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Rethinking social mobility: The social background and career of students from the ‘Vyborg Nation’ (1833–1899)

Introduction

In the autumn of 1821, a 19-year-old farmer’s son by the name of David Miettinen enrolled at the Royal Academy of Turku. This young student of theology soon received some advice from his father, who was worried that David would spoil a rare educational opportunity: ‘Do not. In anything. Unnecessarily. Be involved. Spirits. And. Cards. Do not. Not at all.’¹ The son did not let his father down; he graduated from the university and became the chaplain of a rural parish in Eastern Finland. The change in his social standing was reflected in the new, more elegant surname he adopted: Metén.² Moreover, by marrying the daughter of the late vicar, Metén became integrated into a wider network of Eastern Finnish clergymen. The fact that Metén’s own daughter later married into a prominent family confirms that he had successfully secured his new social standing.³

That Mikko Tuovinen, a humble cottager’s son from Eastern Finland, managed to enter the university was perhaps even more unlikely. One explanation for Tuovinen’s unusual path may be the fact that his father had got a job at a sawmill near the town of Savonlinna, where the youngster could attend a preparatory school. Tuovinen also studied theology at university. Although not ordained, he became a well-respected schoolmaster. His upward social mobility was sealed by a marriage to a postmaster’s daughter – and by a new name, Mikael Tovén.⁴ The cases of Metén and Tovén are textbook examples of a process for which there is a specific Finnish term: *lukea herraksi*, to become a gentleman through reading (rather than through breeding). Between 1810 and 1867, ten

¹ *Älä. Mihingän. Turhin. Rupia. Wijnan. Ja. Kortin. Älä. Ensingän.* Grotenfelt 2003 (1905), 93.

² Until Finnish nationalism – known as Fennomania – developed into a mass movement from the 1850s onwards, adopting a Swedish name was a clear indicator of improving one’s social status. The name Metén no longer appears among the ‘cultured’ families of Finland, but that has probably more to do with the lack of male descendants than a lack of accumulated social capital.

³ The wife of David Metén (1802–1841) was Helena Elisabeth Söderbom, the daughter of Johan Söderbom. Metén’s career was cut short in his late thirties by a fatal illness. Yrjö Kotivuori, *Ylioppilasmatrikkeli 1640–1852: David Alexander Metén*. Online 2005 <<https://ylioppilasmatrikkeli.helsinki.fi/henkilo.php?id=13514>>. Read 11.4.2018.

⁴ The wife of Mikael Tovén (1813–1867) was Maria Magdalena Weilin, the daughter of Georg Aron Weilin. Mikael Tovén worked as a teacher and a schoolmaster in his old school in Savonlinna, and later continued his career in the town of Sortavala. Yrjö Kotivuori, *Ylioppilasmatrikkeli 1640–1852: Mikael Tovén*. Online 2005 <<https://ylioppilasmatrikkeli.helsinki.fi/henkilo.php?id=15472>>. Read 11.4.2018.

per cent of students who enrolled at university in Finland were brought up in peasant homes, and most of them ended up in the lower echelons of the clergy.⁵

This chapter discusses students' academic careers and their potential social mobility from the perspective of their family background in nineteenth-century Finland. The point of departure is the fact that university education provided young people with an opportunity for social mobility, as academic degrees played a key part in determining one's class position.

Young men of humble origins had been able to enter the Royal Academy of Turku (later the University of Helsinki) since its establishment in the 1640s. However, earlier research has shown that immediately after the annexation of Finland to Russia in 1809, the university's role in social mobility actually diminished.⁶ According to the conservative political elite of the time, such mobility was not to be encouraged, as it was likely to increase the chances of social upheaval. Consequently, the lower classes were to be kept out of key positions in the administration.⁷ After 1850, it became increasingly impossible to preserve the status quo because of the rapid socio-economic changes taking place. However, upward social mobility still remained relatively low-key despite the increasing pace of modernisation and the rise of the nationalistic Fennoman movement, which promoted the use of Finnish as the language of education. It was not until the end of the nineteenth century that things really began to change, as the idea of universal education finally took off.⁸

Although the nineteenth-century system of estates was not completely rigid, it was nevertheless guided by unwritten rules that set certain limits on a person's future career. The tale of the farmer's son who manages to educate himself despite almost insurmountable obstacles is a recurring narrative in late nineteenth-century Finland. On the one hand, the upward social mobility of these 'peasant students' – their route from grammar school to the university – was often glorified and described as a path full of sacrifices, poverty, cold, and hunger. On the other hand, the students were often described as experiencing an identity crisis brought about by the clash of the traditional family values of their agrarian background and the values of the urban middle class in which they eventually found themselves.⁹ These young men were aptly described by a contemporary journalist

⁵ Strömberg 1989, 319.

⁶ Waris 1940, 226 – 227; Strömberg 1989, 317 – 322.

⁷ Waris 1940, 232 – 234; Strömberg 1989, 320.

⁸ For an overview of Finnish educational system, see Heikkinen & Kaukiainen 2011.

⁹ The Finnish debate around the 'peasant student' was evoked by the Norwegian Arne Garborg, through his novel, *Bondestudentar* [Peasant Students], which was published in Finnish in 1891. From the beginning of the 1890s until the early 1920s, several university novels were published in Finland. The most famous of them are Arvid Järnefelt's *Isänmaa* [Fatherland] and Juhani Aho's *Helsinkiin* [To Helsinki].

as being at the ‘intermediate stage between two social classes, between the gentry and the common people.’ They had elements of both classes, but belonged to neither of them.¹⁰

At the same time, the more negative narrative of the status-seeking ‘half-gentleman’ appeared in public discussions about education. There was a fear that the growth of educational opportunities for the lower echelons of society would lead to idleness, and that ‘half-gentlemen’ would be capable of neither manual work nor the intellectual tasks typical of a ‘real’ member of the gentry.¹¹ Both narratives can be regarded as a reflection of the fact that the traditional roles of the estates in society were dissolving. Finnish society was in a state of flux in the latter part of nineteenth century. The growth of nationalism, combined with a decline in the power of the church, increased urbanisation, and a growing number of free associations, created a much more diverse middle class. At the same time, the ever-growing number of landless people led to an increasing burden on society from below. These issues made social mobility a pressing matter.¹²

The aim of this chapter is to outline the key factors that enabled social mobility in nineteenth-century Finland. How exactly did upward social mobility through a university education become a reality? How was a new, improved social status secured? How did one’s family background affect one’s later career; and what impact did the socially progressive transition to the nineteenth century have on all of the above? My analysis is based on a sample of students retrieved from the student matriculation records of the University of Helsinki (1833–1899).¹³ As at many Western European universities, the students at the University of Helsinki were divided into ‘nations’ according to their provincial origin. All students in the sample belonged to what was known as the ‘Vyborg Nation’, because they originated from Eastern Finland. Between 1833 and 1899, a total of 918 students were members of the Vyborg Nation.

It should be noted that students of the Vyborg Nation made up only 6–8 per cent of the total student population, even though this eastern province and its capital actually formed 15 per cent of the total Finnish population. The region also had some characteristics that made it different from the rest of the autonomous Grand Duchy of Finland. It was not only noted for being influenced by nearby St Petersburg – and for having been under Russian rule for longer than the rest of Finland

¹⁰ Järvi 1893, 3, 33–36. For more descriptions of university students’ experiences in contemporary novels, see Kortti 2013.

¹¹ Wirilander 1974, 374 – 380. Searching for word *puolihera* [half-gentleman] in Finnish Historical Newspaper Archives (Finnish National Library) results in various hits from the mid-nineteenth century onwards. Digital Collections: <https://digi.kansalliskirjasto.fi/sanomalehti/search?language=en>

¹² This development was most famously described by Arvid Järnefelt in his novel *Isänmaa*, where the protagonist is a farmer’s son who experiences an identity crisis over the traditional family values of his agrarian background and those of the urban middle class in which he finds himself as he is swept up in the rising tide of Finnish nationalism. For more descriptions of university students’ experiences in contemporary novels, see Kortti 2013.

¹³ Women were first accepted as members of Vyborg Nation in the 1890s. See Mervi Kaarninen’s chapter in this volume.

(from the eighteenth century onwards) – but also for having a local elite heavily influenced by the German language and culture. The relatively low number of Vyborg students attending university was most likely due to its relative distance from Helsinki, and the fact that before the 1880s, there was only one school that prepared students for university in the whole province.¹⁴

There is a huge body of literature available on social mobility. One of the favoured methodologies has been to conduct highly specialised studies based on large samples, taking into account entire countries, so that international comparisons can then be made. Such studies aim to analyse major transitions at the macro-level. As such, this kind of research does not focus so much on the kind of value transfer that actually took place on the individual micro-level.¹⁵ Nevertheless, micro-level analysis of personal decisions and family strategies is possible through intergenerational family history, which has been a popular approach in recent studies.¹⁶ A third line of enquiry is to study particular professions and to link educational training and social mobility to power analyses.¹⁷

Focusing on a limited sample of students and only the main events in their life offers a possible compromise that combines aspects of both quantitative and qualitative methods. In Finland, this approach has its roots in the works of Gunnar Suolahti¹⁸ and Heikki Waris.¹⁹ However, the career information found in the student matriculation records has its limitations for studying social mobility: analysing family backgrounds and later career paths can give the impression that university education generally led to success and mostly upward social mobility. Recent re-evaluations of Waris' work suggest that he regarded such a significant upward social mobility as a natural state for the rapidly modernising Finnish society. From his point of view, both the hard work of individual citizens and the supportive state contributed to the progressive development.²⁰

Another criticism of Waris' work is that he may have unconsciously exaggerated the contrast between the 'rigid' society of estates and the 'fluid' modern society. In her recent work on Finnish elites, Laura Kolbe has highlighted the importance of equal educational opportunities as a

¹⁴ For more on the 'Vyborg Nation', see Teperi 1959; 1987. A more recent overview is Matikainen 2014. On the province of Vyborg and 'Old Finland', see the recent provincial history by Kaukiainen, Marjomaa, & Nurminen (eds.) 2014.

¹⁵ For an overview of the field, see Payne 2004. For the Finnish context of social mobility research, see Erola 2010.

¹⁶ See the chapters by Johanna Annola and Ulla Ijäs in this volume.

¹⁷ Kaarlo Wirilander, for instance, combined cultural history and quantitative research in his classic work *Herrasväkeä* [The Gentry] from 1974. Wirilander shows how the old gentry began to adopt new roles during the long eighteenth century. Sociologist Esa Konttinen (1991) has taken this further by analysing how the development of professions was closely tied to the interests of the leading estates, particularly during the transition into the nineteenth century. For similar ideas in the British context, see Corfield 1995.

¹⁸ Gunnar Suolahti's article *Statistical Information on Students of the Academy of Turku in the Eighteenth Century* (1903) marked the beginning of a new Finnish research tradition on social mobility.

¹⁹ Heikki Waris was one of Gunnar Suolahti's students. Waris' article *Yliopisto sosiaalisen kohoamisen väylänä* [University as a Means of Social Mobility], published in 1940, set the bar for later researchers.

²⁰ Lindberg 2014, 271 – 288.

positive long-term feature of Finnish society, as it created the conditions necessary for social mobility.²¹ Gregory Clark's *The Son Also Rises* is another recent study that describes the overall historical development of social mobility, but in darker tones. According to Clark, not even the Nordic countries, otherwise known for their social democracy, provide problem-free examples of social equality.²²

Social stratification in nineteenth-century Finland

Various class schemes have been developed for researching social mobility and stratification. The following classification of former students of the Vyborg Nation according to their occupations, and those of their family, is a modification of the scheme used by Heikki Waris and his followers in their studies, which involved placing nineteenth-century occupations in order of rank.²³

In principle, Waris' scheme differs slightly from standard class schemes used in sociology, which are better suited to studying modern societies. In other words, standard class schemes stress people's positions in the labour market rather than their formal status in society. The variance in these classifications also reflects the difference between Anglo-American and Continental European ideals, with the former placing more emphasis on the market, while the latter focuses more on the state and bureaucracy.²⁴ There is thus no clear-cut way of classifying occupations, as such coding is always more or less subjective and it obviously simplifies what happened in reality. Creating appropriate categories is therefore especially challenging when studying a historical period of social and economic upheaval: new occupations emerge and the status of traditional occupations becomes less clear during such periods.

Compared to the very detailed scheme used by Waris, the main idea in the present chapter has been to reduce the number of categories used to better pinpoint only the key structural changes. In terms of formal status, the nineteenth-century Finnish class system can be roughly divided into three major groups: the elite, the 'gentry seam', and manual workers.²⁵ These groups are introduced below. The concept of the 'gentry seam'²⁶ refers here to the recognised but porous dividing

²¹ Kolbe 2014.

²² Clark 2014.

²³ Waris 1940, 209 – 230.

²⁴ See Konttinen 1991; Scott 2004.

²⁵ According to sociologist Risto Alapuro, the relatively simple (by international standards) dual nature of the Finnish class system still remains. Indeed, making good use of this basic class tension between the gentry and the common people has been a standard theme in Finnish populist politics, and it still forms a key component of the Finnish sense of humour. Alapuro 1997, 162 – 183; Knuuttila 1994.

²⁶ The concept was introduced by Kaarlo Wirilander in 1974 (Wirilander 1974, 90 – 101).

line between the gentry and commoners, as it was a fairly ambiguous who was a member of the gentry and who was not. For example, the ‘half-gentlemen’ were in many ways frowned upon as an anomaly, but for those interested in nineteenth-century social mobility, the seam between the gentry and manual workers – the zone where people were gentrifying themselves – is clearly an important part of understanding the nature of social stratification.

Among the elite were the higher grade administrators (see Table 1 below), consisting of senators, higher grade officials, bishops, professors, large land or property owners, and MPs; and lower grade administrators, such as sheriffs in the countryside and land surveyors in offices. In the latter part of the nineteenth century, this group expanded to become a broader middle class. The development of the modern middle class was also linked to the birth of professions.²⁷ Modern society and its accompanying bureaucracy needed various professional experts such as engineers, foresters, and agronomists; the professionalisation of their increasingly sought-after skills improved their status, along with those of medical experts (doctors and chemists). Meanwhile, the expansion of the school system led to the need for more university-educated teachers. Finland did not have its own army after its annexation by Russia in 1809, but some Finns later served as military officers in the Russian army. Another group with a strong identity, and which ideologically supported the estate system of classes, was the Lutheran clergy. By contrast, there was a more disparate group at the end of the nineteenth century consisting of many academically educated people in the free professions that did not fit readily into the estate system, such as artists, journalists, and private attorneys.

Those on the seam between the elite and manual workers, such as people in commerce, consisted of a wide range of owners and officials in sales and services. In addition, by the latter part of the nineteenth century, companies and banks began to offer new opportunities to white-collar workers. Before long, the only significant members of the elite left in towns who did not have an academic background were the heads of wealthy and respected burgher households. Office-holders formed an important seam group of lower grade employees, such as postmen and janitors. They were non-academic and performed mostly routine tasks, but they were clearly a separate group from manual workers. In church parishes, organists and vergers represented another group on the seam. Railways were built across Finland from the 1860s onwards, and lower-grade railway officials and workers came to form a classic group known for its educational optimism.²⁸

Of the manual workers, artisans and skilled workers were a heterogeneous group that straddled the seam, as experienced master craftsmen in towns could sometimes be counted as gentry

²⁷ Konttinen 1991.

²⁸ Waris 1940, 221 – 227.

in terms of their wealth and lifestyles. A similar large variation in wealth and status was apparent among the largest seam group – the landowning farmers. At the bottom of the social strata were manual, unskilled, agrarian, and industrial workers. The demographic realities of the nineteenth century are also reflected in the number of students whose careers ended due to sickness or death before their studies were ever completed. These nineteenth-century ‘drop-outs’ have been put in the ‘Others’ category in the tables.

In reality, social stratification did not follow such discrete categories as the schemes created for research purposes might suggest – it was more of a continuum. The gentry seam was not straightforward; it varied across the categories of office-holder, artisan, trader, and farmer. In these groups, the top layer at least had obtained the prerequisites for being members of the gentry. This meant being literate and having relative economic independence, either through a permanent salary or as a small-scale entrepreneur.

During the nineteenth century, the upper strata of landowning farmers adopted a gentrified way of life, and many of those representing the peasants in the Diet of Estates gatherings after the 1860s were counted as the gentry. Landowning farmers also played an important role in the development of nationalism in twentieth-century Finnish politics. In the urban context, the most important seam group consisted of traders and artisans. A successful trader, respected master builder, or goldsmith often belonged to the gentry, but a poor shoemaker did not.²⁹

²⁹ Wirilander 1974, 101 – 104.

Table 1. Percentage of Viborg Nation students (1833-1899, n = 918) of particular social origins (based on father's occupation) pursuing particular careers.

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L	%
Higher admin.	26	27	4	2	12.5	5	1	13.5	2	0	7	0	100
Lower admin.	7	32.5	4	1.5	20	4	0.5	6.5	9	10	4	1	100
Military officer	7.5	11	26	7.5	18.5	0	0	11	11	7.5	0	0	100
Medical expert	8.5	12	6.5	10	20	5	0	15	8	12	1.5	1.5	100
Clergy	1	12.5	0	1	48	0	0	5	7	14.5	11	0	100
Teacher	4	8	3	1	24.5	3.5	0	12	13.5	19.5	7.5	3.5	100
Free profession	16	18	0	0	20	6.5	0	13.5	6.5	11	6.5	2	100
Commerce	10.5	18.5	9	4	11.5	1	1	32	4.5	5.5	2.5	0	100
Others	8.5	17.5	7	1.5	23	0	0	19	6	13	4.5	0	100
n=	84	193	46	21	202	27	3	119	71	95	48	9	918

Father's occupation: A. Higher administration, B. Lower administration, C Military officer, D Medical expert, E Clergyman, F Teacher, G Free profession, H Commerce, I Artisan, J Post holder, K Farmer, L Worker. Source: Yrjö Kotivuori, *Ylioppilasmatrikkeli 1640-1852*. Verkkojulkaisu 2005 <http://www.helsinki.fi/ylioppilasmatrikkeli>; Veli-Matti Autio, *Ylioppilasmatrikkeli 1853-1899*. Verkkojulkaisu 2005 <http://www.helsinki.fi/ylioppilasmatrikkeli>.

The cross-tabulation (Table 1) of the occupations of former Vyborg Nation students and those of their fathers supports the idea of a gentry seam. It also reflects other features of social mobility typical of the society of estates. Firstly, the inheritance of occupations was strong in the clergy, civil service, military, and commerce. At the same time, there were certain 'forbidden' career paths, such as moving into a military career from below the gentry seam.

A humble background was generally an obstacle to furthering a career in administration: only one nineteenth-century Vyborg Nation student of farming origins, Antti Sairanen, managed to obtain a post as a district judge.³⁰ However, it should be noted that many Vyborg Nation students came from Finnish families living in St Petersburg, the nearby capital of Russia. For the sons of capital-based artisans and merchants, a career as a civil servant could be an option, because they were fluent in Russian and had economic assets in the city.³¹

³⁰ Yrjö Kotivuori, *Ylioppilasmatrikkeli 1640–1852: Anders Sairanen*. Online 2005 <<https://ylioppilasmatrikkeli.helsinki.fi/henkilo.php?id=16888>>. Read 11.4.2018.

³¹ For example, auditor Juho Estlander's father was a St Petersburg-based merchant called Wirolin. Both surnames point to Estonia and indicate that the father and son belonged to a well-known peasant family from south-east Karelia, Virolainen. Yrjö Kotivuori, *Ylioppilasmatrikkeli 1640–1852: Johan Estlander*. Online 2005 <<https://ylioppilasmatrikkeli.helsinki.fi/henkilo.php?id=14328>>. Read 11.4.2018. For studies in Russia, see Ketola 2007.

Some career paths could be restricted even for the offspring of the leading merchant households. For instance, a wealthy Vyborg-based tradesman Wilhelm Hackman wrote to Professor Zacharias Topelius in 1850 to enquire about the future prospects of his son. The letter implies that from the father's point of view, studies in law or medicine alone were not enough to guarantee a person's success – high birth or exceptional skills were needed, too.³²

Secondly, upward social mobility was usually only possible at one step per generation. Not a single office-holding son, for example, managed to achieve a highest administrative post, and only one in a hundred students who enrolled in the 1833–1899 period came from a family of landless manual workers. This is a much lower ratio compared to the (university) Nations of Western Finland, which highlights the remoteness of the Vyborg province and also supports the idea of one-step-per-generation social mobility. The relative success of farmers' sons compared to their fathers, on the other hand, is mainly explained by their right to participate in political activities after the parliamentary reforms of 1907.

However, there were exceptions to these generally predestined rules of social mobility. The metamorphosis of the young book-loving shepherd Matti Akkanen into the university professor Matthias Akiander has been described in a somewhat romantic manner in the literature. This talented boy learned to read with the help of a local land surveyor who lived nearby, and he had already learned Russian as a schoolboy in Vyborg. Akiander studied theology as was usual, but he soon became involved in the nationalistic Fennoman movement and began his university career as a professor of the Russian language. Despite his success in the academic world, Akiander was ordained in later life in an attempt to respect his mother's wishes.³³

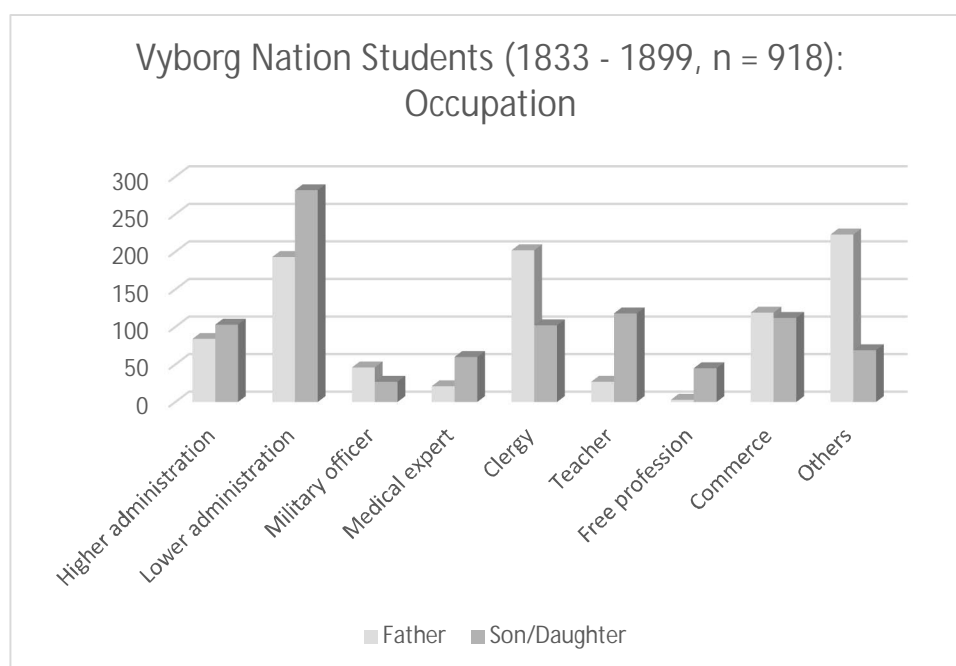
The tender shoots of social mobility

In studying social mobility, the horizontal aspect is perhaps even more interesting than the vertical. The graph of the occupations of the fathers of Vyborg Nation students (see Figure 1) and the later occupations of the students illustrate the expansion of the professions, the decline of the clergy, and the rise of the new middle class. Roughly three quarters of Vyborg Nation students had a background in the gentry, and the remaining quarter was almost entirely recruited from the previously mentioned

³² Tigerstedt 1952, 37 – 40. For more information on education in the Hackman family, see Ulla Ijäs' chapter in this volume.

³³ Yrjö Kotivuori, *Ylioppilasmatrikkeli 1640–1852: Matthias Akiander*. Online 2005 <<https://ylioppilasmatrikkeli.helsinki.fi/henkilo.php?id=13626>>. Read 11.4.2018; Luther 2001.

seam groups, leaving only 1% coming from a manual worker background in either agriculture or industry.



Economic and cultural capital gave families the chance to grasp the new opportunities offered by modernisation and the disintegration of traditional roles in the society of estates. Many members of elite families could secure themselves roles both in private business and public administration. The Alfthans,³⁴ for example, were originally a family of clergymen. However, none of the family members in Vyborg entered the clergy after the eighteenth century. During the nineteenth century, they were active in many other administrative and economic duties. Obtaining professional training was considered important, as was studying abroad.

The development of the professions determined much social stratification in the nineteenth century. Medical experts and foresters usually had their background in academic families, as did those who were later involved in commerce and banking. This fact further strengthens the picture of the importance of family background and networks. The decline of the clergy among the higher echelons of society was quite dramatic, however, and it reflects the socially progressive transition that was also taking place.

Marriage served as a means of securing one's social standing: crossing the gentry seam was often accompanied by marriage into the gentry.³⁵ For example, Salomon Lindh, the verger of

³⁴ Alongside the Thesleff and Zilliacus families, the Alfthans were influential for many generations in the economic, cultural, and political life of Vyborg. Autio 2002; 2007a; 2007b.

³⁵ Wirilander 1974, 234 – 247. See also Ulla Ijäs' chapter in this volume.

Virolahti parish, must have been satisfied with the achievements of his sons: while one of them became a clergyman, the other qualified to become a doctor – and to top this all, both married into an aristocratic family.³⁶ In fact, a successful marriage remained a precondition for a career in the administration for a quite long time. One of the first Vyborg Nation social climbers in the civil service was Gustaf Hellman. Marrying in 1883, he choose a spouse from outside the gentry. This tanner's son later became the Director of Postal Services.³⁷

The data suggests that upwardly mobile, talented, young lower-class men were regarded as acceptable spouses: the number of unmarried students among the less well-off social groups (16%) was lower compared to students with a father in the clergy (33%) or civil service (34%). The number of bachelors among the latter two groups seems very high when early mortality is not excluded (1833–1852). On the other hand, this might simply reflect the isolation of higher social groups, as their members saw themselves as having fewer potential partners.

The growing number of intermarriages between social classes is perhaps the clearest sign of the society's increasing fluidity. As Kai Häggman has shown, the rank order distinctions within the gentry began to vanish earlier than the actual seam between the gentry and the common folk.³⁸ One of the first Vyborg Nation students to marry a farmer's daughter was forester Magnus Forsström in 1866.³⁹ However, the most socially distanced marriage in the studied material was probably that of Johan Sihvonen, a young clergyman, and Julia Gripenberg, the aristocratic daughter of a general, in the 1860s.⁴⁰ Another interesting contemporary case is the marriage between Otto Blomgren, another young clergyman, and Hilma Rehbinder, who was a baron's daughter. Blomgren's path was probably eased by the fact that the baron, who had already died before the marriage, had held a relatively modest official position as a vicar in a rural parish.⁴¹

Despite increasing social mobility, there were prejudices against lower class students among those of a higher class during the latter part of the nineteenth century. In the 1880s, the rapid

³⁶ Yrjö Kotivuori, *Ylioppilasmatrikkeli 1640–1852*: Daniel Lindh. Online 2005 <<https://ylioppilasmatrikkeli.helsinki.fi/henkilo.php?id=13107>>. Read 11.4.2018; Yrjö Kotivuori, *Ylioppilasmatrikkeli 1640–1852: Anton Lindh*. Online 2005 <<https://ylioppilasmatrikkeli.helsinki.fi/henkilo.php?id=14842>>. Read 11.4.2018.

³⁷ The wife of Gustaf Hellman was Anna Silventoinen. Veli-Matti Autio, *Ylioppilasmatrikkeli 1853 – 1899*. Online. <https://ylioppilasmatrikkeli.helsinki.fi/1853-1899/henkilo.php?id=19158>. Read 11.4.2018.

³⁸ Häggman 1994, 126 – 128.

³⁹ The wife of Magnus Forsström was Margareta Lievonen. Forsström's brother, the judge E. F. Forsström, was one of the first to promote the Finnish language within the judicial system. Yrjö Kotivuori, *Ylioppilasmatrikkeli 1640–1852: Magnus Ernfrid Forsström*. Online 2005 <<https://ylioppilasmatrikkeli.helsinki.fi/henkilo.php?id=16729>>. Read 11.4.2018.

⁴⁰ Sihvonen's father-in-law was General Johan Fredrik Gripenberg. Yrjö Kotivuori, *Ylioppilasmatrikkeli 1640–1852: Johan Jakob Sihvonen*. Online 2005 <<https://ylioppilasmatrikkeli.helsinki.fi/henkilo.php?id=16060>>. Read 11.4.2018.

⁴¹ Blomgren's late father-in-law was Baron Karl August Rehbinder. Yrjö Kotivuori, *Ylioppilasmatrikkeli 1640–1852: Otto Gustaf Blomgren*. Online 2005 <<https://ylioppilasmatrikkeli.helsinki.fi/henkilo.php?id=16644>>. Read 11.4.2018.

expansion of schooling led to a debate on whether there were now too many students, and what inflationary effect this was having on standards. Docent F. Elfving, who worked as a university teacher, wrote in 1885:

[w]e know all too well those young men with questionable talent and even more questionable tidiness, who are from uncultivated homes sent to study at university. After their studies they begin to talk about the ‘cause of the people’ as apostles of civilization in various parts of the country.⁴²

Elfving’s fear of lower class ‘apostles of civilization’ preaching Fennomania was not groundless, since as many as half of the teachers that had been Vyborg Nation students came from a lower-class background. University Rector Th. Rein, too, had doubts about students from the lower classes. According to him, ‘many a young man whose natural talents would have made him an excellent shoemaker or tailor pushed his way into university to become a poor civil servant or scholar’. However, E.G. Palmen, who was Elfving’s colleague, replied that in his experience, the worst students actually came from higher class families. To get into university, lower class students had been already forced to show that they were both talented and studious.⁴³

The intellectual capacity of individuals is one variable in social mobility that is greatly discussed and not readily apparent from student matriculation records, even if success at exams might provide some indication when tallied with later career paths. The most outstanding example of such success was perhaps the son of a vicar, C. I. Qvist, who later wrote his doctoral thesis on philosophy and then became one of the leading liberal journalists in Finland, before embarking on a career in medicine.⁴⁴ However, there seems to be no significant correlation between the family background and the ‘quality’ of a student. Among the student cohort of 1833–1852, the average grade of those with a background in the gentry and those without was the same (18.1 votes). Furthermore, there was no difference in the number of early ‘drop-out’ students, since students with a background in the gentry formed 73% of the total number of students and 72% of those whose studies came to an end prematurely.⁴⁵

⁴² Ojala 1962, 376–377.

⁴³ Ojala 1962, 376–377.

⁴⁴ Yrjö Kotivuori, *Ylioppilasmatrikkeli 1640–1852: Carl Immanuel Qvist*. Online 2005 <<https://ylioppilasmatrikkeli.helsinki.fi/henkilo.php?id=16201>>. Luettu 11.4.2018.

⁴⁵ Database on Vyborg Nation students, 1833–1899 (Source: Yrjö Kotivuori, *Ylioppilasmatrikkeli 1640–1852; Veli-Matti Autio, Ylioppilasmatrikkeli 1853 – 1899*. Online publication. <https://ylioppilasmatrikkeli.helsinki.fi/>)

Conclusion

The society of estates still had a strong influence on the social mobility of nineteenth-century Vyborg Nation students, and it set limits on their future careers. Upward social mobility was usually only possible at the rate of a single step per generation; and it was very hard even to conceive of any upward mobility unless some or all the following preconditions were met:

- 1) There was a family background of relative economic independence (in terms of wealth earned through paid work or trade);
- 2) The family had cultural capital (i.e., literacy and language skills in Swedish and Russian);
- 3) There was the opportunity to attend school ('being in the right place at the right time');
- 4) The social climber had personal qualities and natural talents.

Family background was strongly linked to horizontal mobility as well, since the students with a background in the gentry had in practice a much greater choice. Modern professions and commercial activities mostly recruited students with such a background, while the newcomers had to follow more established and traditional routes.

This portrait of Vyborg Nation students probably exaggerates the slow start of the more fluid social mobility in nineteenth-century Finland, since the traditional gentry in the province of Vyborg remained relatively isolated and elementary schooling lagged behind the rest of the country.

Early Finnish newspapers also encountered difficulties in the province of Vyborg. 'Let's say it straight: there is a lack of education', wrote the newspaper *Otava* bitterly in 1863. This radical Finnish-language and pro-Fennoman newspaper was disappointed at its lack of subscribers, and it was once more forced to cease circulation. So, compared to Western Finland, the 'national consciousness' of the common people seemed to be at a much lower level.⁴⁶ Fennomania certainly contributed to increased social mobility and brought the classes closer together. Indeed, the first clearly interclass marriages of Vyborg Nation students were at least partly connected to the national awakening associated with Fennomania.

⁴⁶ Matikainen 2016, 172.

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