Student Power!
The Radical Days of the English Universities

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SCHOLARS**

P U B L I S H I N G

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

ABBREVIATIONS

CND-Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament

CPGB- Communist Party of Great Britain

CVCP- Committee of Vice Chancellors and Principals

IMG- International Marxist Group

IS- International Socialists

LSE- London School of Economics

NSM- New Social Movement

NUS- National Union of Students

NVDA- Non Violent Direct Action

RMT- Resource Mobilisation Theory

RSA-Radical Students' Alliance

RSSF- Revolutionary Socialist Students Federation

SDS- Students for a Democratic Society

Soc Soc- Socialist Society

SWP- Socialist Worker's Party

VSC- Vietnam Solidarity Campaign

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION: THE STUDENTS ARE REVOLTING

Why the sixties; and why now?

The sixties are often held aloft as an emblem of radicalism, freedom, and youthful expression. As the sixties become more distant in our collective social memory, the following question is readily raised, that is, in a fast-paced and ever changing contemporary world, why return to explore the past. This book will take the sixties at its heart, exploring the student population during the sixties, and whilst this is inherently historical, by virtue of our distance from that era, historical does not mean outdated or irrelevant. Rather, this book takes the sixties as an example of how a complex set of conditions within society enabled a social movement to burgeon and blossom, and this I would argue has relevance beyond a time period; enabling us to consider how student activism and protest can and does occur within our society today (or tomorrow).

The sixties and the English student movement are then both interesting and relevant to our understanding of social life, and the importance of this topic for research was noted *during* the sixties and the events of the student movement;

> "It has occurred to me that the present crisis in our affairs is a matter of very considerable sociological interest. It is the first large-scale occurrence of this kind in University life in this country and I would think that in due course a subject of study by sociologists and others" (Frith, 1967: n.p).

Despite the significance of the topic, initial investigations showed that there has been limited attention paid to the specific case of student protests in England. Thus the need to explore this important moment in our political and social history perhaps becomes more pertinent, and I base this

on the following reasons. Firstly, an invitation to a 'Radicals reunion'[1] at the former Hornsey College of Art in 2005 confirmed to me that there were many people with (fascinating) unexplored narratives relating to their experiences of protest in the 1960s, and that capturing such recollections for posterity was historically significant. Secondly, the scale of the unrest in the universities during this era itself makes the movement important in terms of magnitude. For example, during 1968 The Times newspaper contained some 300 references to incidences of student protest within England (The Times Indexes, 1968). Thirdly, a number of scholars (for example, Scott, 1990; Crossley, 2002) have stressed the importance of the 'student movement' as a watershed point between the 'old' and 'new' formations of social movements. Thus understanding such a movement is significant as, "The 1960s opened up the space for the later movements to fill with specific meanings" (Eyerman and Jamieson, 1991: 91).

The scope of attention directed towards the 1960s student movements in other parts of the world, specifically events in France, Germany and the USA displays the importance and interest that these events have aroused in scholars across a number of disciplines (education, history, and politics as well as sociology). Such interest seems to endure, which perhaps roots the problems and issues of student protest as a legitimate and worthy subject of investigation. However, the idea that we have a social knowledge of 'The Sixties' as an era does perhaps need to be rethought in the light of the evident variety of explanations and competing commentaries. The current situation seems well encapsulated by the statement that, "1968 - a label which means so much, but explains so little" (Siegfried, 2006: 75). This is specifically true of England. A generalisation seems to occur, in that what we 'know' and can explain in other European countries, or even globally, will also cover the English experience of this time. Such notions perhaps stem from the scale of the English movement (often noted for smallness in comparison to other countries, for example see Marwick, 1998) and its differences from other countries. The reasons for such a 'one size fits all' account of the English student experience may be understandable, even if not acceptable, in terms of our sociological understanding of these events.

The English student movement has received limited attention in terms of analysis in comparison to other countries, and the works that have appeared have been mainly historical rather than sociological. Why the English experience is under-researched, is perhaps attributable to two factors; the scale and form of the protest that occurred, and the nature of

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[1] Hornsey 'Radicals reunion' was a collaborative project to bring together former radicals and current arts students, further detail about the reunion is available at: www.guardian.co.uk/theguardian/2005/oct/13/ideas.culture21

England and its historical attitude to protest and dissent. Scholars have repeatedly viewed the English student movement as a 'token effort' (see Marwick, 1998; Stratera, 1975), an emulation of the real events that were witnessed globally, particularly when discussed in relation to the wholly more dramatic events in France and the USA. English protest is portrayed as having been less violent, less radical, and more easily controlled (Ellis, 1998), with less militancy among the students (Siegfried, 2006). Thus it, "…lacked the drama and the passion of protest in the USA and in parts of continental Europe" (Ellis, 1998:68). Universities themselves saw the events as less damaging than other countries' movements had been, (Burch, 1996), perhaps seeing the English dissent more as a brief dalliance from the otherwise well adhered to path of good behaviour and respect for the institutions, than any form of revolutionary force or motor for social change. It is not only upon the institutions that the students were seen as having had limited impact, but on broader society, and it was suggested this was due to their seemingly mild behaviour and alleged lack of real contestation (Stratera, 1975). It has also been suggested that their lack of impact may have stemmed from the inability to create links to working class struggles at the time within England (Chun, 1993), as was possible in France, and Italy. The lack of engagement with the working classes is perhaps viewed as having diminished the revolutionary attributes of the movement in the classical Marxist sense, and to some extent resultantly reduced the movement's credibility. Therefore the literature portrays the English event as a seemingly unimportant or uninspiring event; a poor relative of the revolutionary events of continental Europe on which the bulk of analysis and discussion has resultantly focused.

The apparent 'mildness' of the English movement may also be a result of the lack of a revolutionary tradition within England. The drama of France in May 1968, for Marxist writers such as Doyle (1988), conjured references to the 'heyday' of French revolt at the time of the Paris commune of 1871. Similarly Gilbert suggests that the 1960s in America were reminiscent of the 1830-40s when "…communal experiments, sexual utopianism, political radicalism, feminism, conservative evangelical religion, and abolitionism swayed American history onto a course that led straight to the Civil War" (Gilbert, 1984: 245). England however could be seen to lack this radical trajectory. This is by no means to diminish historical uprisings, such as the Abolitionists, Suffragettes, Chartists or the general strike of 1926, but the overarching liberal state committed to democratic rights, and the imperialist history perhaps created a past from which the English people are unlikely to draw revolutionary inspiration. The moderate nature of English politics at the time, in comparison to those

of mainland Europe, was also said to have curbed the student protests in England in a way that did not occur in continental Europe (Ellis, 1998)

The lack of a celebrated revolutionary past in England perhaps accounts for the second reason I perceive for the lack of scholarly contributions about the student movement of England. There is no overwhelming desire to celebrate any dissident past within England, as there perhaps is in other European countries, (France in particular seems to hold monopoly on such a trend, as the 2006 youth uprisings displayed). Despite its alleged shortcomings in terms of militancy and outcomes, "…the English movement had mobilized more people than ever before" (Fraser, 1988: 256), and yet it often appears to have been 'written out' of English history. Universities especially seem earnest about burying any reference to their rebellious pasts, despite any legacies that may remain (in terms of student rights and representation), which is notable through the absence of attempts to archive and preserve documents relating to the period within some institutions. "…There was a time when people spoke their minds and were not afraid to offend - and that since then, too many truths have been buried" (Kurlansky, 2004: xx) and this is applicable to the English situation. We need to get to the 'truth' (as perceived by those involved) of the English student movement rather than inferring what is an important part of our recent past in terms of both social movements as well as the history of higher education.

It is perhaps due to these factors that the English student movement has witnessed only a limited number of attempts to understand and celebrate events of the 1960s, although I would argue that this is a sociological oversight. Blackstone and Hadley (1971) for example were stating the need for further analysis and investigation into the student movement as early as the 1970s; yet, no significant English sociological contribution has been forthcoming.

Therefore the points highlighted above begin to signify the ways in which the English student movement is a topic of sociological relevance, and such significance is perhaps further exemplified by the resurgence in recent years of protest action by students. A variety of contemporaneous student protest actions have occurred, ranging from NUS driven fees campaigns (www.bbc.co.uk, 2008), the saving of a specific university course in the case of Sheffield (timeshighereducation.co.uk, 2009), to broader actions of solidarity with events in Gaza in 2009 (Guardian.co.uk, 2009). Most recently there has been student protest action against the planned increase in student fees by the coalition government, and the violence witnessed at such protests at the end of 2010 received widespread media attention (www.bbc.co.uk, 2010). Whilst the focus of this work is a

historical social movement, it contains contemporary relevance and the applicability of the past on the present will be drawn out within the conclusions of this book.

Thus whilst little is known about the English student movement, the lack of attention received suggests a 'problem' unresolved, in terms of having been little attempt to understand or explain the English student movement. Sociologically it is of interest to us to understand this movement, not only to piece together a part of the radical history of England and specifically the universities, but the topic feeds into a number of aspects of sociology, most obviously social movement studies, but also areas of education (for example questions relating to the nature of being a student) and also citizenship issues of political involvement and social engagement.

The research

Taking into consideration the above significance and previous lack of investigation, the central aim of this book will be: *To explore what happened during the English student movement, detailing in reference to the evidence of interviews and documents, the type of actions that occurred across the span of the movement (broadly the time-period of 1965-1973), so as to give key insights from those who were involved in the movement, giving understanding as to what it was like to be a student at the height of the 'swinging sixties'.*

As noted in the above statement, the main source of data for the research came from two different sources; documents and interviews. It is useful at this juncture to detail how the data was generated, and analysed, as well as the rationale for the choice of methods for the research.

The research and subsequent data on which this book is founded was conducted for doctoral study, thus the parameters in terms of time and space upon the research were enforced by the study requirements of that degree. The starting point for the research was to explore any potential precedents for researching movements similar to the English student movement, and some methodological precedents from social movement research, rather than student movement research were evident. Roseneil's (1995) research into Greenham Common peace camp for example shows the use of interviews and documentary sources. Bagguley's (1995) work into the Anti-poll tax movement utilised interviews with those involved. Reeve's (1999) thesis '*The squatters' movement in London 1968-1980*' utilised documentary research as well as interviews within her work.

There was therefore some precedence in terms of methods from previous research, specifically the use of interviews, or documentary evidence. In the decision-making stages of my research a sense of openness in terms of possible methodology was a guiding principle, with the aim being to utilise a method (or methods) that would allow as much insight into the topic as possible. Part of this openness involved the consideration that multiple methods might be a fruitful means by which to generate extensive datasets. Using more than one method seemed to offer the best means by which I could obtain multiple perspectives on the English student movement. I was concerned that using only one method, such as interviews, might provide only one viewpoint or stance on the movement. Although providing a useful snapshot of personal reflection, interviews alone might not have provided me with the depth or coverage of the movement that I felt would be necessary in order to understand the movement in a comprehensive way. Thus the decision to use two methods, which were ultimately to be *documents* and a form of interview, *oral histories,* was reached. Additional to this methodological combination I also chose to use case studies as a means of framing the data that I was generating and to assist in the sampling process.

The use of more than one method of data generation often highlights differences between the data forms. I decided not to approach the research from the stance of triangulation, seeing the differences as a fundamental part of the 'stories' of the movement, rather than something to be cancelled out or 'resolved' as they would in triangulation. Whilst difference inevitably creates a more complex research picture, I viewed the differences between data forms as an intrinsically interesting part of the story of the events, choosing to embrace them, rather than seek their 'resolution' via triangulation.

The historical nature of the research topic, that is to say looking back on a past social phenomenon rather than witnessing it in 'real time' also impacted on the way in which the topic was approached. Firstly, a note of pragmatism is required for sociological studies that are historical in focus, in that the data sources from which information can be garnered are perhaps more limited than those researching contemporaneous social phenomena. Data must be generated from available sources; the researcher has less facility to 'pick and mix' research methods due to the historical constraints presented. For example, studying a social movement from the past automatically precludes the use of observation-based methods; you cannot observe what has already happened. Insight into the movement needs to be achieved through methods that do allow a window into the

past, and this perhaps requires the use of methods less frequently used in sociological research, those whose focus is more historical.

The methods that I ultimately chose to utilise within the research, documentary analysis and oral history interviews, both allowed access to history, thus circumnavigating the 'historical' problem detailed above. Documents do so via their encapsulation of 'the moment' through the written word, thus giving a ready source of information about a time period otherwise inaccessible. Oral histories likewise ask participants to trace back to the time period or era in question and access their memories, to tell the researcher what it was like 'then', to allow for an understanding of the past to be given even though you are researching 'now'. Both these methods clearly help navigate the issues that historical sociological research presents and, for this research, the methods could be described as the methods of greatest relevance. The correlation of the methods to the research does not imply that the methods themselves are unproblematic, and due consideration of any such problems was given during the research. I will now move to discuss the key aspects of the methods selected, outlining how they were utilised within the research, as well as detailing how any such limitations of the methods were minimised or mitigated.

Documentary sources

Social research literature sees documents as a useful method in the bridging of research questions between the contemporary and the historical (May 2001), and this was in part the reason for the use of documentary methods within this research. Pragmatically, "Documentary sources may also be needed when situations or events cannot be investigated by direct observation or questioning" (Ritchie, 2003: 35). The importance of documentation was not overlooked by some at the time of the English student protests, for example, a staff member at LSE wrote to the Librarian at LSE in 1967 stating, "I think that as complete a record as possible should be obtained of the documentation that has been produced" (Raymond Frith, 1967: n.p).

Documents are also widely seen as being compatible with the use of other methods and can offer aspects such as a cultural biography to other methods (May, 2001; Mason, 2002). Documentary data can also be seen as a benchmark within research, a tool for developing the research design, or, as a starting point within the research (Pole and Lampard, 2002). It is also suggested that documents have a role to play in verification or contextualising personal recollections, and within my research I looked at documentary sources prior to the oral history interviews. This ensured that

I had explored the context of the protests before the interviews, and thus had some understanding of the events and issues the participants might raise in the oral histories.

The documents used within the research took a number of different forms and were amassed from a variety of locations (see appendix for full list of locations from which material was gathered). The majority of the documentary material was amassed from University archives, although some material came from personal papers donated to me, or materials available in virtual archives online. The documents were written mostly by the students or activists, the universities or the media. The types of documents looked at included personal correspondence, student memos, university memos, posters, newspaper articles (ranging from student papers to national broadsheets), minutes of meetings and press releases. The newspaper material used with the research was predominantly material held in the relevant archive files relating to student protest, in that clippings of related news stories had been collected by archivists and thus were accessed in my research via the archive sources, rather than news sources being searched separately. The types of documents used were produced by a variety of people and for a variety of purposes. For example, Students' Union posters or flyers were aimed at students, advertising events, talks, or meetings, whereas internal memos between the university authorities had an informative aim and a much smaller audience. Thus documents were produced by divergent groups, including: students; those who worked in universities, (both teaching staff and management); by members of the public; and journalists. The purpose of the documents ranged from information, advertisement, and negotiation, to opinion pieces.

The variety of documents used tells different sides of the same story, allowing for evidence of divergent perspectives. Scott (1990) suggests that official documents are the most important type of documents, in that they can cast light onto organisations, and this is certainly true of the documents of universities from the time period. The documents demonstrate how the universities acted, what the view towards protest was, and the power structures within the universities. Scott (1990) also goes on to suggest that organisational documents often have more to say about men's lives than women's, and again the university authority of the 1960s was comprised overwhelmingly by men, so it is mostly male reflections that are represented by such documents.

Pole and Lampard (2002) outline three pragmatic aspects to consider in the utilisation of documents within social research: knowing a document exists; identifying its location; and gaining access to it. In terms of my

research the cataloguing of archives and the use of online catalogues made the identification of documents a relatively straightforward procedure. I began with a list of universities where protest had occurred (based around newspaper reporting from newspaper index searches) and then investigated whether archives existed at those universities or colleges. Some of the 'newer' polytechnics or merged universities do not have archives and thus no archive material (Hornsey College of Art, for instance, is now subsumed within Middlesex University). However, most universities do have an archive and most have very open access to their material. Only Warwick University deemed the material in their university archive as 'too sensitive' and the registrar denied access to it. Given the passage of time since the events under investigation occurred, most material is now readily available, with some files being recently opened under the thirty-year rule (for example, the files of Lord Annan at Kings College, Cambridge). The knowledge of the archivists was also a crucial factor in locating material; they often could suggest files that might be connected (for example relevant university committee minutes) and were a source of great help with the pragmatic aspects of 'doing' documentary work. Whilst online catalogues undoubtedly ease the process of documentary research, and the catalogues can give a good idea of the amount of material held within a certain archive, this can sometimes be deceptive. Often archives appear promising in terms of the material available but if the content of the boxes or files are un-catalogued then the material can transpire to be neither relevant nor useful in the context of the research. Thus in the course of the research a lot of material was viewed but not actually used. Rather it was filtered out at the point of reading on the basis of relevance. Duplication of documents was also common, particularly in terms of key articles or pamphlets, both within archives as well as across locations. However, some archives, for example, Hull, required repeat visits due to the sheer volume of material, thus displaying the variety evident between archives.

The research did not employ strict content analysis of the documents, rather I aimed to view the overall picture the documents presented and the story being offered, rather than the meaning of the way documents were written. In this way the approach to analysis was what Finnegan (2006) refers to as 'direct use', in that I explored the documents for their factual content. Whilst the 'direct use' of the documents was about the 'facts' of the texts, issues of judgement and interpretation, seen as crucial for the use of documents, were kept in mind (ibid). For example, during the analysis of the documents the key question of 'what was the student movement like?' mediated my interpretation of the documents.

The analysis of the documents can be viewed as being two-stage. Much of the initial documentary analysis took place in the archives themselves. The process of viewing, reading, and taking notes, was the first stage of accessing the factual content that the documents offered. Some documents encountered at this stage were not relevant, for example, articles referring to student protest in the 1980s, which was beyond my timeframe and remit. Where possible, including at Leeds, The London School of Economics (LSE) and Hull which all had good facilities, relevant and key documents were copied, and taken away from the archive. However, this was not possible at all archives, therefore at locations where copying was unavailable, for example at Essex, detailed typed notes were taken *in-situ* for further analysis once 'out of the field'. The copied documents and notes were then explored during the analytical phrase proper, to engage with the different views and ideas the documents offered.

The documents were analysed thematically. Thematic analysis is useful for a broad ranging set of documents in that, it is "The identification of themes or major ideas in a document or set of documents. The documents can be any kind of text including field notes, newspaper articles, technical papers or organizational memos" (www.socialresearchmethods.net). Information from the literature review of student protest literature and social movement theories grounded the selection of the themes. I did however remain open to emergent themes during the analysis, and the familiarisation with the documents during the archive visits facilitated this approach. Thematic analysis looks at the content of text and the author, rather than discourse or content. In this regard it can be seen as being an approach that works with "what is there" (Mason, 2002:149). This approach to the analysis of the documents kept close ties to the purpose of the documentary evidence, to attempt to 'piece together' as broad a perspective of the events of the English student movement whilst simultaneously considering the later analytical and theoretical chapter and the use of the data within that. Therefore as the documents were explored, their contributions to the cases, i.e. what they could tell us about specific events, as well as the emergent themes were also explored. The documentary analysis, as with the oral histories, was in many regards an immersive process, utilising intense searching and exploration in the early stages, and then familiarity with the material in the later stages.

The analytical themes within the documents were identified by what Ritchie and Spencer refer to as a "…recurrence or patterning of particular views or experiences" (Ritchie and Spencer, 2002: 313). Thus incidences of, to use an example from the analysis itself, solidarity, were noted across

the documents, and within the cases. This thematic analysis also drew out patterns, in that similarities across cases could be noted, for example the use of similar tactics at different locations, or a different incidence but involving the same controversial figure as had been noted in relation to another locale. By using a thematic approach to the documents, connections between the literature and the data were possible. The use of themes also made the process of analysing two sets of data together more manageable as they were ordered in the same way, which aided the assessment of what the data demonstrated in terms of the movement as a whole.

Whilst the utilisation and analysis of documentary sources was mostly straightforward in my research, in part due to the excellent advice received from archivists as I searched for material, the use of documents within social research is not without problems. Documents are not written within a vacuum, they have a social context, and that context is often unavailable or not portrayed by the documents themselves. Documents have both intended and unintended audiences, with researchers inevitably being an unintended audience (Pole and Lampard, 2002). Thus, when using documents, the intended audience of the documents needs to be considered, and questions such as whom was this written for, what was its aim and purpose, what does it tell us about the author, all had to be considered for each document. Documents are not seen to be neutral artefacts (May, 2001); they have a cultural situation as well as a historical one. Issues of hermeneutics are therefore omnipresent in the use of documents, and a dialogue between researcher and text is suggested to be central to negotiating the different frames of meaning that may exist (Scott, 1990). As well as understanding the intended audience of a document, an understanding of the author's frame of reference is also deemed to be important in the correct contextualisation of documents (Pole and Lampard, 2002). For example, the context in which a document is written is very important to its understanding; letters in an archive may be out of the context of the written conversation which created them. The researcher might never be able to see the replies or responses to letters so may never know their full or true context. There is also the issue of bias in relation to documents, therefore who wrote the document(s) needs consideration. For example, an important question is, do only those in a position to create a document, that is, in a position of power, have the ability to put forward their views via documentary material. As a researcher, there are key questions to be asked about whose views are expressed via documentary material. In the case of the English student movement, because a variety of groups' views were demonstrated by the

documents, for example, students, the general public, the university, and specific left-wing groups, a good cross section of views was visible. Consideration of who was writing and why they were in the position to create a document was something that was kept under consideration during the documentary research.

Other issues facing researchers in relation to documents refer to notions of authenticity, credibility, and representativeness (May, 2001). Often 'official' documents relating to the universities I researched were written on headed paper, as were Students' Union memos, thus providing some evidence of authenticity via their origins. However, authenticity is hard to prove with documents containing less revealing features, thus an element of acceptance has to co-exist alongside documentary research; the researcher has to believe documents are what they say they are, particularly if there is no further means for examining their origins or intentions.

Representativeness is another area often seen as crucial within social researching. However, as Pole and Lampard (2002) suggest strict representativeness may not be a key criteria in documentary research if the generalisations being made from the documents are, as in the case of this research, theoretical rather than statistical. There is also the question of the selective creation of documents; there may only have been a certain type of document created about a topic, not all documents and information that the researcher would like to view, were actually created. Similarly, not all the documents ever created are then archived. The nature of documents as objects means notions of representativeness are therefore problematic.

I was donated a personal collection of documents during the course of my research, which was a personal privilege, as well as a rich sociological resource. However personal collections are a great case in point of selective processes, in that they do not always contain all the things relevant to the subject; rather they are only what people have kept. This, however, is interesting in itself in that it shows what they deemed to be significant in terms of what they retained. As with all documents, personal collections cannot be taken as 'all' the material on a specific topic, so cannot be conclusive in any way. However, they allow a wide cross section of ideas and views to be reviewed and are an excellent means by which events can be pieced together in order to gain an understanding of what happened during a specific event or episode. Documents in this respect are excellent constructors of 'pictures'. One can begin to formulate an understanding of what happened, when it occurred, and who was involved, which for an under researched topic is particularly useful in creating a foundation for the research. The sheer volume and variety of

documents encountered during my fieldwork also meant that cross-referencing dates and places were possible. This is not to say that discrepancies between 'stories' within documentary evidence on the English student movement does not exist, but such discrepancies are something that I have viewed as an interesting facet in the broader 'story' and something that I have aimed to comprehend.

A major practical problem faced in using documents within social research is that documents are a time consuming method. The process of locating and searching for relevant materials via library webpages and catalogues is initially a large undertaking. Whilst the process, from location to analysis took a significant amount of time, the documents as a source, particularly for my topic of research, were an excellent resource particularly in terms of the quantity and type of material; a resource often overlooked in sociological studies.

Often deemed the preserve of the historian rather than the sociologist, much of the material I viewed has not been used in sociological or historical scholarship despite the depth of the resource and its potential usefulness to the topic. My research has, however, clearly demonstrated that documents and archives are a resource that can speak as much to the sociologist as to the historian, and provide access to sociological phenomena that is otherwise beyond the grasp of contemporary sociological observation and investigation.

Oral Histories

Interviewing is perhaps the most prevalent of methods within social research, and is thus a method that is well established within the discipline and well tested in the field (Pole and Lampard, 2002). Interviews can be defined as "A verbal exchange of information between two or more people for the principal purpose of one gathering information from the other" (Pole and Lampard, 2002: 126). Oral histories are one type of interview, useful for the accession of historical memories and engaging with phenomenon's that were significant to the lives of participants, in that they "…offer rich evidence about the subjective or personal meanings of past events" (Thomson, 1998: 584).

Oral history can be defined as "…an account of first-hand experience recalled retrospectively, communicated to an interviewer for historical purposes and preserved on a system of reproducible sound" (Lummis, 1987: 27), or, "…the interviewing of eye-witness participants in the events of the past for the purposes of historical reconstruction" (Thomson, 1998: 584). Oral histories are suggested to be a useful method for researching the

recent past (Lummis, 1987), and can fill 'gaps' left by documentary sources (ibid), which perhaps demonstrates an element of 'fit' between the subject and methods within my work. Documentary sources alone, as discussed previously, may not be able to provide the 'whole' story. Indeed some proponents of oral history work suggest that the collaboration of documents and oral histories is not only useful but necessary in order to produce useful oral history data; "It is important before the interview to get deeply into the documentary materials relevant to an interviewee's experience" (Friedlander, 2000: 318). It is suggested that, "Atmosphere – of a particular episode or series of events, or of a whole period – is often what contemporary documents fail to provide" (Seldon and Pappworth, 1983: 47). Therefore one of the main uses of oral history is the provision of aspects such as 'colour' or "atmosphere" of an era, and which documents lack (ibid).

The method of oral history interviews allows accession into the past, "The retrospective element in oral history is important because it asks questions of the past which reflect present interests and seeks evidence which was not produced at the time" (Lummis, 1987: 27). There has been little engagement within sociological research to document the views and voices of those who were involved in the English student movement, and a method such as oral histories can allow for such voices to be captured. It is therefore a method which appears to play a useful role in terms of under-researched areas of social life, in that "Oral history is a history built around people. It thrusts life into history itself and it widens its scope" (Thompson, 2000: 28).

The fit of oral histories as a useful method has not been ignored within social movement scholarship and its possibilities for researching the 1960s has been noted. Eynon, for instance, states, "For the most part, the rich potential of oral history for scholarship on the 1960s has yet to be realised. This is puzzling, as oral memoirs would seem a natural tool for historians of social movements of the recent past" (Eynon, 1996: 560). Eynon (1996) also suggests that oral histories could be useful for social movement research in that they could mediate between the past and present and discover the legacy, if any, of the movement in question, which is potentially of great use for understanding social movements.

Roberts defines three types of oral histories: "topical interview"; "biographical oral history; and "autobiographical interview" (Roberts, 2002: 95). "Topical" refers to a specific occasion, whereas "biographical" is the experience of a particular individual, and "autobiographical" is the course of an individual life (ibid). There is however overlap between these elements. Within my research the major focus rested upon the use of

topical and biographical aspects, in that it involved the experiences of individuals of a specific event and time period (the student movement).

The major strength of oral history is suggested to be its almost emancipatory/advocatory role, "…it can give back to the people who made and experience history, through their own words, a central place" (Thompson, 2000: 22). In so doing "…oral evidence gives us the opportunity to understand the history of the people rather than of activists, leaders of people or their formal organisations" (Lummis, 1987: 18). The underlying rationale for the 'giving of a voice' within oral histories is due to the perception that "Everyone has a story to tell about their life which is unique to them" (www.ohs.org.uk).

One of the recurrent criticisms of the oral history method is the reliance on memories in order to generate data; "Memory is a treacherous thing" (Friedlander, 2000: 318), due to it being, "…amazingly short and amazingly fallible" (Seldon and Pappworth, 1983: 17). Respondents can be mistaken in what they convey or can consciously distort issues that are embarrassing or painful for them (ibid). Probing and cross-examination of participants is seen as key to overcoming some of the fallibilities of memory (Friedlander, 2000). However other oral historians see the cross-examining of participants as converse to the tradition of 'giving a voice', in that it overrules the notion of allowing a space in which participants can discuss *their* issues and lives. It has also been suggested that the peculiarity of memory is actually one of the strengths of oral history (Thomson, 1998). Rather than being a negative feature, the 'misremembering' of participants can actually be key to understanding the meanings of events (ibid). Memory or lack of memory about events may therefore be meaningful in terms of what the participant has foreshadowed in their mind about an event, and that issues of memory can tell us something of the way people make sense of their lives (ibid).

It has been suggested that participants are also liable to overplay their role in events, or condense events in an attempt to appear articulate, as well as create excess subjectivity within oral histories (Seldon and Pappworth, 1983). However, the interviewer's role in oral history can also be criticised in that "When a writer writes a biography, he or she writes him- or herself into the life of the subject written about" (Denzin, 1989: 26). Thus the dialogue that emerges in this type of interview is by its nature a subjective one. Whilst that may be an attribute of the method, being unable to see discontinuities in the respondents' memories, or failing to question the data due to being too close to both the subject and the data being generated may be problematic.

The method is also seen to have some inherent problems, specifically its inability to be verified by others (Seldon and Pappworth, 1983), in that each person's story is unique and usually their story is previously unreported or documented, or is 'new' and unable to be questioned. However, the 'newness' of each person's story was one of the features that was attractive about the method for this research; no two stories were the same, as no two lives were the same. Whilst there may be discontinuity between individuals' recollections, or between the documents and oral reflections, questioning why documents may tell one story and interviews another may offer us further insight into the subject of investigation.

Using oral histories is by no means an easy option; it is deemed to be a time intensive exercise (Seldon and Pappworth, 1983) as well as being intellectually challenging to create sociologically useful information (Eynon, 1996). However, for this research the inputs necessary to create a useful and detailed piece of work appeared more than equitable to the outputs gained from having used the method. The oral history element of the research was comprised of thirteen interviews in total (including piloting), and these ranged in length from half an hour to nearly four hours, thus the volume of data was extensive. Whilst undertaking an oral history interview is time intensive as Seldon and Pappworth (1983) suggest, the major time constraint I found came from the process of finding, contacting and arranging interviews with participants. This process could take some weeks, and there was often a period of waiting if participants liaised with one another to pass on my details. Fitting into the schedules of people with exceedingly busy lives was also difficult. Some participants arranged to meet with me several months ahead, inevitably adding to the time required to complete the oral histories.

Given the population under research was those who had some forty years previously attended a university or college in which protest was witnessed, no sampling frame existed from which participants could be drawn for the research. Key respondents were sought for my sample, and pragmatics drove the sample rather than aims of representativeness or stratification. I chose to explore three key cases within the oral histories, namely the London School of Economics, Essex University and Hornsey School of Art, in order to both narrow down the sampling, and also to explore three very different educational institutions whose commonality was the significant student unrest they witnessed during the 1960s. Participants' names who occurred in the documents, or who had written about the English student movement at the time of its occurrence were noted during the documentary and archival phase of the fieldwork. These people were then traced, often utilising 'Google'/Internet resources and

participants were then formally contacted via letter or email. Other participants arose from previous meetings, for example in 2005 there had been a 'Radicals Reunion' and a subsequent conference at the former Hornsey School of Art, both of which I attended. At these events contact was made with potential participants and contact details of those willing to be interviewed were gained at that time. Participants also made suggestions of other participants and often liaised with them on my behalf to assess whether they were willing to participate before passing contact details to me. Such acts by participants demonstrate the overwhelming generosity shown to me during the research, the willingness of participants and potential participants to help and share what they could in order to benefit my research was an extremely positive feature of the fieldwork. Such assistance by participants undoubtedly helped in the data generation and the quality of data garnered during the fieldwork stage.

The way in which participants were 'found' and contacted meant that sampling was based around key respondents, and thus notions of representation were difficult to achieve. Another issue of the oral history method is the representativeness, or lack thereof of the approach. Each person's story of the English student movement is unique, and part of the appeal in the selection of oral histories was the drawing out of the individuality and specificity of the events for each person involved. Discrepancies exist between the stories told by those involved, thus notions of a truth cannot be concluded, but variations are important in understanding the protests. The oral histories provided a snapshot of events, and offered a variety of ideas and experiences providing detailed insights that compare and contrast with the alternative story of events as provided by the documentary research.

Of the sample there were only two women interviewed, and it was important from the outset of the research to ensure some female perspectives were represented within the oral histories. At the time of the student unrest in England, the population at university was predominantly male, so the minority of women to men in this regard is not necessarily unusual. The important overriding factor from my perspective as researcher was to have some female representation, so the ratio of female to male was not something pre-decided, rather as with the sample more broadly, it was a feature of how it transpired in practice.

The key features of the sample of my oral history participants were as follows; all of those interviewed attended higher education during the years 1965-1973 at an institution that had experienced unrest. All participants were white and British. As previously noted, of the thirteen participants eleven were male, two were female. The participants all

worked in a variety of professional occupations, with many having taken routes into employment within higher education[2].

Many of the people who were significantly involved in the English student movement are now in positions of power, and as a result many of them declined to be involved, perhaps fearing a conflict between current roles and past involvements. This group made up the largest proportion of people who declined to be interviewed, and whilst their involvement would have been interesting given the roles they had played in the movement, they are perhaps the group who are most able to speak of their past experiences thus not becoming of the desire to 'give voice' which oral history work aims to achieve.

Whilst the interviews were not representative they were stratified in terms of the case studies, of which there were three. The interviews and their analysis was organised into these three cases, and an equal number in each was attempted. This was perhaps the only key organisational criterion imposed upon the sampling.

Three pilot interviews were undertaken prior to the commencement of the fieldwork proper (with two of these interviews being used in the final data). This was in order to trial the oral history process and to gauge the length and amount of data that may potentially be generated from the interviews. The piloting process reaffirmed that the oral history interview is a time consuming method, which as mentioned previously was one limiting factor on the number of interviews that could be undertaken, particularly given the extensive documentary work also undertaken.

One feature that also arose during the piloting phase, and then during the interviews themselves was the tendency for participants to recall not only what happened during the protest in which they were involved, but to offer their own interpretations and explanations for the events. This was particularly evident for those whose careers involve some form of analysis. Whilst the interpretations were interesting and informative, they had to be negotiated in order that a clear distinction between what happened and what they believed happened or why participants believed something happened, was demarcated. This was negotiated via exploration with the participants about the importance of the events in relation to their careers and how it may have developed their thinking, as well as exploring

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[2] The key data of the participants has been discussed in this general way, rather than in a tabular or other more detailed format to avoid the revealing of the identities of the participants by offering too much information about them. The identities of the participants have been disguised via the use of pseudonyms, and thus the decision to avoid compromising anonymity has been taken in relation to key data about the participants.