditions.

October 1st: Around 5000 *lycée* students demonstrate in Nîmes.

October 2nd: Further student demonstrations take place in Nîmes.

October 6th - 7th: The PCF, SNES and FSU announce their support for student protesters.

October 7th: 3000 *lycée* students in Montpellier protest over poor conditions and the presence of FN members on school administrative councils.

October 8th: around 800 *lycée* students demonstrate in Toulouse. Allègre meets FIDL leaders, promising the replacement of absent teachers, a reduction of certain *baccalauréat* programmes and new measures for the democratic representation of students.

October 9th: Thousands of *lycée* students demonstrate throughout France, in Reims, Bordeaux, Marseille and the Paris suburbs. Rail workers also go on strike in the Paris region.

October 10th: The CGT announces its support for the protests.

October 11th: Allègre meets local education officers, urging them to see that the new student councils are functioning.

October 12th: Around 10,000 students demonstrate in Paris. 8000 students demonstrate in Bordeaux and 6000 in Grenoble. An *assemblée inter-lycées* is held in Paris, and delegates are elected to meet with Allègre on the 15th. In a *Le Monde* interview, Allègre affirms that students' actions are justified.

October 13th: 200,000 students demonstrate throughout France (16,000 in Toulouse, 15,000 in Bordeaux, 10,000 in Lyon and Rennes). In Paris, a student protester is killed in a car accident.

October 14th: Government representatives meet student representatives from the Conseil National de la Vie Lycéenne (CNVL).

October 15th: 500,000 students join a national day of action. There are confrontations between youths and police. Allègre meets a student delegation. Two separate *coordination* structures are formed in Paris. In *Le Monde* and *Libération*, Allègre again affirms his sympathy for student protesters.

October 16th: Students demonstrate in the provinces.

October 17th: The rival *coordinations* meet separately.

October 18th: On TF1, Allègre again affirms his sympathy for students. The prime minister Lionel Jospin declares his confidence that the minister of education will solve the crisis.

October 20th: 300,000 *lycée* students and teachers participate in a second national demonstration. The SNES, FSU, FO and SUD-education call for their members to take part. The SE-FEN, SGEN-CFDT and FEN send delegations and offer logistical support.

October 21st: A student delegation meets Allègre, who unveils an agreement for the *lycées*.

October 23rd: The Toussaint holiday starts.

October 24th: Sporadic protests in the Universities of Caen, Rennes, Metz and Toulon over local issues.

October 26th: Transport workers hold a national day of action.

October 28th: Student representatives of *coordination* structures meet in Marseille. A unified decision making structure fails to emerge.

November 2nd: Representatives of *coordination* structures meet for the last time.

November 3rd: The Toussaint holiday ends.

November 5th: Poor turnouts for the third national demonstration, marking the decline of the protests.

December 1998: Some local branches of student organisations (UNEF, UNEF-ID, SUD-étudiant) in Amiens, Montpellier, Toulouse, Nice and Paris I (Tolbiac) stage protests against the Attali report, which is criticised for reinforcing inequalities between students. Physical education students protest against diminishing prospects.

SEPTEMBER - OCTOBER 1999: PROTESTS IN LYCEES PROFESSIONNELS

March 1999: Teachers protest against Allègre's policies.

September 27th: Students in *lycées professionnels* in Avignon, Montpellier and Metz protest against teacher shortages and poor conditions. They express disappointment that their situation has not changed despite the government's promises a year previously.

September 28th: 3000 *lycée* students demonstrate in Toulouse. There are also demonstrations in Auch, Toulon, Avignon, Rennes, Arles and other towns.

September 30th: 150,000 *lycée* students participate in demonstrations organised by FIDL. The turnout is very small in Paris. There are violent incidents in several towns, notably in Marseille. Students demand the implementation of Allègre's agreement of October 1998.

October 7th: Around 60,000 students participate in a second national demonstration, with the support of the SNES, SGEN-CFDT and FCPE. There are further violent incidents, notably in Paris and Marseille.

October 9th: A *coordination* structure is formed. Almost half the delegates are in *lycées professionnels*.

October 19th: Around 6000 *lycée* students join a further national demonstration, this time without the support of teachers' unions and parents' associations (with the exception of the FSU). There are further clashes between police and youths.

This chronology has been completed on the basis of articles available in *Le Monde*, *Le Monde de l'Education*, *Libération and L'Humanité*.

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