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Author(s): Jouhki, Essi

Title: 'Then we were ready to be radicals!' : school student activism in Finnish upper secondary schools in 1960–1967

Year: 2021

Version: Published version

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Please cite the original version:

Jouhki, E. (2021). 'Then we were ready to be radicals!' : school student activism in Finnish upper secondary schools in 1960–1967. *Scandinavian Journal of History*, 46(3), 383-407.

<https://doi.org/10.1080/03468755.2021.1875871>



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To cite this article: Essi Jouhki (2021): 'Then we were ready to be radicals!': school student activism in Finnish upper secondary schools in 1960–1967, *Scandinavian Journal of History*, DOI: [10.1080/03468755.2021.1875871](https://doi.org/10.1080/03468755.2021.1875871)

To link to this article: <https://doi.org/10.1080/03468755.2021.1875871>



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Published online: 09 Feb 2021.



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'Then we were ready to be radicals!': school student activism in Finnish upper secondary schools in 1960–1967

Essi Jouhki 

Department of History and Ethnology, University of Jyväskylä, Jyväskylä, Finland

ABSTRACT

In the Western countries, Scandinavia and Finland included, the legacy of the student movement of the 1960s has been extensive and established a fixed narrative of a radical movement. This article challenges the elitists and university-centred grand narrative and argues that the student movement was more multifaceted and mobilized young people of various ages and backgrounds. This is done by addressing the international student movement from the perspective of school-aged students in Finnish upper secondary schools, focusing on student activism carried out in school-sanctioned student associations. Above all, this article aims to distinguish the relatively unknown history of the Scandinavian school student movement.

ARTICLE HISTORY

Received 5 August 2020
Revised 7 January 2021
Accepted 8 January 2021

KEYWORDS

Finland; history of childhood and youth; oral history; secondary schools; student movement; youth activism

Introduction

On a chilly October morning in 1964, the small Finnish rural town Iisalmi woke up to a provocative procession led by school-aged young people. Over two hundred upper secondary school students marched down the streets, shouting slogans and carrying placards that demanded more versatile cultural activities, better education, and, in short, that students' voices be heard.¹ A few weeks after the demonstration, a 16-year-old schoolgirl pseudonymized here as 'Irkakeesa' wrote a brief report of the event in a Finnish national student magazine *Teinilehti*. Her words were fierce:

We are completely and utterly bored with this rotten state of things! No one acts here; no one even tries to take action. Nothing new is created or adopted. It's truly time for some winds of change. [...] We truly feel like we've done something. Let us hope that we've also accomplished something. But we must remember: this was just a wake-up call. The progression has to move on: our town has to wake up.²

In her report, she described how the event was a success in many ways: first, it had brought the students together and activated individuals that had not previously expressed interest in common issues, and, secondly, it had managed to provoke a fruitful discussion within the town community. For the teachers and school administration, however, it was both a shock and an unanticipated and intolerable outburst against traditional educational values.³ Yet, the school students of this small town were not an

CONTACT Essi Jouhki  essi.k.jouhki@ju.fi

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exception nationally speaking; during the following years, public and political demonstrations organized by young people grew more common around the country. Finally, by the year 1968, the pulse of the student movement swept through young people of different ages all around the world.

Much like sixty years ago, the global youth is on the move again. This article draws from the topical discussion on modern youth activism, which is perhaps best perceived through the global climate movement. In 2018, after 15-year-old Swedish schoolgirl Greta Thunberg began her solitary strike against climate change, her protest quickly and unexpectedly transformed into a contemporary, transnational youth movement, as young people around the world have taken a global stand against climate change. In certain segments of the adult population, however, the reception and attitudes towards this new youth movement have been negative at the very least – and even hostile. Such opposing quarters condemn and ridicule school students as naïve, immature, lacking perspective, and simply not suited for political activism.⁴

Curiously, the strong message of Greta Thunberg and other young climate activists of today bear an uncanny resemblance to the message of 'Irkakeesa', who represented the generation that was mobilized by the international social movement over half a century earlier. The 1960s, and especially the year 1968, have traditionally been seen as an era of unprecedented youthful dissidence, demonstrations, and revolutions, as well as violent conflict. International research on the legacy of the student movement is extensive. But while the major studies and books on the youth movement have established a grand narrative focusing mainly on the year 1968 and the experiences of certain memory groups, such as left-wing activists and the leaders of the student elite on university campuses,⁵ this narrative has given little room to studies that recognize the personal experiences of youth groups, such as school-aged students at lower levels of education.⁶

In her editorial piece in a 1968-themed special issue of *Memory Studies*, Andrea Hajek has critically pointed out that since the beginning of the 21st century there has been a reflexive turn in remembering the student movement. According to Hajek, the dominant, collective, and somewhat elitist narratives of 1968 no longer obscure the experiences and memories of different memory groups and individuals. In a sense, the memory of 1968 has become multidirectional and subject to ongoing negotiation, cross-referencing, and borrowing.⁷ The paradigm shift can be seen especially well in recent studies that have begun to take interest in different groups involved in the movement, such as young feminists, European social-democratic youth, and non-public figures.⁸

Scandinavian countries, Finland included, offer their own chapter in the historiography of the 1960s student movement. For instance, Thomas Ekman Jørgensen and Laura Kolbe have challenged the international grand narrative and established that the Scandinavian countries had certain distinguishing features – one of them being the long-standing hegemony of Nordic social democracy, civil society, and welfare state – that set its student movement apart from the larger European movement. Unlike in most Western countries, there were no significant violent protests or conflicts with the military, and the movement manifested mainly as peaceful occupations or sit-ins on university premises.⁹ The movement itself was prominent, however. Reflecting its unique nature, the Scandinavian student movement could be better described as an inclusive and transnational youth movement that mobilized thousands of students in acts of solidarity and protest at different educational levels.¹⁰

More surprisingly, the students' spontaneous activities and aspirations also seem to be missing from the educational histories. School students are at the centre of education, but their roles and agency in everyday life at school have traditionally been overshadowed by institutional and adult-oriented points of view.¹¹ However, during the last few decades, research on school students' spontaneous activities and direct involvement at school has been a growing trend: studies on school playgrounds, extracurricular activities, and the personal memories of school have grown more common.¹² Still, the relatively scant research interest seems paradoxical, considering that recess and different school-related activities have always taken up a great deal of students' time.

This article addresses the reflexive and multidirectional shift of the research paradigm head-on by focusing on the experiences and memories of school-aged activists in the context of Finnish secondary education.¹³ This article aims to contextualize the role of school students by focusing on relatively unique and spontaneous student associations that functioned in Finnish secondary schools during the 1960s and 1970s. Themes of youthful activism and dissent are addressed by perceiving school student activism through personal memories of *being* and *becoming* activists. By doing so, the article focuses on what kind of forms student activism took, who the young activists were, and what motivated them to act. More precisely, concentrating on the years 1960 to 1967, this study examines why secondary school students in Finland became activated well before the peak of transnational student radicalism in 1968.

This article aims to open new vistas in studying the history of youth activism. The study demonstrates that school-aged children, too, have a long and transnational history of dissidence and opposing strong authorities and conservative values in educational institutions and society at large. More so, this article draws attention to the previously neglected Scandinavian school student movement and distinguishes it from the better-mapped history of Anglo-American high school activism.¹⁴

The article begins with an overview of its sources and methods. Autobiographical memories and remembering are an important theoretical standpoint of the entire study; however, the aim of this article is not to address different methodological ways of analysing oral history sources. The focus is rather on understanding the mechanisms of activism conveyed through personal narratives and memories. The following section maps out the emerging of school student activism in the light of previous research and knowledge, and the questions of *becoming* and *being* an activist are addressed in the latter sections. The final section draws a comparison between Scandinavian and Anglo-American school student activism and contextualizes the role of the school-aged children and young people within the historiography of the international student movement.

Looking back to the student life

The material for this article derives from a Ph.D. research project (2015–2020) that studied the history and personal experiences of student associations in Finnish upper secondary schools from the 1950s to the 1970s.¹⁵ The original body of research materials consisted of over thirty autobiographical interviews, written autobiographical memoirs, newspaper articles, and student magazines, as well as a wealth of archival sources. For this article, a selection has been made of seven individual autobiographical interviews with former students who attended secondary school in two different Finnish cities during the 1960s.

In this case, two very different cities make for an interesting context for comparisons and recognizing recurrences, differences, and shared experiences in the interviewees' recollections.

The interviewees chosen for this article were active members of their student community – they either were editors in local student magazines, acted as presidents, or took a leading role in social activities organized by the student associations. The interviewees will be referred with pseudonyms: Martti (b. 1944), Annikki (b. 1945), Pekka (b. 1949), Marianne (b. 1945), Suvi (b. 1945), Heli (b. 1948), and Henri (b. 1949). All the participants – three men and four women – can be categorized as part of the demographically large Finnish baby boomers' generation born between the years 1945 and 1949.¹⁶ During their activist years, they were approximately 15 to 19 years old. From this sample, Marianne, Suvi, Heli, and Henri spent their youth in the small rural town of Iisalmi in Eastern Finland. The town had two neighbouring secondary schools, one for boys and one for girls. The rest of the interviewees lived in the provincial centre of Northern Finland, Oulu, where Martti and Pekka attended co-ed schools and Annikki an all-girls' school.¹⁷

The interviewees were recruited through open calls in social media and newspapers, and contacts from the first interviewees. Different recruiting methods were used to reach participants from diverse backgrounds and with multivocal memories, but also to avoid emphasis on networks with similar experiences. The interviews were semi-structured, and the focus was on narrativity and the interviewees' subjective reconstructions of the past.¹⁸ For instance, the interview themes were not solely focused on memories of school but also youth and personal life histories in general. After all, memories are all about stories and narratives that are recollected, reconstructed, reinterpreted, and retold by people to other people. Fundamentally, remembering is a reflexive act, meaning that narrators re-live and clarify past events to their audience as well as to themselves. Thus, a lived and experienced life history becomes a narrative that has a direction and a purpose.¹⁹

Oral testimonies as a historical source have traditionally come under scrutiny due to the long temporal distance between the past and the present. Oral historians, however, are unanimous in their opinion that the narrator should be allowed to remember and recount their memories as they want. Remembering is a reflexive and socially constructed act, where people articulate subjective experiences about the past through the prism of the present. Memories are not merely about historical facts or events, as they tell us more about the people involved in them, as well as their mindset, opinions, and motivations to act. Remembering is always a social act that happens at a certain time and place, and for a certain purpose. While something is remembered, other things are forgotten or left untold.²⁰

In this study, oral testimonies and written documents were placed in a dialogue and then analysed by combining the methods of historical contextualization and thick description of the sources, which are often utilized in social and narrative studies.²¹ In this particular case, oral testimonies were seen as the primary source, and written documents were used as a contextualizing and interpretative tool. The seven individual narratives were read side-by-side with two Finnish student magazines, a local student magazine *Plipsi* (published in 1964–1968), and a national magazine *Teinilehti* (published in 1945–1983). The former was a local magazine edited by students in Iisalmi with the help of a teacher representative. The latter was a professionally printed biweekly magazine published by a national student organization, the Finnish Union of Secondary School

Students (FUSSS). Its independent editorial board consisted of young editors studying at the University of Helsinki, but the magazine also published pieces written by secondary school students. *Teinilehti* had an exceptionally large circulation, as it was sent automatically to all members of the FUSSS.

Student magazines have a long tradition in nearly all educational systems, and they have a twofold purpose in both upholding the sense of community within the student body and educating in citizenship skills. Even though teachers or principals often supervised the magazines, the content was not filtered through an adult perspective, being edited and published by the students themselves. Student magazines can, therefore, serve as an exceptionally fruitful source regarding the experiences and voices of the past student generations.²²

Mapping the international school student movement

Scholars such as Gael Graham, Matthew Ides, Steve Cunningham, David Lavalette, and Kimmo Rentola have increasingly challenged the grand narrative of the student movement, suggesting that rather than just focusing on university students, school-aged students were also active in the political and social movements of the 1960s.²³ A noteworthy yet for some reason still overlooked entry in this area was Graham's pioneering book *Young Activists: American High School Students in the Age of Protest* (2005), which points out that the high school student movement was fundamentally a students' rights movement. For American teenagers, the sharpest critiques of the movement were mostly directed against structural issues in the education system, racial discrimination, and rules of decorum, such as hairstyles and regulations on skirt lengths. A smaller group of activists rebelled against the strict and outdated administration at high schools, demanded free speech for student magazines and more democratic student governments, or campaigned for feminist causes.²⁴

Likewise, Cunningham and Lavalette have recently highlighted that in the early 1970s the young activists in Great Britain gathered together to protest oppressing educational structures, like corporal punishment and rules of decorum, including school uniforms.²⁵ As for the Scandinavian context, Kimmo Rentola has been one of the first scholars to recognize the relationship between school students and the student movement. In his research, Rentola has established that the roots of the prominent political Finnish Neo-Marxist movement called Taistoism (*taistolaisuus*) in the 1970s can be traced directly to radical student groups in secondary schools in Southern Finland.²⁶

The Scandinavian schools, however, differ from their Anglo-American counterparts as they had no such profound and discriminating structures to rebel against. In a sense, the Scandinavian educational system was rather equal in terms of race or gender, and the school administration did not push strict rules of decorum. Instead, individuality, to a certain degree, was somewhat encouraged.²⁷ Consequently, the Scandinavian student movement was more about the fundamental rights of the students, such as school democracy, and dismantling and renewing the unequal educational system altogether.²⁸ There was, however, some variation in the educational histories.

Finland, for example, was among the last countries to establish compulsory basic education in 1921, and the comprehensive school system was developed in the 1970s. In comparison, other Scandinavian countries had adopted mass schooling a decade

earlier.²⁹ Also in the United States, high school education had become universal and nearly mandatory for adolescents of all races and classes.³⁰

Before the processes of mass schooling, the Finnish secondary school system was an unequal two-track system, where social background dictated the level of education for children: secondary education was expensive and thus often exclusive to higher social classes.³¹ However, the shift to inclusivity was rapid: in 1960, roughly a third of the entire age group enrolled at secondary schools, and by the end of the decade, the majority of young people aimed to obtain a degree in secondary education.³² These relatively fast transformations in education are often explained by postwar structural, economical, and societal changes that boosted its value.³³

In addition to these characteristics of its educational system, Scandinavian school student activism had certain other traits that set it apart from the global picture. One of the holistic traits of the entire Scandinavian student movement was the particular tradition of civil society and the relative lack of social hierarchy.³⁴ Surprisingly, unlike in the United States or Great Britain – where the young activists were forced to resort to underground and even borderline illegal tactics – Scandinavian activism was carried out through existing structures and school-sanctioned activities.

Since the early 20th century, disciplinary monitoring and the socialization of school students had traditionally been encouraged through different kinds of social clubs and athletic teams, and for decades these school activities constituted the frames of most students' social lives. In Scandinavian countries, secondary school students had a long tradition of independent and local student associations (*elevråd* in Sweden, Norway, and Denmark; *teinikunta* in Finland) that included a large portion of the whole student body. In addition to organizing free-time activities, such as student parties and social clubs, student associations acted as a form of student governance.³⁵ Social clubs and student governments were essential in high school culture in the United States as well, but they were often intended for several different student groups. Consequently, American high school activists mobilized through smaller and several unrelated groups, most often based on race or other peer relationships.³⁶

For the Scandinavian student associations, their most important function was to support and strengthen the sense of community between the students at both the local and national levels. The latter was enforced through national cooperative organizations such as Suomen Teiniliitto (Finnish Union of Secondary School Students, FUSSS) and Finlandssvenska Skolungdoms Förbundet (FSS) in Finland, Sveriges Elevråds Centralorganisation (SECO) in Sweden, Norges Gymnasiastsamband (NGS) in Norway, and Danske Gymnasiastförbun (DGF) in Denmark.³⁷ Moreover, these national student organizations were engaged in transnational collaboration and active exchange of ideas. For instance, they had regular correspondence, meetings, working groups, and shared projects, such as charity events called Operation Day's Work (*Dagsverke*), which are still carried out in all Scandinavian schools.³⁸

Scandinavian countries have traditionally had a high rate of assembling in labour unions and organizations, and school students were no exception: for instance, during the 1960s, over 60% of all Finnish-speaking upper secondary school students had membership in the FUSSS.³⁹ This, combined with prominent networks, is another trait that set Scandinavian school students apart from their international peers. For example, in Great Britain, the student activists formed a National Union of Secondary School Students

(NUSSS), but it was not as acknowledged or long-lived as its Scandinavian counterparts, only lasting from 1968 to 1973. Moreover, even though American high school activism was a large-scale phenomenon, the students failed to organize a national student network, as most collective efforts centred on single or citywide high schools.⁴⁰ Scandinavian student organizations, on the other hand, had established themselves as recognized agents, as most of them had been founded before the Second World War.⁴¹ They had sustained permanent and functional structures, which were swiftly utilized by the young activists at the beginning of the 1960s. For example, in addition to receiving *Teinilehti* and monthly circular letters, all local FUSSS representatives attended biannual, three-day district meetings and took part in summer courses, weekend seminars, and other events hosted by the organization.⁴²

Despite certain national particularities, the school student movement was in fact transnational in scope. Much like their slightly older peers, school-aged students around the world were concerned with issues such as civil rights and democracy. Moreover, they were distressed by the Vietnam War and Third World catastrophes. All these, combined with the counterculture and the influence of the *Zeitgeist*, led to simultaneous outbursts of activism and protests among school-aged students in several countries – who were, however, mostly unaware of each other.

Culture as the cradle of activism

The student rally described at the beginning of this article is an illuminating example of the spontaneous student activism that spiked around Finland during the 1960s. The demonstration was the opening act of a two-day cultural festival, organized by the student associations of both secondary schools, which included panel discussions, teach-ins, art exhibitions, and a culture-filled evening programme. The main message was that the local students were disappointed with the state of cultural activities in their hometown. In their view, recognizing the importance and diversity of culture was the gateway to education.

The citation of the 16-year-old schoolgirl 'Irkakeesa' at the beginning of this article was originally published in *Teinilehti*, but she expressed her voice in the local student magazine *Plipsi* as well. In the last issue of 1964, she wrote a report on the cultural festival and revealed some of the motives behind it. She quoted some of the student speakers at the festival and presented an explanation for the 'rotten state of things':

'School is the cradle of culture. That's where a young person is lulled slowly to sound sleep, from which he will never wake up.'

'Every school grade equals one grog. Finally, at the top, we've emptied about 14 grogs. No wonder we pass out.'

But maybe the fault isn't in our education system, even though it's over 50 years behind its time, but in the attitudes of our teachers. Our very own school is an institution for distributing knowledge, where the teachers are mere technicians giving out instructions. They sure aren't great educators or cultural figures.⁴³

Her message was clear: the fault lay within the system itself. The teachers, who were the representatives of the system, had to be re-educated. While the festival was mostly about

culture and improving cultural life, it also offered a sharp critique of the conservative secondary education system, stuffy teaching methods, and hierarchical relationships between teachers and students. One of the banderols even screamed: 'The school has to learn to respect the student!'⁴⁴

Two of the interviewees, Marianne and Suvi, were central figures in organizing the cultural festival and editing the student magazine *Plipsi*. Marianne also acted as the president of the student association in the all-girls' school. Together they reflected on what made the students pull together and organize such an event:

Interviewer: Could you tell me a little about the cultural festival? It was a prominent event back then. How did you end up organizing such a festival?

Suvi: It's impossible to say how we ended up [laughs], more like we were drawn into it! But honestly, I don't have a clear memory of how, just that we felt like something simply had to be done, like, this can't be how it is!

Marianne: Right, I was thinking about this before you [the interviewer] came, that how on Earth did we come up with this? Because we were both involved in this. An idea must have come from somewhere, that ...if we think that everything isn't right, then you can talk about it in public and that you can ... that we have a right to draw other people into it. And assume, that we can pull it off!

Suvi: Yes! And in the banderols, we pretty much summed up that we weren't happy with the teaching at school. [...]

Marianne: That's the thing! If you look at these photographs of those banderols, it was really radical. I mean, this idea about school democracy was prominent in these. Like, we need democracy and reforms, not just more wages for teachers and such... And ...that you could take these placards and march down the streets so that everyone can see – it was really huge.⁴⁵

The women had already tried to formulate a shared narrative of the event before the interview, and together they agreed that even though the culture was the spearhead of the event, they had underlying societal motives and early political aspirations at school. For instance, public and common demands for students' legal protection and school democracy did not gain ground until 1967 and 1968.⁴⁶

For the women, however, organizing the event was a significant turning point that demonstrated that the students had a voice, and it could be heard. Understandably, the festival created antagonism between the students and teachers. Amazingly, none of the students involved were expelled or publicly punished. However, Marianne, being the president of the student association, felt the repercussions of their radical activism: she was angrily scolded by her history teacher and her grade dropped permanently.

The young activists in the town of Iisalmi were not alone. Their activism was linked to two larger phenomena. First, and most directly, it was inspired by a national student campaign by the FUSSS. In 1964, the annual theme of the FUSSS was titled 'regional cultural politics', which included seminars, circular letters, and extensive features on culture and politics in *Teinilehti*.⁴⁷ While Marianne and Suvi initially emphasized their own initiative and activity over the direct influence of the FUSSS, in the end, Marianne pondered: 'But maybe the courage came from the fact that we were part of a bigger system. Like, if they [the FUSSS] could speak about this and do that, then why couldn't

we?’ The central organization was, after all, an influential role model and source of inspiration.

Secondly, both the cultural festival and the early theme of the FUSSS were part of a larger intellectual and ideological reform taking place in Finland at the beginning of the 1960s. For instance, Laura Kolbe has described that in Finland the culture-oriented movement, later titled ‘cultural radicalism’, stemmed from a series of long-reaching processes, such as structural and social adjustments, radicalization of the political left, and cultural modernization dating to the turn of the 1960s. The movement was closely linked with young intellectuals and a widening of the ‘national’ cultural horizon: new examples from Western Europe, such as literature, theatre, and art, became important platforms for the young radicals to reinterpret the collective past of the Finns. For instance, the role of war memories was heavily debated, and right-wing, ideological militarism was criticized.⁴⁸ However, neither the conservative elite nor all of the public greeted the novel ideas positively, and the entire movement was quickly deemed as social democratic or even leftist propaganda. For many young students, this became a self-fulfilling prophecy.

Cultural radicalism was distinct to Finnish university students, but students from lower school levels were greatly influenced, too. One of the interviewees, Martti, who acted as the president of the student association in his co-ed secondary school, summarized the overall atmosphere among school students at the beginning of the 1960s:

Martti: Actually, now that I think back on what happened in Finland in the ‘60s, I think one of the prominent traits was that, like, on all levels the ‘establishment’ was being questioned. And, uh, culture was the flower that we nourished.⁴⁹

For Martti, culture-oriented activities were key elements in engaging in student activism. When asked what he and his schoolmates wanted to accomplish with the student association, he answered promptly: ‘Actually, we wanted to show that we were more than just little kids. [...] I mean, to show our parents and others, what else it [a student association] can be. Like, it’s not just partying.’ During the 1950s, young people’s fascination with new popular culture and music, such as tango and rock ‘n’ roll, had quickly earned them a reputation as carousing schoolkids who had lost their morals and noble beliefs.⁵⁰ For the young activists, publishing a student magazine, writing in local newspapers, and organizing literature matinees or classical concerts served as a strong message to the surrounding society that the school students wanted to be heard and taken seriously.

The interviewees pointed out that important cultural organs of the University of Helsinki, such as the student newspaper *Ylioppilaslehti* and the Student Theatre, were well known among secondary school students. As a consequence, *Teinilehti* and local student magazines quickly adopted the same culture-political line, and published opinions began to grow sharper. As the examples of Marianne, Suvi, and Martti demonstrate, attentive school youth could not close their eyes to the contemporary societal debate. Instead, they felt obligated to take part in it.

Yet, for some students, the motives for cultural activism lay elsewhere. Annikki, who attended an all-girls’ school in the same city as Martti, also participated in the activities organized by the student associations. She agreed that young people’s attitudes towards authorities and fixed conceptions about the past were changing, but she remembered that she was simply driven by an interest in the new European culture. She described how

she and her closest schoolmates used to sit on the stairs of the local church, discussing the modern culture. 'Oh, we were so cultured!' she laughed theatrically, and described how contemporary classics, such as Albert Camus' *The Stranger*, had a profound impact on her.⁵¹ Both Martti and Annikki emphasized how the contemporary poetry, music, and theatre shook established conceptions and societal views. The interviewees greeted these new winds of modernization with joy and described them as surprising, unanticipated outbursts in the stuffy and serious atmosphere. 'Like a fart in church', Martti joked during his interview.⁵²

Young activists searching for their voice

The principal idea of the Finnish cultural radicalism was that culture and society are intertwined and inseparable. Moreover, youthful dissident and conflict between generations were essential features of the movement, as the uprising academic youth wanted to shock the old, conservative elite, whom they felt were stuck in the 1950s. Public discussion and sensational headlines were sought after, and everything could and had to be scrutinized critically.⁵³

The cultural radicalism was widespread among both university students and school-aged young people. However, the students at different educational levels did not share the same opportunities and possibilities to be heard. As Martti's memories reveal, the young activists – being underage – bore the stigma of being considered childish school-kids. Because of their age and an educational ideology that still predominantly emphasized strong authority and obedience, school students could not express their demands and actions as publicly as adult university students could. For this, they needed a strong spokesperson and a proper channel.

For the Finnish school students, the FUSSS fit that bill. By the end of the 1960s, the majority of upper secondary school students had acquired membership,⁵⁴ and the FUSSS had quickly grown into a trade union-like organization for school students. Although providing a national channel for participation, its activities and administrative functions were centred in the capital city of Helsinki – something that the FUSSS was often criticized about. Thus, the students in the municipalities and rural cities had to be imaginative, often relying on original forms of participation. In the spirit of cultural radicalism, two of the most prominent platforms of participation were found in culture: theatre and the written word. The editors of *Teinilehti* encouraged local student magazines to continue their work in promoting free speech and acting as the voice of the students. Moreover, they stressed how the student magazines 'should educate students into regional cultural personalities who dare to demand equality for young people in their hometowns'.⁵⁵

Apparently, the message was taken seriously. The students in Iisalmi founded *Plipsi* at the beginning of the fall semester in 1964, just a few months before the cultural festival. Recollecting her time on the editorial board of the first controversial issues of *Plipsi*, Marianne emphasized how the aim of the magazine was to have a say in the topical issues of their local community and the larger society as well: 'We printed a magazine, wrote sharply. We wanted to make the world a better place. The yellow colour of our cover (in [Figure 1](#)) wasn't a coincidence, it was carefully chosen.'⁵⁶



Figure 1. Select issues of the student magazine *Plipsi* from 1964 to 1968.

Student magazines changed drastically during the early 1960s. They no longer printed light entertainment such as jokes or beauty columns, but turned their gaze to contemporary societal, political, and international issues. The first issues of *Plipsi* raised such topics as unethical teaching methods and students' rights. In the following years, the magazine addressed issues of sexual education, school democracy, problems of Third World countries, Apartheid policies, and the Vietnam War.⁵⁷ Marianne had a clear vision of their motivations:

Marianne: But our focus on societal issues... I recognize it immediately because you can clearly see it in these magazines. Like, such a thing as society exists and you can discuss about it. And it's constantly on the move. Maybe not so much about internationalism... we didn't have television back then, but there were some images of Africa or ...was it Biafra?⁵⁸

Examples of *Plipsi* and the personal narratives of the interviewees demonstrate that by the mid-1960s, young students had become more aware and increasingly vigilant regarding the societal and global issues around them. Newspapers, radio, and the growing ubiquity of television brought the world closer, and alert students could not simply ignore the global issues. Instead, they demanded better and more accurate education on contemporary and often distressing issues. The students wanted to know more about society, how it functioned, and, most importantly, how they could take part in it.

School-aged activists around the Western countries were interested in similar ideas, and student magazines were a key platform for distributing information. However, this new kind of student activism was not always greeted openly. For instance, American school newspapers were often subject to heavy censorship, which led to a wave of radical underground student magazines in the late 1960s and early 1970s, and distributing and possessing such magazines on school premises was often punished.⁵⁹ Matthew Ides, who

has studied the rise of second-wave radical feminism within high school students in the United States, has concluded that underground feminist student magazines played a crucial role in the growth of high school activism as a whole. In addition to the feminist agenda, magazines critiqued the mainstream youth culture, brought up controversial themes, and suggested ways that students could participate in social movements.⁶⁰ Even though Scandinavian student magazines addressed similar topics, they enjoyed a relatively wide freedom of speech and were rarely censored by the school staff. Rather, students were encouraged to take part in societal discussion.

Active citizenship was at the core of the Finnish secondary education ideology, as up to twelve years of education aimed to prepare students both for further academic studies and as active citizens of a larger polity. This was enforced through the curriculum, which included courses on civics and studies on societal rights and responsibilities.⁶¹ The educational principles were also supported through school-sanctioned activities such as student associations, civics clubs, and student magazines. However, the degree to which these aims were realized varied between regions, schools, and individual teachers. For instance, Marianne, Suvi, and their peers felt that the education they received at the local all-girls' school was inadequate. Their slightly younger schoolmate, Heli, shared their frustration:

Heli: Our history teacher, she only taught us ancient history, the times of Cleopatra, and such. Ooh, you just listen, we had to memorize all those, whatever they were, the pearls of Cleopatra, and how they somehow melted somewhere. ... This ancient history! And when we finally got closer to modern history, she just gave us, like, over thirty pages of homework. It was ridiculous! And well, how do you grow into a citizen then?⁶²

In comparison, the students of the neighbouring all-boys' school had a young and innovative history teacher who adopted new, inclusive, and participatory teaching methods and emphasized civics lessons. Henri, a student there, described how the teacher took students on field trips, for example, to a court case or a county jail. He stressed, 'You just get it differently, you know? It's not just told to you, but actually shown how things can be.'⁶³ The students at the all-girls' school were aware of the differences in their education and openly expressed their dissent. As an answer to the unequal setting, the boys and girls organized a shared co-ed civics club and asked the popular teacher to run it. However, the club met only a few times per month, and in the end it had little impact on the students' overall civics skills. Even though considered a good start, those with the most hunger for knowledge had to find their civic education elsewhere.

For all the interviewees, the FUSSS and *Teinilehti* were important sources of information they could turn to. For example, Pekka, who later entered a career as a journalist, held *Teinilehti* in high regard:

Pekka: I used to read *Teinilehti*. It came to us because of my older siblings, and I was really interested in it. For me, there were these intriguing features on things like free education, Summerhill, and so on. [...] But then there were a lot of other things, like current things on Third World countries, especially with Peru, and maybe something on Mozambique. Well, materials like that. Of course, this was, it had a lot to do with the over-all rise of leftism and cultural radicalism. And all these movements came when I was in secondary school. One channel, an important channel to get information, was *Teinilehti*.⁶⁴

In terms of distributing knowledge, *Teinilehti* had several advantages: first, it was edited by young people for young people; secondly, it was professionally edited and covered a large array of topics; and finally, it openly dealt with controversial issues that were often neglected by curriculum-based education, such as sexual education, internationalism, and students' rights. However, the magazine was automatically sent to all FUSSS members, which caused friction between the students and some conservative principals, who tried – but failed – to stop the circulation of the magazine.⁶⁵

This new policy was adopted between the years 1963 to 1966, when the board of the FUSSS was taken over by a radical group of students that promoted the importance of societal issues, internationalism, and global solidarity.⁶⁶ Erkki Tuomioja, a long-standing political figure in the Finnish Social Democratic Party and one of the key members of the ideological shift of the FUSSS, has recollected in his memoirs that the individual members of this group had strong social democratic tendencies early on. For some, this later led to open leftism and neo-Marxism.⁶⁷ Because of the turnover of power relations, the new pro-society message spread quickly through the FUSSS networks. The most prominent networks were forged in annual summer courses known as 'teen leader courses' (*teinijohtajakurssi*).

Extensive courses and seminars had always been part of the FUSSS repertoire, but since the mid-1960s, their importance grew significantly in mobilizing young active students. For instance, during the most active summers in 1966 to 1968, over four hundred school students attended these camps each summer. The ten-day camps intended for newly elected presidents and secretaries of student associations offered educational courses on running an association, focusing on such practical skills as keeping minutes and giving speeches. However, they also swiftly grew into an influential venue to spread new ideas and to network with other students around the country.⁶⁸

The nature of the courses began to change around the same time as the shift of *Teinilehti* and the FUSSS. Ideological doctrines, such as free education, political activism, and free love, began to gain a foothold in the course agendas. This caused a lot of distress among the wider public, prompting discussions of drug use, pre-marital sexual experiments, and political propaganda.⁶⁹ Heli, who attended the camps twice in 1965 and 1966, was quick to overturn these conceptions, however:

Heli: It was so much fun! [...] But then some people later claimed that it was communist propaganda and indoctrination. No way, that's not how it was! [...] And well... I have to say, education on societal issues that was lacking from school education, we got it from these courses. Actually, I participated twice!⁷⁰

Instead, Heli stressed the importance of practical skills and wider societal education. She continued:

Heli: It wasn't brainwashing, it was like, ...they [the camp teachers] painted the bigger picture of Finland and the world in general. It was during the Vietnam War, you see. They talked about these kinds of issues. And everyone was so motivated and interested in it, and you see, people think that it was just drinking and stuff! But we couldn't drink, we were still under 18 years old, the camps were all sober. Well, maybe cigarettes. And peanuts and raisins.

Interviewer: How did it reflect in your local student association, that you had attended these camps?

Heli: Well, I think the biggest impact was that we organized panel discussions and things like the celebration of the United Nations and other international things.⁷¹

Pekka and Henri, who attended later, had a very different memory of the course agenda. In their narratives, it is evident that by 1968 the summer camps had grown into a platform of radical networking and active indoctrination of neo-leftist and even Marxist thinking. On top of that, the students attending these courses were, to begin with, some of the brightest, curious, and most articulate students of their peers.⁷² The students then returned to their local associations with a bunch of new, and often radical, ideas. As an outcome, nearly all radical university students that took part in the Finnish student movement in the late 1960s had already met and networked at the FUSSS summer camps.⁷³

Who were the young activists?

Each of the seven interviewees had unique experiences and memories of school student activism, but there are certain characteristics and background factors that connect their narratives. The most distinct marker is that they all identified themselves with the generation of Finnish baby-boomers, and, more precisely, with the mobilized and radical faction that took part in the student movement at Finnish universities.⁷⁴ However, the so-called generational consciousness alone does not explain the large-scale mobilization of school-aged students.⁷⁵ This raises the question: was there a stereotypical young activist?

First, the typical young activists represented the top of their peers. Student associations were exclusive to secondary schools and, more precisely, to the last four upper secondary grades. Moreover, secondary education was fundamentally intended for only a select fraction of the society: in the mid-1950s, when the interviewees were approximately 11 years old and applied for secondary schools, only one-fourth of the age cohort was accepted. Five years later, roughly 40% of them graduated with a middle school degree and the rest of them continued in upper secondary grades and took their matriculation exams in the mid-1960s.⁷⁶ In a sense, the secondary school system filtered the most capable and skilled students and provided them with better chances in their later careers. Therefore, the student activists of the early 1960s represented a rather small, yet better educated segment of their age cohort.

The second characteristic dealt with the students' family backgrounds. Before the Second World War, secondary schools had an elitist reputation and relatively high admission fees, and thus secondary education was more common for children from the middle and upper classes.⁷⁷ Consequently, during the postwar years, secondary education grew more common among the lower classes: by the 1960s, the majority of students came from families with primary income from industry and handicrafts (30%) or agriculture and forestry (25%), and smaller portions from public office and professional work (16%), commerce (12%), communication and traffic (10%), and personal services (2%).⁷⁸ By definition, higher education had become accessible to all social layers.

The elitist and conservative educational system, however, treated students differently based on their backgrounds. For example, for high-income families, secondary education was still a self-evident privilege, and the children were often granted more freedom with their academic achievements and leisure-time activities. Whereas for children from lower-

or middle-class families, expensive education was a serious business: poor grades and failed classes could result in parents pulling their children out of school altogether. In some cases, the teachers even granted special privileges to students from better backgrounds and were stricter on lower-class students. Accordingly, some students had better opportunities and more time to engage in time-consuming activities.

Yet, within the student community, student associations appeared to be highly inclusive and lacking discrimination based on social background or gender. Moreover, both boys and girls had equal opportunities to participate in the movement: co-ed schools had common associations, whereas segregated schools, such as in Iisalmi, had gender-based associations that shared alliances with their counterparts. Strong gender roles and expectations were still prominent in the educational ideology, and it is tempting to argue that female students would have been more obedient and less active. In most cases, however, strict authorities and conservative rules drove girls to protest. This is evident in the cases of Marianne, Suvi, and Heli, who remembered many oppressive structures in the all-girls' school they attended. For them, the student activism was a venue to 'air out the stuffy vacuum' and boost their confidence as young women.⁷⁹

Nonetheless, there were some issues that naturally led some students to be excluded from the activities. Even though over half of all young Finnish people lived in rural areas, the majority of upper secondary schools were located in cities or bigger rural towns. In 1960, for instance, 25% of secondary school students lived in another community or more than twenty kilometres from their school.⁸⁰ Geographical distances and a lack of public transportation often dictated that such students had no opportunities to participate in after-school or late-night activities. For this reason, the school student movement was characteristically urban in nature.

As it happens, the interviewees chosen for this article represent both the typical secondary school student and young activist, as their social backgrounds correlate with the overall structure and diversity of Finnish secondary school students at the beginning of the 1960s: Marianne's father was a priest, Pekka's mother a teacher and a principal, Martti, Henri, and Heli's fathers were clergymen, and Annikki's father a doctor. Suvi, on the other hand, was born into a family of farmers. In addition to their different social backgrounds, they were all well known among their peers and had a certain social and outgoing disposition. They also had good academic skills, and they were interested in a wide array of cultural and societal issues.

This does not, however, indicate that all young activists were from upper-class families – on the contrary, their backgrounds were rather diverse – but students from the lower classes often had to put more effort into managing both school and extra-curricular activities. For instance, Suvi's experiences represent a certain counternarrative. For her, education was not as self-evident: her parents had not received any proper education and her primary school teacher had encouraged her to apply for secondary school. Moreover, she lived quite far from her school, but in her case sufficient public transportation allowed her to attend after-school activities. Even though she described herself then as cultured and eager to learn, she did not do well at school and often had difficulties with the teachers. Due to her conflicts with the school authorities and the educational system as a whole, she had a clear incentive for her activism.⁸¹

The stereotypical characteristics of Finnish school student activists resemble the American high school activists described by Gael Graham as being in the minority but

at the same time among the smartest and quick-witted of their peer group, often receiving support from their high-status families and complying with their parents' political views.⁸² On the other hand, in the United States, high school education was more equal and inclusive to begin with. While a comparison of the American and Finnish student activists does reveal some differences, the most important characteristics of a young activist appear rather universal. In the end, becoming and being an activist was not necessarily based on class, gender, or race; rather, it required a social personality, an impression of certain injustices, and a drive to make a difference. The most important thing was finding like-minded peers and trying to be heard.

Re-evaluating and dismantling the grand narrative of the student movement

For a long time, the legacy and historiography of the student movement enforced a fixed top-down narrative in which young adults at universities led the march towards a revolution, while younger students marvelled at them and drew influence from their progress. Even Gael Graham, in her pioneering work on school student activism, resorted to this frame when explaining the relationship between activism at high schools and on university campuses. She drew the conclusion that even though high school activism had an original agenda and often local forms of activism, the young activists either followed the news coverage about on-campus activism or were inspired by their older siblings taking part in the movement.⁸³

The findings of this article have illustrated the indisputable correlation between student activism at Finnish secondary schools and universities. After their matriculation exam, Martti, Annikki, Suvi, Marianne, and Heli enrolled at the University of Helsinki and took part in the radical student politics of the late-1960s and early 1970s. While they did not take any leadership positions, they regarded themselves as active participators. Nevertheless, for them the student association was a significant platform for their activism. Earlier, Martti was cited in describing the school student activism as 'nourishing the flower of culture'. At the end of his interview, he concluded with this metaphor:

Martti: Well, then, in the university, the cultural radicalism really bloomed. In our student association, we were still learning things. It was kind of learning the structure, and then we were ready to be radicals!⁸⁴

Even though the history of the Scandinavian school student movement still remains relatively underexplored, recent educational history studies in Sweden indicate similar connections between Swedish school student actives and the university radicals of 1968.⁸⁵ Together with the Finnish examples, the findings conclude that the tradition of student associations prepared the young activists for their later lives in a multitude of ways. The associations had traditionally educated their active members in useful social and academic skills, but the youth generation of the 1960s was the first to fully utilize its networks and skills of persuasions acquired in the school student movement. For the FUSSS activists, the national networks and social skills were significant, as many of them continued their later careers in national politics and otherwise influential positions in society.⁸⁶

However, when analysing personal narratives of the past it is important to understand the temporal nature of remembering, which makes it a reflexive act in the sense that memories are often revisited and reinterpreted from the perspective of the present moment and knowledge.⁸⁷ In the case of the seven narratives analysed in this article, memories of school student activism are inevitably impacted by the narrators' later experiences of the student movement as a whole. Due to this, some of the interviewees may have been more prone to emphasize the significance of student associations for their later lives. For instance, Pekka and Henri, who did not participate in the on-campus student movement, emphasized different and more ordinary aspects of student activism, such as the sense of community and social relations. Despite the shared activity, not all students experienced their participation in the same way.

The literature overview and the findings of this study have so far demonstrated that school student activism was a widespread and international phenomenon, and that young activists demanded to be heard and wanted to change the school system. Despite shared objectives, young activists in different countries were also fighting battles in their own ways. For instance, Anglo-American school activism was more concerned with racial segregation, civil rights, the banning of corporal punishment, and dismantling rules of decorum. Moreover, to achieve their goals, these young activists resorted to civil disobedience and local demonstrations, violent protests, and even lawsuits.⁸⁸ The Scandinavian movement was rather peaceful; the young activists channelled their activism within established systems, turned to their national student organizations, and utilized their influence to target educational structures and policies. In a sense, the Scandinavian movement followed the principles of Nordic democratic societies, even though in the educational context it was often restricted to a certain kind of *mock democracy*: student associations represented the student body, yet they had no real say in the decision-making inside the education system. This was the fundamental aspect the students wanted to change – to have real democracy. Later in the 1970s, school democracy and party-political aspirations became the determining objectives of the Scandinavian school student movement.⁸⁹

In the end, the international school student movement of the 1960s was a revolution of rights. Like with many other movements of that era, the term 'participation' is essential when describing the school student activism. Students in different countries wanted to participate fully in school and society; moreover, they wanted to be heard and involved in their everyday life at school. According to Graham, for the school students, their activism constituted a self-conscious and widespread effort to redefine their status, roles, and rights within the educational system and society at large.⁹⁰ Mostly, this was about being recognized as active citizens and young adults, rather than children in need of steering and pampering.

In critically evaluating the grand narrative of the student movement, this article suggests that perhaps the flow of action operated in reverse, being inspired from below, from secondary schools to universities. By demonstrating how the Finnish school student movement resonated with the international student movement, this article opens new perspectives in the history of youth activism that have not yet been explored in the wider Scandinavian context. However, smaller fragments of research from here and there indicate that there was a collective Scandinavian student movement where both personal and collective motives, ideologies, and ways of taking action transcended national limits.

These conclusions lead us back to dismantling the grand narrative of the student movement. Even the limited example of the Finnish secondary schools indicates that the historiography of the 1960s student movement is not as straightforward as it has often been depicted – there were more bypaths, national specialities, and heterogeneous youth groups involved. This study has focused on understanding different aspects of the school student movement, and in doing so it has opened novel perspectives on the timely discussion of youth activism and illustrated the more multifaceted history of youth movements. At the very least, these results demonstrate that youthful dissidence transcends time and place and, when channelled properly, it may lead to significant changes in society.

Notes

1. Teppo, Untitled article, 7; and Leskinen, “Mitä tarkoittaa käsite kulttuuri-ihminen,” 6.
2. Irjakeesa, “Ihmeen hyvää lisäselvitystä,” 17.
3. Jouhki, *Teinikuntatoiminnan sukupolvet*, 193–196.
4. For academic discussion on modern climate activism, see Nairn, “Learning from Young People Engaged in Climate Activism”; O’Brien et al., “Exploring youth activism on climate change”; on public discussion, see, for example, Leysen, “Critics of the climate school strikes.”
5. Katsiaficas, *The Global Imagination of 1968*; Kurlansky, *1968: The Year That Rocked the World*; Marwick, *The Sixties*; Wiley et al., *Uprising at Bowling Green*; for Scandinavian approaches, see Jørgensen, “The Scandinavian 1968 in a European Perspective”; Kolbe, “From memory to history”; and Östberg, “Sweden and the long ‘1968’.”
6. Cunningham and Lavalette, *Schools Out!*; Graham, *Young activists*; Ides, “Dare to Free Yourself”; Jouhki, *Teinikuntatoiminnan sukupolvet*; Rentola, “Kevään 1968 isänmaan toivot”; and Söderberg and Östberg, *Skolan och elevrörelsen*.
7. Hajek, “Challenging dominant discourses of the past”; see also Rothberg, *Multidirectional Memory*.
8. For example, see Ferhat, “Did Youth Destabilize Politics?”; and Gildea, “Utopia and conflict in the oral testimonies of French 1968 activists.”
9. Jørgensen, “The Scandinavian 1968 in a European Perspective,” 327, 330–331; Kolbe, “From memory to history.” See also Saksholm, *Reform, Revolution, Riot?*, 18–20.
10. Jouhki, *Teinikuntatoiminnan sukupolvet*; Saksholm, *Reform, Revolution, Riot?*; and Söderberg and Östberg, *Skolan och elevrörelsen*.
11. Gleason, “Avoiding the agency trap”; and Larsson and Norlin, “Introduction,” 9–10.
12. Gulczynska, “The students in the Polish socialist secondary school”; Larsson et al., *Den svenska skolgårdens historia*; Rosén Rasmussen, “Touching materiality”; and Sundkvist, *Klassens klasser*.
13. In this article, secondary education refers to the last stage of general basic education: high schools, upper secondary schools, grammar schools or sixth form college (British).
14. For Anglo-American historiography of school student activism, see Graham, *Young activist*; Ides, “Dare to Free Yourself”; and Cunningham and Lavalette, *Schools Out!*
15. Jouhki 2020, *Teinikuntatoiminnan sukupolvet*.
16. For the definition of and broader discussion on the Finnish baby-boomer generation, see Karisto (ed.), *Suuret ikäluokat*.
17. Prior to mass schooling, the Finnish secondary school system consisted of three different types of schools: co-ed secondary schools and gender-divided secondary schools for boys and girls. Divided secondary schools had a long tradition, and they were often associated with good reputations and the quality of education. Co-ed secondary schools and inclusive education, however, grew more common during the 1950s. Leino-Kaukiainen and Heikkinen, “Yhteiskunta ja koulutus.”
18. Josselson, *Interviewing for qualitative inquiry*.

19. Abrams, *Oral History Theory*, 106–107; and Barnes, *The Story I Tell Myself*.
20. Abrams, *Oral History Theory*, 7, 21–22; and Portelli, *The Death of Luigi Trastulli, and Other Stories*, 50.
21. Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures*; and Keightley, “Remembering research.”
22. Graham, *Young activist*, 88; Musgrove et al., “Hearing Children’s Voices”; and Roberts, “It is Better to Learn than to be Taught.”
23. See note 6 above.
24. Graham, *Young activists*, ch. 4; and Ides, “Dare to Free Yourself.”
25. Cunningham and Lavalette, *School’s out!*
26. Rentola, “Nuortaistolaisuuden synty I”; Rentola, “Kevään 1968 isänmaan toivot”. For Swedish research on the topic, see Söderberg and Östberg, *Skolan och elevrörelsen*.
27. For a general overview on the history of Scandinavian education and different educational structures governing the formation of an individual and a citizen, see Buchardt et al. (eds), *Education, state and citizenship*.
28. See Jouhki, *Teinikuntatoiminnan sukupolvet*; Kärenlampi, *Taistelu kouludemokratiasta*; Söderberg and Östberg, *Skolan och elevrörelsen*.
29. For a detailed overview on the history of mass schooling in Scandinavia, see Buchardt et al., “Introduction,” 9–12.
30. Graham, *The Young Activists*, 17–18.
31. Until the education reform in the 1970s, the Finnish education system started with compulsory folk school (grades 1–4), after which those with academic skills and financial resources could apply for secondary schools. The secondary school system consisted of middle school (grades 1–5) and upper secondary school with a matriculation exam (*lyceum* or *lukio* in Finnish, grades 6–8).
32. *Suomen Virallinen Tilasto IX: no 88*, 15.
33. Jouhki, *Teinikuntatoiminnan sukupolvet*, 94–95; and Simola, “The Finnish Miracle of PISA,” 458.
34. Saksholm, *Reform, Revolution, Riot?*, 20.
35. Jouhki, *Teinikuntatoiminnan sukupolvet*, ch. 3; Norlin, *Bildning i skuggan av läröverket*; and Söderberg and Östberg, *Skolan och elevrörelsen*.
36. Graham, *Young Activists*, ch. 1; and Ides, “Dare to Free Yourself,” 299.
37. Holmén and Ringarp, “1968 och reformer av högre utbildning,” 65–66; Jouhki, *Teinikuntatoiminnan sukupolvet*, 120; Roselius, *Skolungdom*; and Söderberg and Östberg, *Skolan och elevrörelsen*.
38. Holmén and Ringarp, “1968 och reformer av högre utbildning,” 65; and Kärenlampi, *Taistelu kouludemokratiasta*, 62.
39. Table 8, “The FUSSS memberships and the amounts of Finnish-speaking secondary school students in 1943–1975,” in Jouhki, *Teinikuntatoiminnan sukupolvet*, 129. Note that Swedish-speaking students had their own union, the FSS. For a recent centenary history of FSS, see Roselius, *Skolungdom*.
40. Cunningham and Lavalette, *School’s out!*; and Graham, *Young Activists*.
41. Holmén and Ringarp, “1968 och reformer av högre utbildning,” 65.
42. Rentola, “Suomen Teiniliiton nousu ja tuho,” 176. The Swedish student organization SECO organized similar activities and published their national magazine *Elevforum*; see Söderberg and Östberg, *Skolan och elevrörelsen*.
43. Irja, untitled article, 4. The author of the article is ‘Irja’, who is the same person as ‘Irjakeesa’ in note 2.
44. Pictures of the banderols in Leskinen, “Mitä tarkoittaa käsite kulttuuri-ihminen.”
45. Interviews with Marianne and Suvi, 3 November 2016.
46. For detailed study on the rise of school democracy in Finland, see Kärenlampi, *Taistelu kouludemokratiasta*. See also Jouhki, “Teinikuntatoiminnan sukupolvet,” ch. 6.
47. Tirkkonen, “Teinit ja maakunnallinen kulttuuri”.
48. Kolbe, “From memory to history,” 366–367. See also Kortti, “Building the New Cultural Finland”; and Saksholm, *Reform, Revolution, Riot?*
49. Interview with Martti, 28 August 2017.

50. Jouhki, *Teinikuntatoiminnan sukupolvet*, 154.
51. Interview with Annikki, 14 August 2017.
52. See note 49 above.
53. Jouhki, *Teinikuntatoiminnan sukupolvet*, 187; and Miettunen, *Menneisyys ja historiakuva*, 93.
54. See note 38 above.
55. Ivaska, "Nyt ovelle koputetaan."
56. Interview with Marianne and Suvi, 3 November 2016.
57. "Seulottiin tyttölyseota"; Sonninen, "Monipuolisempaan ja aktiivisempaan ulkopolitiikkaan"; E.L., "Sukupuoliopetuksesta"; Heli, "Kouludemokratiaa"; and P.H., "Vietnamin supersota."
58. See note 56 above.
59. Graham, *Young Activists*, 96–104.
60. Ides, "Dare to free yourself," 296–267.
61. Buchardt et al., "Introduction"; and Nivala, "Kunnon kansalainen yhteiskunnan kasvatuksellisenä ihanteena," 90.
62. Interview with Heli, 1 September 2016.
63. Interview with Henri, 2 November 2016.
64. Interview with Pekka, 12 June 2017.
65. Rentola, "Teiniliiton nousu ja tuho," 177.
66. Jouhki, *Teinikuntatoiminnan sukupolvet*, 205–207.
67. Tuomioja, *Kukkaisvallasta kekkosvaltaan*, 63, 66–68.
68. Jouhki, *Teinikuntatoiminnan sukupolvet*, 220; and Rentola, "Teiniliiton nousu ja tuho," 181.
69. Tuomioja, *Kukkaisvallasta kekkosvaltaan*, 77.
70. See note 62 above.
71. Ibid.
72. Interview with Pekka, 12 June 2017; interview with Henri, 2 November 2016; Tuomioja, *Kukkaisvallasta kekkosvaltaan*, 78.
73. See also Rentola, "Kevään 1968 isänmaan toivot."
74. The vast research on Finnish baby-boomers has established the student movement as one of the main generational experiences – even though only a fraction of the generation was actively involved in the movement. However, nearly all members of the generation reflect their experiences through the prism of the student movement: either as part of the mobilized segment, as a bystander, or as completely indifferent, yet still acknowledging the larger significance of the movement. See further discussion in an article by Hoikkala et al., "The Baby Boomers, Life's Turning Points, and Generational Consciousness."
75. For a more detailed description on *generational consciousness* in sociological terms, see Connolly, "Generational Conflict and the Sociology of Generations."
76. *Suomen Virallinen Tilasto IX: no 79*, 8–9; and *Suomen Virallinen Tilasto IX: no 82*, 18.
77. Before the Second World War, the majority of secondary school students came from families of higher professions, clergymen, or merchants (74%) and only a small fraction (13%) came from farms or smallholdings. *Suomen Virallinen Tilasto IX: no 64*, 18.
78. *Suomen Virallinen Tilasto IX: no 79*, 24–25.
79. Interview with Marianne and Suvi, Nov 2016; interview with Heli, 1 September 2016.
80. Haapala, "Nuoriso numeroina," 76–77; and *Suomen Virallinen Tilasto IX: no 78*, 10.
81. Interview with Marianne and Suvi, Nov 2016.
82. Graham, *The Young Activists*, ch. 1.
83. Graham, *The Young Activists*, 7–8.
84. See note 49 above.
85. Holmén and Ringarp, "1968 och reformer av högre utbildning," 65–66.
86. A Finnish scholar – and a previous student activist himself – J.P. Roos has extensively traced where the most influential cohort of the Finnish student movement ended up in the early 2000s. According to Roos, the cultural radical activists of the mid-60s were mostly employed in the cultural and media sector. As for the political activists of 1970s, in the early 2000s, they dominated in state politics and institutions as well as the public sector. Roos, "Missä he ovat nyt?," 71–73.

87. Abrams, *The Oral History Theory*.
88. Graham, *The Young Activists*; and Ides, "Dare to Free Yourself."
89. See Kärenlampi, *Taistelu kouludemokratiasta*.
90. Graham, *The Young Activists*, ch. 1, ch. 7.

Acknowledgements

I wish to express my gratitude to the LAPANEN-research group at the University of Oulu and the Ph. D. seminar on History of Education at the University of Umeå for comments and feedback on the earlier drafts of this article.

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author.

Funding

This work was supported by the Koneen Säätiö [201902353].

Notes on contributor

Essi Jouhki holds a Ph.D. in History and is a post-doctoral researcher at the Department of History and Ethnology, University of Jyväskylä. Jouhki has specialized in oral history, history of education, and history of childhood and youth, especially in the context of postwar Finland. Jouhki is currently working on a four-year research project, 'Passion and Emotion in Finnish Secondary Schools, 1960–1975: The Breaking of the Emotional Regime in the Final Stages of the Secondary School System', funded by the Kone Foundation.

ORCID

Essi Jouhki  <http://orcid.org/0000-0002-5243-8552>

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