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**NOBILITY AND SCHOOLING IN  
RUSSIA, 1700S-1760S:  
WESTERNIZATION OF AN ELITE  
AS A SOCIAL PROCESS**

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In this paper we use the records of the Heraldry and the Noble Land Cadet Corps to explore the career and educational choices made by Russian nobles in the 1730s and 1740s. We make use of the fact that after the 1736-7 reform of noble service, young members of the elite were allowed to express their preferences regarding enrolment in specific schools or branches of service, and the government promised to respect these choices. Our goal is to investigate how much choice had nobles in reality, what choices they made, and how these choices can be explained. Our analysis demonstrates that post-Petrine nobles had very clear preferences, and that there are deep cleavages within the elite in terms of the attitude of its members towards schooling. While wealthier nobles tended to opt for state schools, especially the Noble Cadet Corps, the poorest nobility overwhelmingly ignored the educational requirement and service registration rules imposed by the state, and did not apply for state schools, preferring instead to enlist directly into regiments as privates. Despite numerous attempts, the government failed to force the poorest nobility to follow the 1736-7 rules for entering schools and the state service, and was forced to regularly issue blank pardons to these offenders. Finally, the paper considers the role of social connections in shaping choices of education and service made by the nobility. The paper presents the Westernization of the Russian elite as a dynamic social process driven by the choices made by the nobles themselves.

JEL Classification: Z

Keywords: Nobility, education, state service, Peter I, Westernization, choices, Heraldry, Cadet Corps, schools, social networks

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## Introduction

When Aleksei Pushchin, a page at the household of one of the members of the Russian Imperial family, learned in 1731 that after his master's death he has been reassigned to the newly founded Noble Land Cadet Corps, he thought it was an "offence" for him — the teenager would have much preferred to be transferred into the army where he could "better observe all sorts of rules in general, and prove himself in active service, and learn military regulations." The government ignored his petition: he had to stay at the Corps for four years and was eventually commissioned as an ensign.<sup>1</sup> This episode is typical of the attitude towards education among the Russian ruling class in the early decades of the 18th century. Peter I's efforts to force his nobles to attend schools had long become proverbial, as had their resistance to these efforts. Indeed, the introduction of modern secular schooling for the elite in Russia was one of the key elements of Peter I's reforms. Initially, the story goes, Peter had to coerce his noble subjects to study, as the very idea of learning geometry and foreign languages was perceived as being contrary both to the aristocratic dignity of Muscovite servitors and to their cultural-religious sensibilities and phobias. Eventually, however, at least some nobles appear to have given in and embraced Westernized education. By the 1760s, only 8% of retiring nobles were illiterate, while 47% satisfied basic standards of literacy and numeracy, and further 45% graduated from either a cadet corps or some lower-level school.<sup>2</sup> This suggests that eventually the state was able to create a new Westernized elite that sustained and perpetuated the post-Petrine cultural and social regime.<sup>3</sup> In that sense, Russia replicated, albeit in a very top-down and time-compressed manner, the developments in Western European countries where the early modern nobilities likewise experienced a cultural revolution which implied integrating learning and, more specifically, formal schooling into their career trajectories and family strategies, and individual and collective identities.<sup>4</sup> The story of Petrine transformation would be repeated in other non-Western countries, from Egypt and the Ottoman empire to China and Japan, as everywhere efforts to modernize and "Westernize" were accompanied by campaigns to create local "Westernized" elites through schooling.

While the cultural consequences of this transformation in Russia has been the subject of numerous scholarly works, the social dynamics that made it possible has not really received much attention. Were the nobles really averse to study, and if so, why? How did they manifest their attitudes towards formal schooling? Was there any pattern in the ways in which the nobles reacted to schooling opportunities, and if so, what factors shaped these reactions? This article provides a preliminary overview of the sociology of post-Petrine elite schooling. Specifically, it addresses the questions of how much choice the nobles in reality had in reacting to the new

cultural regime, and how the choices made by nobles could be interpreted in their social context. In this regard this article follows the trend to emphasize “the dynamic, fluid quality of imperial Russia’s multiple social ‘structures’ or ‘systems.’”<sup>5</sup> It also seeks to counterbalance the dominant tendency to view the early modern Russian state as an omnipotent force shaping a passive elite into a Europeanized nobility and to give agency to the individual actors themselves in shaping and reinventing the elite. More broadly speaking these questions refer to the larger issue of whether the introduction of modern formal schooling enhanced upward social mobility, or whether it should be viewed primarily as a mechanism for the reproduction of the existing elites.

Rank-and-file nobles of the period did not leave letters or diaries, and official records that serve as sources are almost the opposite of being narrative. So, the approach here is based on treating the actions taken by the nobles and recorded in these official documents as choices and attempting to interpret these choices within their social context, as far as it can be deduced from official documents, and also within the institutional framework of schooling and service that the state attempted to impose upon the elite. The subjects speak with their own voices whenever they could be heard through the formulaic dryness of petitions and records. That, however, does not happen as often as one would like. Naturally, the elements of social context I attempt to tease out of the sources are no more than random glimpses of early eighteenth-century social reality; and in the absence of the subjects’ own voices certain meaning has to be ascribed to their actions. Hopefully, however, “through judicious use of inference and induction, one can profile the likely principles and operating assumptions of both collective entities and relatively inarticulate individuals.”<sup>6</sup>

Specifically, this article makes use of a sort of a natural experiment — the decision made by the government in 1736, after much doubting, internal debate, and opposition, to allow young nobles to choose their future careers, that is, to request specific service or schooling assignment. An analysis of these choices, recorded in the Heraldry registers, demonstrates that the nobles had very clear preferences and that these preferences reveal deep cleavages among the members of the elite in terms of their attitudes towards schooling. It was predominantly the upper-middle segment of the elite that consistently choose to attend government schools, while the poorest nobles overwhelmingly shunned these opportunities and preferred to enrol as privates in the army. This article strives to reconstruct the mechanisms that produced this stratification by exploring the resources available to individual noble families, as well as the ways in which schooling fit into their social reproduction strategies depending on the particular combination of threats and resources they had to deal with, and also on the institutional configuration of schooling opportunities and requirements. As these resources and opportunities were to a large extent social in the sense that they depended on being related to and interacting with other

members of the elite, individual choices made by individual nobles regarding schooling coalesced into group strategies; Westernization was thus not only a cultural, but also a social process as it spread along social networks and was both driven by and contributed to the consolidation and reaffirmation of social statuses and the divisions within the elite. What emerges is a picture of Westernization of the nobility as a dynamic process driven by the decisions made by the nobles themselves, by the willingness of an important section of the elite to accept and engage the new cultural regime, thus ensuring its sustainability.

### **Recruiting Nobles to School Under Peter: The Navigation School and the Naval Academy**

General surveys of the period customarily claim that nobles resisted and resented Peter I's attempts to educate them because of some sort of ingrained conservatism or deep cultural aversion to study on their part. Yet, the evidence of such resistance and resentment is yet to be presented on any wide scale. Arguably, the nobles generally did not resist schooling as such: they resisted the educational requirements introduced by Peter as far as these were very poorly compatible, or incompatible, with their own social reproduction strategies. During the first two decades of Peter I's rule (roughly up to 1712-1714) the tsar and his government do not seem to have pursued any systematic policy regarding the education of the nobility. Though the tsar promoted a number of educational initiatives, recruitment into these schools was by and large organized on a voluntary basis, and the government did not have any clear preferences regarding the social composition of their student body. Thus, the decree of 1701 establishing the Navigation and Mathematics School in Moscow did not provide any indication which social groups the students were to be recruited from, which was also true for the artillery school founded the same year.<sup>7</sup> Yet, due to their ability to pay modest allowances, or "daily feed" money, of 5 *altyn* (3 kopeks), or less, depending on their "mastery of studies," to students deemed "destitute,"<sup>8</sup> these schools were consistently able to attract hundreds of applicants, including the poorer nobility. In the fall of 1711 the Navigation school had 506 students receiving stipends, including 126 noble minors and 130 sons of soldiers from the Guards, some of them likely also of noble origin.<sup>9</sup> The wealthier nobles and the court aristocracy, understandably, stayed away from these technical schools, preferring either home-schooling or those schools that were set up in Moscow by foreign teachers, including the Jesuits, and that offered curriculum broadly fitting the aristocrats' emerging self-perception as members of pan-European nobility.<sup>10</sup> Finally, starting from 1698, Peter repeatedly dispatched groups of young

aristocrats for training abroad, usually in navigation and shipbuilding. These were extremely onerous commissions for the young nobles involved: not only were their preferences ignored, but so was their foreign language proficiency (or rather, lack thereof); they received very modest stipends, at best, and were normally expected to live abroad at their own expense, which often meant penury.

The situation changed in the mid 1710s, when Peter I's launched a campaign to identify and register all young nobles eligible to be drafted into service, which included reviews of coming-of-age nobles by the tsar and his associates and, eventually, creation of the Heraldry (*Gerol'dmeisterskaia kontrora*) to maintain service records and coordinate the service assignments of nobles; nobles aged from 10 to 15 were to learn "numbers and geometry" and prohibited to marry until they master these subjects.<sup>11</sup> Officially, this was a system where the members of the elite had no say in choosing their career path, and by the end of the 1710s, instead of noble youngsters "signing up," or "enrolling" into schools, we find them being "sent to the Academy" by various officials. Besides the government's refusal to take into account the preferences of individual nobles, two other factors must have affected the attractiveness of Petrine schools in the eyes of the elite. In a situation of a growing fiscal crisis, Peter failed to provide sufficient funding for the maintenance of students in his schools. Count Andrei Matveev, appointed the president of the newly founded Naval Academy in 1715, repeatedly complained of his inability to pay his faculty and students their salaries and stipends because the money allocated for his school was in arrears.<sup>12</sup> In later years, financial situation did not improve much, and the students continued to complain of penury for the next two decades. Another factor was the absence of any clear rules for the promotion and assignment of the graduates, making their career prospects totally unpredictable. Take the example of Iakov Nazarov, who entered the artillery school in 1703 and stayed there until 1722, when, at age 40, he has finally completed his course of study and was immediately dismissed from service for poor hearing and eyesight.<sup>13</sup> The St Petersburg Naval Academy by 1718 had almost 300 *gardes-marines*—nobles who finished their course of study and were now essentially in limbo, serving as apprentices and waiting to be commissioned.<sup>14</sup> This became especially problematic after the end of the Northern War when demand for naval officers dropped dramatically. As a result, some of the graduates had to stay in *gardes-marines* for years, or even decades, with uncertain prospects of ever receiving a commission.<sup>15</sup>

While the Petrine system of assigning young nobles for service and study might have been inflexible, the problems were compounded by the manifest lack of will to enforce it on the part of Peter's immediate successors. By the early 1730s its collapse became evident for the government. Its response was two-pronged. On the one hand, in addition to the Naval academy,

artillery and engineering schools inherited from the Petrine era, it created in 1731 the Noble Land Cadet Corps.<sup>16</sup> The creation of this school could be, at least to some extent, viewed as a response to the demands voiced by the nobility during the 1730 constitutional crisis when some members of the elite specifically called upon the government to provide channels for young nobles to reach officer ranks without having first serving in “degrading” lower ranks.<sup>17</sup> At the same time, the Corps was a follow-up on a number of expert proposals dating from the 1720s that called for creation of either a “cadet corps,” or “cadet companies” to train future officers,<sup>18</sup> and an expression of the desire of Empress Anna’s ministers to create a new breed of elite, a “true nobility.”<sup>19</sup> So, the Corps charter stipulated that only nobles or sons of commissioned officers would be admitted and promised that the noble cadets who demonstrated the necessary application in their studies would be able to graduate with officer ranks.<sup>20</sup> The curriculum was ambitious indeed: cadets were to study “Arithmetic, Geometry, Drawing, Fortification, Artillery, Fencing, Riding and other subjects necessary for a military career.” Some cadets, moreover, were to be given an opportunity to pursue civil, rather than military careers, and therefore, to study “foreign languages, History, Geography, Jurisprudence, dancing, music and other useful subjects.”<sup>21</sup> In short, these were the subjects that the young nobles “could have learned in foreign academies,” and appropriately, the Corps was also referred to as the “Knight’s Academy.”<sup>22</sup> While earlier Russian schools were usually housed in random buildings, often sharing them with military units or governmental offices, the Corps was located in the palace of Prince Menshikov, the exiled favourite of Peter the Great, on Vasilievskii Island, by the 1720s the largest and, according to a contemporary report, the most luxurious building in the new capital, surpassing even the imperial residence itself.<sup>23</sup> The government emphasized the spacious accommodation the cadets would be provided with at the Menshikov Palace, promised sufficient funding for food and uniform, servants for cleaning and maintenance, and generally stressed that the families would not have to bear any expenses.<sup>24</sup> Finally, the empress decided to enrol a number of imperial in-laws: Ivan and Martyn Skavronskii, Ivan and Andrei Gendrikov, and Andrei and Ivan Efimovskii (all of them relatives of Catherine I, Peter I’s second wife), as well as Vasiliï Lopukhin (a nephew of the emperor’s first wife, Evdokia). The best cadets were regularly invited to take part in the court festivities reciting poems of their own composition or demonstrating their dancing skills.

On the other hand, in 1736-1737 the government issued a series of decrees seeking to establish a comprehensive scheme in order to achieve “perfect benefit to the State” and to make sure that “all the nobles were educated, and fit for military and civil service, and were making diligent efforts towards this end.”<sup>25</sup> According to the new regulation, when a young noble reached the age of seven, he was required to register with the Master of Heraldry in St

Petersburg or with his local governor in the province. Next time he was to present himself to the authorities for a review at twelve: by that age he was supposed to master reading and writing. At that time he (or rather, his father) had to make a choice. A nobleman who had 100 male serfs (“male souls,” hereafter m.s.) or more could keep his son at home if he agreed to guarantee that by the next review the boy would learn arithmetic, geometry and the basic tenets of Orthodoxy. Those who owned fewer than 100 male serfs could only keep their sons at home if they could demonstrate that the boys actually had already begun studying arithmetic and geometry. Otherwise these poorer nobles (or those whose fathers would not guarantee home schooling for them) were to be enrolled in state schools. The entire procedure was to be repeated when the young nobles reached the age of sixteen. This time, however, the review was to take place in the capital and the subjects to be studied were geometry, fortification, and history. The young nobles who stayed at home for studies but did not master the prescribed program were at this point to be drafted into the navy as common sailors without the right of further promotion. The final, fourth review was to take place when they reached the age of twenty (for those, of course, who were not already serving their sentence in the navy by that time). At this point the young nobles were, finally, to enter service.<sup>26</sup>

This scheme emphasized the obligatory nature of schooling and government’s concern with the poorer nobility: while the wealthier nobles could opt for home schooling, those owning fewer than 100 male serfs had to attend state school. Those avoiding their obligation to register for service and study were threatened with a sentence of life-long banishment to the lower ranks without promotion. In reality, however, the scheme meant an accommodation of sorts with the nobility. On the one hand, the basic premise behind the new system was that all nobles had a certain natural inclinations for various types of service, and the duty of a good ruler was to recognize these inclinations and to make appointments accordingly as a way of encouraging them to perform their duties with more application.<sup>27</sup> Thus, the imperial decree of July 29, 1731, announcing the foundation of the Noble Cadet Corps, specifically called for volunteers (“*zhelaiushchie*”) to sign up<sup>28</sup>, and subsequently the same approach was extended to other schools and branches of service. The decree of May 6, 1736 instructed the government agencies to assign noble minors to regiments “according to their wishes,” while the youngest noble boys were to study grammar “and other subjects, whatever they have a desire for.”<sup>29</sup> This principle was codified in the 1737 law, which likewise mandated assigning young nobles to schools and services according to their wishes and inclinations.

## Career Preferences of Russian Nobles, 1730s and 1740s

How did the nobles react to this legislative framework? How exactly did they plot their career trajectories within its bounds, and how much were they able to navigate and manipulate it? The observations presented below are based on the data from two annual registers compiled at the Heraldry where young nobles (minors *nedorosli*) had to present themselves for examination and assignment for service or schooling. One of these registers covers 1736, the period right after the government formally granted the nobles the right to request specific service assignments, but before the decree of February 9, 1737, that introduced new comprehensive educational requirements for the elite. The other register dates from 1745, that is, after the new system had time to take root. Between them, the two registers include about 1400 individual entries, listing all the young nobles presenting themselves at the Heraldry during the year in question.<sup>30</sup> There is also data from over 2500 petitions for admission to the Noble Cadet Corps.<sup>31</sup> These entries and petitions might typically include some or all of the following information: name, age, preferred service or school assignment, the number of male serfs held by his family (his father or himself, if an orphan), whatever education the young noble might have received prior to registration at the Heraldry, and the decisions made by the authorities regarding this noble's service assignment. Sometimes, the documents would also include additional information, such as the youngster's place of residence in the capital, his father's service rank and branch of service, and the name and rank of an adult noble who presented the teenager at the Heraldry and testified to his nobility. Summary statistics for wealth distribution among the nobles registering in 1736 and 1745 compared to the Russian nobility in general in 1727 and 1762 is presented in Table 1. It indicates that the two samples are broadly representative of noble population at large, although there might be a bias against the poorest nobility, as the data on the nobility in general covers landlords only, not all nobles. The analysis indicates that the nobles expressed very clear preferences for different types of service and schooling, and that these preferences broadly correlate with their wealth. Their requests for specific assignments were by no means binding for the authorities that clearly had certain policies in mind when making appointments; yet in general the government did appoint nobles according to their requests. The government chose to amend its policies and even the legislative framework to accommodate some of the most clearly expressed preferences of the nobility.

**Table 1. Distribution of Nobles by Number of Serfs<sup>32</sup>**

	Registering minors, (n)	Data on wealth, (n)	Share of nobles,% (number of observations)			
			≤20 male serfs	21-100 male serfs	101-500 male serfs	≥501 male serfs
Russian nobility at large, 1727			60.6%	30.8%	7.7%	0.9%
Nobles minor, registering at the Heraldry, July-December 1736	612	607	51.9% (315)	32.1% (195)	12.8% (78)	3.1% (19)
Noble minors, registering at the Heraldry, 1745	658	650	59.4% (386)	28.8% (187)	10.2% (66)	1.7% (11)
Russian nobility at large, 1762			51.0%	31.0%	15.0%	3.0%

Let us explore how young nobles expressed their preferences in practice, and what these preferences were. The Heraldry register for 1736 lists 714 minors; this number certainly reflects the efforts by the government to round up the minors who failed to sign up for service in previous years. The majority of registering nobles were teenagers, although 119 of them had not reached the age of ten (some were as young as 6 or 7), while 182 were 20 and older, the oldest being 65. Out of these 714, 102 nobles arrived to register in the period from January to June, and these were not, apparently, asked about their service preferences. The first record that includes a request for specific assignment, reflecting the provisions of the May 6 decree, is dated July 1: Mikhailo Molostovskii, 16 years old and an owner of 15 serfs in the Bezhetsk district, illiterate, asked to be enrolled into the army as a rank-and-file trooper and was duly assigned.<sup>33</sup> Overall, there were 612 nobles, who registered in July-December, and only 59 of them did not express any career preferences (or these were not recorded for some reasons). From among these 59, the Heraldry assigned 18 to the Cadet Corps, and 5 – to other schools. Some young nobles could even list their choices in order of preference: Aleksei Tikhemenov (15 years old, 478 m.s. in Kostroma and Simbirsk) declared that he “desired to serve in the Semenovskii Regiment of the Life Guards, and if he is not accepted, he desired to be in the Cadet Corps instead,” and was dispatched to the Corps.<sup>34</sup>

Among those nobles who had their assignment preferences recorded during the registration, 204 asked to be enrolled directly into military service, nine among them citing specific regiments (see Table 2). A further 33 minors asked to be enrolled in the Guards, 10 of them referring to specific regiments. In addition, 88 young nobles asked to be allowed to stay at home for further study. The rest of the registering minors requested to be assigned to various schools: 72 to the Noble Cadet Corps, 76 to the Engineering School or “to the Corps of Engineers for study,” 52 to garrison schools (17 of them, specifically to the St. Petersburg garrison school), 13 to the Naval academy, and 11 to the artillery school. In other words, out of about 600 young nobles, over 200 asked to be enrolled in schools.

The Heraldry generally respected their preferences: overall, about 60% were assigned according to their requests. The decisions to disregard the requests can, in many cases, be explained by the need to fill the units that attracted few or no applicants, such as the Naval Academy. The least successful among all the young nobles on our list were the aspiring guardsmen: in 1736, only 5 out of 33 were assigned according to their wishes<sup>35</sup>; the majority were sent instead to the Ingermanland Regiment, the most prestigious units of the line. Likewise, some of the nobles applying to Cadet Corps were instead assigned to prestigious apprentice positions in civil service, mostly to the College of Foreign Affairs, but also to the Synod and the Mint.

**Table 2. Service Preferences and Service Assignments of Nobles, July-December 1736**

Nobles registered, total: 612

Preferences recorded, total: 553

Appointments recorded, total: 578

	Applicants/ Approved applications / Appointment s, total	Serf-holding among applicants, average/media n (m.s.)	Serf-holding among successful applicants, average/media n (m.s.)	Serf-holding among all appointees, average/media n (m.s.)	Age of applicants, average/media n
Service in the army	191 / 134 / 228*	60 / 13	38 / 10	27* <sup>+</sup> / 8*	16.9 / 16
Guards	39 / 5 / 12	205 / 30	497 / 69	277 / 97	16.4 / 16
Naval academy	13 / 8 / 33	16 / 4	18 / 0.5	22 / 10	11.2 / 11
Artillery school	11 / 3 / 3	32 / 18	20 / 24	20 / 24	11.8 / 12
Engineerin g school	70 / 28 / 47	35 / 21	34 / 18	48 / 30	12.3 / 13
Garrison schools	35 / 21 / 42	17 / 9	17 / 7	18 / 7	10.8 / 11
Cadet Corps	73 / 39 / 62	268 / 95	361 / 129	281 / 100	13.3 / 13
Continue home schooling	88 / 62 / 147	78 / 30	57 / 26	79 / 30	11.0 / 11

\* Not including appointments to the Ingermanland Regiment

<sup>+</sup> Not including three Dolgorukov princes (5000 m.s.)

There is a very clear correlation between service preferences and assignments, and the wealth. By far the wealthiest in our sample were the applicants to the Cadet Corps and to the Guards: only 18 of the applicants to the Corps had fewer than 50 serfs, and mere three did not have any serfs at all. In the case of both the Cadet Corps and the Guards, the government policy only reinforced this trend: both the average and median number of serfs held by successful applicants was much higher than among the applicants in general, suggesting that the even within this group the wealthier had higher chances of being appointed.

On the other hand, among the young nobles, who did not wish to study, but asked to be assigned directly to active service we find the poorest teenagers: two thirds of members of this cohort had 20 serfs or less. These were also mostly older teenagers, generally, 16 to 18 years old. Characteristically, the three wealthiest teenagers in this group, Ivan Shenshin with 300 m.s., and Vasilii and Boris Koshelev with 500 m.s., were reassigned by the Heraldry to the Cadet Corps instead of the army.

The artillery and engineering schools attracted young nobles who were, on average, somewhat wealthier than those applying to the army, yet poorer than the cadets and the guards. In this case, however, the government appears to have pursued a different policy, as slightly poorer nobles had marginally higher chances of being assigned to their chosen schools. Successful applicants to the Engineering school had on average 30 serfs, while their unlucky peers had 38. The garrison schools were the preserve of the poorest of the poor; likely, there were many more young nobles attending these schools than our table indicates, but they were registered and enrolled by provincial authorities, without notifying the central authorities. Finally, noble minors who requested to be allowed to continue their education at home were somewhat better-off than the applicants to state schools and the army, while still much poorer than the aspiring cadets and well below the 100 male serfs threshold to be set by the February 9, 1737, decree for home schooling.

The situation in 1745 was roughly similar (see Table 3). The register for 1745 includes 658 entries, and its structure reflects the framework set in the February 9, 1737 decree that mandated that every noble teenager attended a series of reviews. Among the registering minors, we find 61 noble coming for their first review (including 9 boys who missed the deadline by a couple of years), 82 for the second, and only one for the third. On the other hand, 321 teenagers are listed as having missed their reviews and being in violation of the regulations, and for 184 nobles of all ages, from 7 to 20 and older, there is no information on their previous participation in the reviews. Among those who missed earlier reviews, the vast majority were 18 and older, including some nobles who were over 40 and even over 60. Two thirds of this group had 20 male serfs or fewer, while only 8 had 100 serfs or more. The authorities took quite a lenient stance towards these violators: a third of them ended up being assigned to the Guards, and two (those citing illness as an excuse) were even sent to the Cadet Corps.

**Table 3. Service Preferences and Service Assignments of Nobles at the Heraldry, 1745**

Registered, total: 658

Preferences recorded, total: 642

Appointments recorded, total: 607

	Applicants/ Approved applications / Appointment s, total	Serf- holding among applicants, average/media n (m.s.)	Serf-holding among successful applicants, average/media n (m.s.)	Serf-holding among all appointees, average/media n (m.s.)	Age of applicants, average/media n, average/media n (m.s.)
Service in the army	172 / 140* / 182*	18 / 8	17* / 8*	16* / 7*	18.0 / 18.0
Guards	179 / 128 / 130	51 / 20	58 / 20	57 / 20	17.8 / 18.0
Naval academy	3 / 3 / 33	17 / 15	17 / 15	45 / 24	12.3 / 12.0
Artillery school	5 / 1 / 3	20 / 20	18	7.5 / 5	12.6 / 12.0
Engineerin g school	40 / 12 / 15	28 / 13	17 / 15	14 / 13	12.6 / 12.0
Garrison schools	15 / 10 / 15	6 / 1	7 / 0	7 / 3	11.4 / 11.5
Cadet Corps	48 / 37 / 39	184 / 100	193 / 125	193 / 125	11.6 / 12
Continue home schooling*	152 / 133 / 146	146 / 25	170 / 29		8.4 / 8.0

\* Includes those assigned for life-long service (“forever”) with the right of promotion.

\*\* As per #1 of the February 9, 1737 decree, i.e. mostly those coming for the first review.

As in the previous decade, the Corps attracted by far the wealthiest nobles: the 47 who asked to be enrolled in this school, had on average 184 male serfs per person; aspiring cadets were also the most law-abiding: at least 31 among 48 applicants have previously attended their first review, and were now duly coming for the second. While the applicants to the engineering schools were much poorer than the aspiring cadets, a third of them (14 out of 40) were also coming for their second review. On the other hand, those who asked to be sent directly into the

army were not only much poorer and much older, but also generally failed to observe the registration laws: as many as 142 out of 172 have previously never attended any review at all. Generally speaking, the law-abiding nobles coming for the second review had on average 156 serfs (median – 100), while among the violators the average number of serf was 25 (median – 10), and only 10 violators had over 100 serfs.

Among service schools, the Naval academy attracted very few applicants (only three, all of whom were dully appointed), and the authority reassigned to it teenagers who initially applied to the Artillery (4) and Engineering (15) schools. The Artillery school with its five applicants did not fare much better, and after the authorities redistributed some applicants, it actually ended up with students who were on average much poorer than even the sailors. The Engineering school, on the other hand, got almost as many applicants as the Cadet Corps, although these were also quite poor. The Guards, unlike in 1736, received almost 200 applications, and most of them were assigned as requested; note, however, that this time the guardsmen did not stand out in terms of their wealth: in fact, they are almost on par with the applicants to the service schools; on the other hand, the future Guards were much older. Finally, while those applying to state schools and to the guards normally cited a specific unit, minors requesting to be sent into the army rarely, if ever did so; the few who did, usually asked to be sent to the Senate Company, or to the Ingermanland Regiments.

How representative are these numbers in terms of the distribution of career trajectories? It appears that they fit the broader pattern. Overall, in the period from 1743 to 1750, 8753 young nobles came for service registration. Among them, 226 were assigned to the Guards, 342 to the artillery school, 338 to the engineering school, 316 to the Cadet Corps, 584 to naval schools, 363 to garrison schools, and 1200 were allowed to continue home schooling. In addition, over 3000 were sent to service in the ranks as privates, and about 1000 banished for violation of the service registration rules, although it appears that the vast majority of them were pardoned.<sup>36</sup> Clearly, these numbers reflect the efforts of the government to shift young nobles, especially the wealthier ones, towards certain unpopular units, such as the Naval academy.<sup>37</sup> Also, these numbers do not include young nobles who signed up for service directly with their local governors, instead of going to the capital, as the central authorities acknowledged that they did not have any information about these minors.<sup>38</sup> If the 1744 register of the Ufa Provincial Chancellery – admittedly, not representative of the core serf-holding areas – is any indication, these were mostly poor, uneducated nobles (out of 31 minors on the register, only seven were learning to write, the rest were illiterate) who went directly into the regiments of the line as rank-and-file troopers.<sup>39</sup>

Summing up, by late 1730s young nobles clearly expressed a variety of very different career preferences. On the one hand, we find that “service in the low and degrading ranks” was not viewed as “degrading” by the nobility: for large sections of the poor nobility this was clearly not the case. These poorer nobles consistently ignored the service registration and education requirements, stayed at home till they were 18 or 20, and arrived at the Heraldry fully ready to be sent as privates to the regiments of the line. Moreover, they rarely, if ever, requested specific appointments within the army, which indicates that they had difficulty navigating the institutional landscape of state service. The government’s attempts to force them to follow the registration and schooling requirements did not have much effect, even though scores of such nobles were annually banned to the ranks (or even into the navy) “forever” (i.e. without the right of promotion).

The numbers and persistence of such violations forced the government to compromise. In June 1745, for example, the Senate decreed that Stepan Salov be sent into the navy “forever.” Yet already in July the decision was reversed and he was allowed instead to stay at home until the age of 16 in order to study arithmetic and geometry. Nikolai Sharygin came for his first review in June 1745 when he was already sixteen years old, and although literate, he had not studied any advanced subjects, so he was clearly in violation of the 1737 decree. Sharygin cited illness as an excuse, but he could not produce any evidence to support his story, nor could the Penza provincial chancellery confirm it. In July Sharygin was banished to the navy forever; in September, however, the Senate reconsidered and sent Sharygin to study at the Naval Academy instead.<sup>40</sup> It appears that in practice, in order to avoid punishment it was often sufficient for a minor to bring along a noble witness who would agree to certify that the youngster in question had missed the reviews due to illness. Moreover, the scale of noncompliance forced the government of Empress Elizabeth to repeatedly issue blank pardons for young nobles who failed to register for study and service in time (such decrees were issued in 1742, 1747, 1751, 1754, and 1759): instead of being banished for life, they were allowed to enter service as privates in the army.<sup>41</sup> That meant, of course, that there were few incentives to observe the registration and schooling requirements for those who did not want to do so.

On the other hand, we find a category of nobles who tended to follow the 1736-37 registration rules and educational requirements, and who volunteered for study at state schools, especially at the cadet corp. These nobles repeatedly showed up for reviews (even if they might have been late by a year or two), and eventually they voluntarily asked to be enrolled into state schools. These nobles tended to be wealthier – some of them, even much, much wealthier – than their peers enrolling in the regiments of the line, and they knew the specific school they wanted to attend.

This might look like a clear-cut division, with wealthy nobles choosing the schools, and poor nobles not aspiring for anything more ambitious than carrying a musket in a regiment of the line. It is striking that in a sense they reproduce the pre-Petrine divisions within the nobility: it was a well-established practice already in the 17<sup>th</sup> century that the poorest and landless nobles were drafted as privates into the regiments of dragoons and, increasingly, infantry. It could be speculated that the mid-18<sup>th</sup> century Guards and the Cadet Corps appear here as the functional equivalent of the Sovereign's Household (*Gosudarev dvor*) and the Muscovite elite forms of service, the gentry cavalry militia, where membership was reserved for nobles with at least 100 serfs,. Yet the situation was more complex than that; applicants to the service schools were only marginally, if at all, wealthier than their army-going peers; the aspiring guardsmen could be as wealthy as the cadets – and wealthier than the service school applicants – yet, they would also often skip reviews. Unlike the army-going minors, the future guardsmen tended to apply to specific regiments. This creates something of a puzzle. The Noble Cadet Corps was supposed to be a highly attractive institution: not only were the cadets well-fed and well-equipped, they also enjoyed Imperial patronage on a symbolical level. Most importantly, the Corps' charter specifically promised that successful graduates would be awarded with officer commissions – and indeed, in the period from 1732 to 1762, only 14% of its graduates left the Corps without officer's insignia.<sup>42</sup> Nor did the charter specify any formal requirements or prerequisites for enrolment. In short, enrolment in the Corps should have been every noble's dream, and especially attractive for the poorest nobility who could not hope to gain a commission through patronage. Why were the penniless nobles not fighting for a chance to spend few years quartered at a mansion in the capital in proximity to the court and get a commission afterward, but instead preferred to carry musket as rank-and-file infantrymen? Put differently, what factors shaped their choice of career trajectories, and why were some of them forfeiting opportunities for upward mobility through schooling?

### **Shaping the Choices: Social Links and Cultural Affinities**

The most straightforward explanation for the patterns of the career trajectories charted earlier might be simply the disparity of wealth. Poorer minors often explained their failure to come for a review by the lack of money necessary to travel to the capital, and the government in the 1730s repeatedly sought to address this problem by allowing the poorest nobles to register for service with their local governors. In 1745, roughly half of nobles among those who had missed earlier reviews explained their failure to comply with regulations by illness, and the rest

by their poverty, which allegedly prevented them from travelling to the capitals. It is likely that extreme poverty, especially in combination with a lack of adult relatives, could and did make it physically impossible for a young noble to observe the registration and schooling requirements. This was certainly a factor, but not the only one. After all, many applicants to the service schools were coming from among the most destitute nobles, while wealth by itself did not guarantee that a noble would choose school study. Note that Nikolai Sharygin's behaviour could not be explained by poverty preventing him from traveling to the capital: in fact, he came from a distinctly mid-level family. He had 150 male serfs in the Arzamas and Penza districts; his grandfather was a *stol'nik* (a reasonably high pre-Petrine service rank), his father was an infantry captain. And Stepan Salov was even wealthier—he had 600 serfs.<sup>43</sup> On the other hand, some of the cadets were so poor that upon graduation they did not have enough money for equipping themselves and traveling to their regiments, and the Corps sought to provide them with financial assistance. So, while the nobles did tend to cluster somewhat around two opposite extremes on the scale of career preferences, enlistment in the infantry and enrolment in the Cadet Corps depending on their wealth, the overall picture was much more dynamic, especially for nobles who owned between 20 and 100 male serfs.

Unfortunately, the young nobles themselves tell us very little about the motivations behind their decisions. Rank-and-file Russian nobles from the period left very few personal letters or diaries that could shed light on the factors behind their decisions, while their petitions tend to be extremely dry and formulaic. When we do come across more elaborate petitions, they appear to reflect not so much their own motivations, but rather the ability of hired letter-writers to manipulate the official discourse for the petitioner's advantage.<sup>44</sup> Given the virtual absence of the nobles' own voices in our sources, we shall focus on the social reproduction strategies and resources available to them and try to reconstruct, as far as possible, these resources in order to understand the choices made by the members of the elite. Their social connections insofar as these shaped their career opportunities will be explored. It is no secret that early modern Russian nobles were embedded in family and patronage networks, which they relied on in matters large and small.<sup>45</sup> A high-ranking relative, a friend, or patron could provide access to appointments. A son from a poor family could be sent to live with wealthier relatives or benefactors, who might provide him with home schooling along their own children, and eventually, direct him towards one or another unit or school. Finally, a friend or relative in St Petersburg or Moscow might provide a teenager with lodging, supervision, and advice during registration at the Heraldry, especially since the process of assignment to service could last at least a few months. The importance of these factors was naturally amplified for youngsters who lost their fathers, and also for poorer nobles.

On the other hand, we shall explore the role played by the cultural affinities and resources of noble families in shaping their strategies. We hypothesize that familiarity with and exposure to the post-Petrine administrative universe and the imported Western European knowledge and cultural skills made it likelier that a noble would appreciate the potential benefits of schooling, would believe in his ability to succeed at school, and would be able to negotiate the enrolment process. As we shall see, access to this imported knowledge and culture was often gained through patronage networks or, alternatively, through one's position in the state service. Arguably, as the older Petrine schools did not necessarily provide nobles with systematic career advantages, there existed an ambiguity in the minds of nobles regarding their social role: was the formal schooling provided by the government a privilege, a social lift, a form of welfare for the poorest nobility, or all of the above? Given this ambiguity, the role of social connections and cultural capital in guiding individual choices must have been especially important. The data do not allow us at this point to systematically assess the role of these factors: we can neither comprehensively trace the social networks of noble minors in our sample, nor measure their cultural capital.<sup>46</sup> What we can do is to document the possible impact of such factors in specific instances.

The case of the Noble Cadet Corps serves as a rather useful illustration here. The very first group of 24 volunteers to sign up for the Corps in August-November 1731 included quite a few sons of members of administrative elite of the time, but also young nobles who appear to be relatively poor and disadvantaged.<sup>47</sup> The very first to enrol, on August 16, was Aleksandr Novosiltsev, son of a Privy Councillor and senator. The next day he was joined by the Protasov brothers, Yakov and Ivan, whose father was a retired colonel with a considerable estate (450 serfs). Ivan Polev, who signed up three days later, was the orphaned son of a major with no serfs whatsoever. Two more young nobles also enrolled on the same day. One was Andrei Pozniakov, son of the chief of the St. Petersburg police, the other was Mikhail Bakhmetev, whose father was a mere ensign in the navy. Later Nikifor Maslov joined the Corps: his father, an ennobled commoner, became *ober-prokuror* of the Senate later that same year. He was followed by Aleksandr Voeikov, son of an Actual State Councilor and former Chief Procurator of the Senate; and Evgraf Tatishchev, son of Vasiliï Nikitich Taishchev, an administrator and intellectual, who played an important role in the 1730 crisis and now enjoyed a favour of sorts with the Empress, but also by the likes of Davyd Stupishin, son of a *zhiltets* (a pre-Petrine rank) with mere 26 serfs to his name.

For these members of the administrative elite sending their sons to the Corps might have been a natural move: they appreciated the importance attached to the school by Anna's government, and enrolment was for them a way of signalling their support for this initiative,

their loyalty to the regime and to the leading dignitaries who patronized the Corps. In fact, Tatishchev actively participated in discussions at court leading up to the creation of the Corps, and even brought his son Evgraf from Revel, where he has been earlier sent to study, back to Moscow in anticipation of the opening of the new school.<sup>48</sup> Note, however, that nobody in this cohort belonged to the true aristocracy, or to the super-rich titled families of the court.

A closer look at the poorer applicants also allows us to identify possible channels that might have led them to the Corps. Ivan Polev, for example, though poor and orphaned, boasted of knowing German. That, most likely, is explicable by the fact that he lived at the house of Field-Marshal Prince Ivan Yur'evich Trubetskoi, who, among other things, spent 13 years in captivity in Sweden, and was the father of Ivan Betskoi, a prominent Enlightenment figure of Catherine II's reign. The late father of Nikolai Choglokov was a lieutenant-colonel, and he left his son only 70 male serfs. Yet Nikolai was literate and knew German: he lived at the house of General Peter Hassenius' widow and was probably either her relative, or a protégé, as he enrolled in the Corps the same year with her own son, Petr Hassenius junior. Karl-Ulrich Stiernschantz (son of a late general-major) listed as his place of residence the house of Privy Councillor Aleksei Makarov, Peter I's trusted secretary, in 1731 president of the Revenue College. Besides speaking German, young Stiernschantz also knew some French, and he joined the Corps the same year as Makarov's son Petr.<sup>49</sup> In all of these cases we tentatively identify a combination of social connections and socially conditioned cultural affinities that likely channelled young nobles towards the Corps.

The same factors are visible when we look at a larger sample of young nobles. Quite often young nobles specifically cited their desire to join their relatives as a reason for applying to the Corps, or a particular unit or school. Ivan Pisarev coming to the Corps in 1733 (son of a major in the dragoons, 120 m.s.) was related to the Efimovskii brothers already studying there. Petr Krenitsyn (son of a *kamerir*, enrolled in 1734) was a cousin of two other cadets, Fedosei Baikov and Rodion Goriainov.<sup>50</sup> Naturally, these factors could also work to channel career choices towards other schools or units. In 1736, the Baskakov brothers, Fedor and Aleksei, asked to be allowed to enrol as apprentices in the civil service "to study along with their brothers," Grigorii Baskakov, a Senate *ekzekutor*, and Osip Baskakov, a Senate clerk.<sup>51</sup> In 1745, Koz'ma Arbuzov (10 m.s.) asked to be assigned to the Horse Guards, where his two brothers were serving; the same was true of Mikhailo Ravinskii (70 m.s.), Ivan and Andrei Matavtin (three m.s. shared among four brothers), Egor Maksimov (one serf), and others. Similar considerations led Petr Zhukov (60 m.s.), Grigorii Korsakov (25 m.s.), Nikita Kablukov (110 m.s.), and Bogdan Mordvinov (80 m.s.) to apply for Semenovskii Guards, and Ivan Priklonskii (360 serfs) to the Cadet Corps.<sup>52</sup>

Major Mikhail Danilov notes in his memoirs that his elder brother studied in the Artillery School in the early 1730s, and when his time came, Mikhail enrolled as well; when transferred to St Petersburg, his brother arranged to take Mikhail along.<sup>53</sup> Serving in the same unit with relatives or friends provided a young noble with a network of supporters, who might facilitate his integration in to the new environment, provide him with a room to stay, help him to survive on his meagre income by pooling resources—all of which was especially important for poorer nobles. Even for relatively wealthier nobles a trip to the capital and the costs of staying there while waiting for an assignment were a significant burden, as testified by numerous complaints. So, having a relative or friend in the capital to whom a boy could be entrusted was an important resource. The Guards regiments illustrate the role of these networks among poorer nobles especially well. In 1745, Sergei Butkevich (15 years old, son of a deceased lieutenant-colonel in *landmilitia*, 50 m.s.) upon his arrival in St Petersburg for registration lodged “in the 4<sup>th</sup> company of the Horse Guards, with *vits-vakhmistr* Vasilii Khomiakov”; he asked to be enrolled in the Horse Guards and was duly assigned. Fedor Ostafiev (18 years old, son of a Preobrazhenskii Guards private, 30 m.s.) was staying with Corporal Ivan Elagin of the Horse Guards, who also came to the Heraldry to serve as a witness certifying Ostafiev’s nobility; he also certified that indeed it was due to illness that Ostafiev missed all the deadlines for service registration. Ostafiev requested to be assigned to the Horse Guards, and his request was granted. The very same day Corporal Elagin also served as a witness for two other young nobles, Kirill and Ivan Nechaev (20 and 18 years old, sons of a retired Preobrazhenskii sergeant, 30 male serfs). The Nechaev brothers were lodging with Yakim Katov, a trooper at the Horse Guards, and they also joined that regiment. Similarly, Mosei Avdulov, Ivan Aristov, Aleksei Polenov, Osip Filisov, and others who applied for and joined the Preobrazhenskii Guards, either stayed with Preobrazhenskii guardsmen, or brought them along to the Heraldry as witnesses.<sup>54</sup> We can see that these young nobles were integrated into specific Guards communities prior to their enlistment, which probably played a decisive role in their career choices.

Likewise, the data show how the role of these social connections might have been especially important for nobles in unfavourable circumstances. Thus, it is striking how many of applicants to the Corps in its early years were orphaned (or more properly, lost their fathers, as we usually do not have any information on their mothers). Among the first 24 cadets who signed up in August-November 1731, at least five boys were orphans and lived at the houses of patrons. Thus, Ivan Karaulov (son of lieutenant-colonel, 158 male serfs) lived at the house of Ivan Annenkov, member of the board of the Stables Office (*Koniushennyi prikaz*), while Ivan von Meisner (son of a major, no serfs) resided at the house of Lieutenant-General Prince Ivan Bariatskii.<sup>55</sup> We could suspect that not infrequently relatives or guardians used the Corps to get

an orphan off their hands, as was apparently the case with Cadet Nikolai Mel'nitskii, who was enrolled into the Corps by his relatives even though he was so sick he was eventually pronounced unfit for study.<sup>56</sup> Indeed, in 1737, out of 47 incoming cadets for whom we have the relevant data, 15 were orphans and further 14 were sons of retirees, that is, their fathers were so old or crippled that the government allowed them to leave service: these numbers certainly reflect the heavy toll taken by the Petrine wars on the servitor class, but also probably a certain tendency to view the Corps as a sort of welfare institution. In subsequent decades, the situation changes: in 1748, out of 98 incoming cadets 17 were the sons of retirees and only 3 orphans, and in 1751, the numbers were 15 and 2, respectively (out of 58 incoming cadets).<sup>57</sup>

Finally, social networks were also crucial in shaping the cultural endowment and preferences of noble families that can sometimes be linked to their career choices. We do, in fact, see some nobles pursuing proactive strategies regarding schooling. Prince Afanasii Myshetskii, a captain in the Vyborg Regiment, at first had his son Dmitry enlisted as an underage soldier in his own unit to attend the garrison school there. In 1744, however, he petitioned to have Dmitrii transferred to the Cadet Corps, as they “do not teach beyond arithmetic and beginnings of drawing” at the garrison school.<sup>58</sup> Petr Veshniakov, enrolled in the Artillery school, was released home to study at his own expense, yet had no money and “no private teachers, whom I could learn from, according to my wishes, and be ready for service” and since he wanted to “learn languages, sciences, and military exercise,” Veshniakov requested a transfer to the Corps.<sup>59</sup> Petr Bukhvostov explained his motives, “In the year [1]740, in January, I was enrolled, according to my wishes, into the Engineering Corps as a student and learned arithmetic up to subtraction. Yet, currently no languages and other sciences are taught there, except those related to engineering. I am, however, a noble from the Novgorod district, and I am fourteen years old, and I wish to study foreign languages, fencing, dancing, and other sciences listed in the Charter of the [Cadet] Corps.”<sup>60</sup> Indeed, note that dancing and fencing were the most popular subjects at the Corps, which probably meant that these “gentlemanly sciences” fit the cadets’ self-perception. On the other hand, Cadet Mel'nitskii explained in 1732 that he was enrolled into the Corps by his relatives in Moscow “without truly knowing the essence and the rules of this Corps, nor its studies.” After arriving at the school, however, he realized that the Corps “consisted of advanced and numerous studies [*sostoit v vysokikh i mnogikh naukakh*],” and so asked to be dismissed.<sup>61</sup>

Often, however, these cultural endowments could not be really disentangled from the social ones. Coming to the Corps in 1736, Ivan Davydov knew both French and German, probably because he lived at the house of his uncle, Colonel Petr Melgunov, a high-ranking civil official, a Procurator at the Revenue College, and was home schooled along with his children,

who also joined the Corps.<sup>62</sup> Likewise, it is hardly by chance that the two Shishkin brothers, lodging in 1745 at the house of Ivan Bibikov, a Lieutenant-Colonel of the Engineers, ended up applying to the Engineering School.<sup>63</sup> Fedor Smolianinov reported at the Heraldry that his father, though a supervisor of the fisheries in Astrakhan, was a retired major, a fact that gave Fedor access to army engineers at the local garrison. So he was able to learn “arithmetic with appropriate parts of geometry, and also enough of fortification,” and to present a certificate to that effect “personally signed by engineering officers of field and company grade.” He attended two reviews and in 1745 he requested to be sent to the Corps of Engineers for study, and was duly assigned.<sup>64</sup> Similarly, Sergey Nakovalnin was able to present at the Heraldry a letter certifying his expertise in geometry and signed by two army engineers, a lieutenant-colonel and a second lieutenant, because his father was a colonel and a commanding officer of the Nezhin garrison in Ukraine; upon examination at the Corps, though, Nakovalnin’s expertise in geometry was found to have been exaggerated, to put it mildly, by his father’s obliging colleagues.<sup>65</sup> The sons of Russian officers posted in the Baltic provinces tended to pick up some German. In 1732 three incoming cadets whose father’s regiments were stationed in Estland (Molchanov, Shatilov, Travin) all knew some German. In 1749 it was the case with Petr Chelishchev (his father was posted in Narva).<sup>66</sup> One might notice that the educational and intellectual outlook of a leading eighteenth-century memoirist, Andrei Bolotov, was absolutely crucially shaped by his stay first, as a boy, with his father’s regiment in Estland, and later, as a young officer, in occupied Konigsberg.<sup>67</sup>

The sons of the low- and middle-ranking civil servants at the government offices were especially likely to possess some advanced learning, as their fathers were better able to appreciate its importance due to their own experience in the service and might have had access to expert tutors. Timofei Klishin, a clerk at the College of Foreign Affairs, actually paid from his own pocket to teach his son not only French and German, but also Latin (though not geometry).<sup>68</sup> Characteristically, Ivan Rogachev had already studied arithmetic, German, and French prior to entry to the Corps, even though Rogachev’s father, a secretary at the Senate, had no serfs, while Nikolai Titov, son of an ensign with 400 m.s. had not mastered anything beyond basic literacy. Similarly, Aleksey Kozhin, son of an NCO with 1150 m.s. was barely literate when he arrived to the Corps.<sup>69</sup> Note that generally speaking at the Corps the rank of the cadets’ fathers turned out to have been negatively correlated with their wealth, but weakly and positively with indicators of their cultural endowments. This might indicate a certain heterogeneity of the elite, that is, the coexistence in our sample of the traditional, wealthier—and less educated—nobility with a stratum of technical experts recruited from among the lower nobility and non-nobles.<sup>70</sup>

However, the examples of Kozhin and Titov are also significant in that they exemplify numerous cases of noble families who might have sent their sons to the Corps precisely because these families found themselves in socially precarious positions. Take Aleksei and Nikolai Liapunov, who joined the Corps in 1736. The brothers came from a highly prominent non-titled provincial noble family with claims to a princely lineage, and their father owned 600 m.s., yet he was a mere NCO in the guards. Similarly, Ivan Neielov and Ivan Shenshin, arriving at the Corps the same year as the Liapunov brothers, were scions of respectable provincial noble clans sons and inherited from their fathers 230 m.s. and 500 m.s., yet their fathers were mere privates in the guards. Moreover, one finds among the incoming cadets a number of young nobles whose fathers never gained any rank at all under the Petrine system and were listed with their pre-Petrine ranks. In 1736 alone one finds no less than 8 such youngsters: the fathers of Aleksei and Lev Shatilov (126 m.s.), Iakov and Tikhon Kvashnin-Samarin (82 m.s.), Fillip and Iakov Eremeev (36 m.s.), Vasily Boltin (350 m.s.), and Nikolai Gnevashov (147 m.s.) all “served as nobleman” (*v drorianakh*), i.e., in the gentry militia.<sup>71</sup> Some of them belonged to established provincial clans and while not rich, possessed estates that put them in the top strata of the Russian elite. Yet they found themselves outside of the new service hierarchy and faced very real prospects of losing their elite status; in that sense we might hypothesize that they were likely to view the Corps as a potential opportunity to compensate for this handicap.

**Table 4. Cadet Corps Distribution of Nobles by Number of Serfs Percentage**<sup>72</sup>

	“Russian” entrants to the corps, number of observations	Data on wealth, number of observations	Share of nobles,% (number of observations)			
			≥20 m.s.	21-100 m.s.	101-500 m.s.	≤501 m.s.
Entrants to the corps, 1736-1745	494	165	17.6% (29)	32.7% (54)	38.8% (64)	10.9% (18)
Entrants to the corps, 1746-1750	221	170	10.6% (18)	32.4% (55)	50.6% (86)	5.9% (10)
Entrants to the corps, 1751-1755	169	144	7.6% (11)	28.5% (41)	53.5% (77)	9.7% (14)
Entrants to the corps, 1756-1760	355	99	17.2% (17)	38.4% (38)	32.3% (32)	12.0% (12)

To illustrate how the choices could be shaped by a combination of small factors, take the case of Ivan Kharlamov. Ivan was fifteen years old in 1733, and he was already enlisted in the Ingermanlandskii Infantry Regiment as a private where his brother and namesake, Ivan Kharlamov, was a corporal. Yet he applied to be transferred to the Corps. During the wars of Peter I, their father, Andrei Kharlamov, served in the gentry militia squadrons (*vybornye rot*) under the Field Marshal Boris Sheremetev, and was later retired to the civil service; he had

estates in the Novgorod, Pskov, and Vologda districts, although the younger Ivan did not even remember exactly how many serfs their father had. One of the boy's uncles was in the navy, another served in the capital (as an ensign in the St. Petersburg Garrison Regiment). Importantly, Ivan's cousin, Egor Golovtsyn, was already a cadet in the Corps. Even more importantly, Ivan's elder brother Grigory, to whose supervision he was entrusted the capital, was an NCO in the Corps of Engineers. Taken together, these circumstances could probably account both for his decision to go into the Corps, and for the fact that he knew a "little arithmetic," in addition to grammar.<sup>73</sup>

## Conclusion

In this paper we have explored the educational and career choices of Russian nobles in the post-Petrine decades—how much choice did the nobles have, what choices did they make, and how they made them. As we could see, nobles reacted to new educational opportunities offered by the state in different ways: some accepted them, others did not.

As a result, the government failed to force the poorest nobles into state schools and to produce a culturally unified nobility, and had to retreat by repeatedly granting pardons to those nobles who failed to study. The choices made by the nobles in post-Petrine decades and profiled in the previous section demonstrate that even though the 1730 conspirators were talking about creating special schools in order to relieve the nobility from the obligation to begin service in "low and demeaning ranks," education and formal schooling was not and could not, contrary to our modernizing assumptions, be automatically associated in the eyes of the rank-and-file nobles with upward mobility and, more specifically, with progress in the service hierarchy; nor was service as a rank-and-file trooper in the regiments of the line considered to be demeaning by the vast majority of the lower nobility. On the other hand, we do see a segment of the nobility that was, already by the 1730s, actively buying into the Petrine projects and actively seeking out the opportunities offered by the state schools.

While these different reactions might reflect some cultural preferences, such as deeply ingrained conservatism, the sources do not tell us anything about the details. What they do demonstrate, however, is that these reactions were often shaped by the nobles' own circumstances, by their financial conditions and by the social networks in which they operated. I argue, therefore, that their decisions could be understood as driven by their attempts to use the resources available to them to secure and enhance their chances for social reproduction. Different combinations of these resources dictated different strategies, some geared towards working for upwards mobility, others towards minimizing the risks in a situation of uncertainty

and resource scarcity. As a result, post-Petrine schools provided some nobles (and not only nobles) with opportunities for upward mobility, but generally they reproduced the division within the elite. More importantly, the so-called Westernization emerges here as dynamic process driven by decisions made by the nobles themselves in their specific socio-economic contexts.

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<sup>1</sup> RGVA, f. 314, op. 1, d. 1632, ll. 70-71 ob, 87.

<sup>2</sup> Faizova, IV 1999, "Manifest o vol'nosti" i sluzhba dvorjanstva v XVIII stoletii, M., pp. 51-53.

<sup>3</sup> For brief overview in English, see: de Madariaga, I 1995, "The Russian Nobility in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries", *The European Nobilities Northern, Central and Eastern Europe*, in H Scott (ed.), vol. II, pp. 223-273; Dewald, D 1996, *The European Nobility, 1400-1800*, New York: Cambridge University Press; Lieven, D 2006, 'The Elites', *The Cambridge History of Russia*, vol. II: Imperial Russia, pp. 227-244.

<sup>4</sup> Dewald, D 1996, *The European Nobility, 1400-1800*, pp. 151-155.

<sup>5</sup> Wirtshafter, EK 1997, *Social identity in Imperial Russia*, Northern Illinois University Press, p. 171.

<sup>6</sup> Smith, JM 2001, "Between Discourse and Experience: Agency and Ideas in the French Pre-Revolution", *History and Theory*, 40, no. 4, Theme Issue: Agency after Post-Modernism, p. 141.

<sup>7</sup> *Materialy dlia istorii russkogo flota* 1866, SPb., vol. 3, p. 289.

<sup>8</sup> Decree of January 14, 1701, see: *ibid.*

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 314.

<sup>10</sup> See, for example, Kovrigina, VA 1988, *Nemetskaia sloboda Moskvyy i ee zhiteli v konce XVII – v pervoi chetverti XVIII vv.*, M., p. 309.

<sup>11</sup> Polnoe sobranie zakonov Rossiiskoi Imperii Povelieniem gosudaria imperatora Nikolaia Pavlovicha sostavlennoe: sobranie pervoe s 1649 po 12 dekabria 1825 goda. Sanktpeterburg: Pechatano v Tipografii II Otdeleniia Sobstvennoi Ego Imperatorskago Velichestva Kantseliarii, 1830 (hereafter PSZ I). 2778; Benda, VN 2008, *Sozdanie i razvitie sistemy podgotovki voennykh kadrov v Rossii v konce XVII – pervoi polovine XVIII vv.*, SPb, pp. 145-153.

<sup>12</sup> Matveev Apraksinu 15 marta 1717, see: *Materialy dlia istorii russkogo flota*, vol. 3, p. 338.

<sup>13</sup> Strukov, DP 1892, 'Moskovskaja Pushkarskaja shkola: k istorii pervogo voennogo uchilishcha Rossii vremeni Petra Velikogo', *Voennyi sbornik*, no. 1, pp. 159-160.

<sup>14</sup> *Materialy dlia istorii russkogo flota*, vol. 3, p. 345.

<sup>15</sup> Veselago, FF 1852, *Ocherk istorii morskogo kadetskogo korpusa s prilozheniem spiska vospitannikov za 100 let*, SPb, pp. 73-74, 84, 88-91.

<sup>16</sup> RGA VMF, f. 176, op. 1, d. 111, here p. 175, 180.

<sup>17</sup> On the events of the crisis, see: Kurukin, IV & Plotnikov, AB 2010, *9 ianvaria - 25 fevralia 1730 goda: Sobytiia, liudi, dokumenty*, M., Kvadriga.

<sup>18</sup> Fedyukin, II & Lavrinovich, MB 2014, 'Sukhoputnyi Kadetskii korpus v Sankt-Peterburge (1730-e) i ego berlinskii proobraz', in Fedyukin, II & Lavrinovich, MB (eds.) "Reguliarnaja akademija uchrezhdena budet...": *Obrazovatel'nye proekty v Rossii v pervoi polovine XVIII veka*, M., pp. 264-316.

<sup>19</sup> Fedyukin, II 2014, "'Chest' k delu um i okhotu razhdaet': reforma dvorjanskoi sluzhby i teoreticheskie osnovy soslovnoi politiki v 1730-e gg', *Gisatorii rossiiskie, ili Opyty i razyskanija k ubileju Alexandra Borisovicha Kamenskogo*, M., Drevlekhranilische, pp. 83-142.

<sup>20</sup> PSZ I. 5811, 5881.

<sup>21</sup> PSZ I. 5811.

<sup>22</sup> PSZ I. 6050; RGVA, f. 314, op. 1, d. 1632, ll. 26-37. In practice, however, the distinction between the two was soon forgotten, and the term "Knightly Academy" fell out of use.

<sup>23</sup> Berk, KR 1997, 'Putevyie zametki o Rossii', in YuN Bespiatykh (ed.), *Peterburg Anny Ioannovny v inostrannykh opisaniakh. Vvedenie. Texty. Kommentarii*, SPb., p. 227.

<sup>24</sup> PSZ I. 5894.

<sup>25</sup> For an overview of this reform, see: Fedyukin, II 2014 "Chest' k delu um i okhotu razhdaet": reforma dvorjanskoi sluzhby i teoreticheskie osnovy soslovnoi politiki v 1730-e gg.

<sup>26</sup> PSZ I. 7171.

<sup>27</sup> See: Fedyukin, II 2014 "Chest' k delu um i okhotu razhdaet": reforma dvorjanskoi sluzhby i teoreticheskie osnovy soslovnoi politiki v 1730-e gg.

<sup>28</sup> PSZ I. 5811.

<sup>29</sup> PSZ I. 6949, 7039.

<sup>30</sup> RGADA, f. 286, op. 1, dd. 178, 305.

<sup>31</sup> For description of these petitions and archival sources, see: Fedyukin, II & Gabdrakhmanov, S 2014, *Cultural Capital in an Early Modern Elite School: The Noble Cadet Corps in St Petersburg, 1732-1762*, preprint, National Research University Higher School of Economics, Moscow, Russia.

<sup>32</sup> For an overview of wealth distribution among the eighteenth-century nobility, see: Mironov, BN 1999, *Sotsialnaia istoriia Rossii perioda imperii (XVIII-nachalo XX veka)*, SPb., vol. I, pp. 82-97. The data on the Russian nobility in general in 1727 and

1762 comes from Mironov, *Sotsial'naiia istoriia*, p. 89; Kahan, A 1966, "The Costs of 'Westernization' in Russia: The Gentry and the Economy in the Eighteenth Century", *Slavic Review*, no. 25, p. 45. Compare with the data in Guards regiments: Smirnov, YuN 1989, "Osobennosti sotsial'nogo sostava i komplektovaniia russkoi gvardii v pervoi polovine XVIII veka", *Klassy i sosloviia Rossii v period absol'utizma*, Kuibyshev, pp. 103-105.

<sup>33</sup> RGADA, f. 286, op. 1, d. 178, l. 39.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid, l. 124 ob.

<sup>35</sup> At the same time, neither the Heraldry, nor the Cabinet, nor the Senate had much information on the number of openings in the schools or regiments. In 1732, for example, the Semenovskii Guards sent to the Heraldry an acerbic "memo" that the last group of young nobles arriving from the Heraldry had to be enrolled into the regiment outside of the normal complement and without pay, and thus the Heraldry was not to send any more recruits until specifically requested. RGADA, f. 286, op. 1, d. 183, l. 3.

<sup>36</sup> RGADA, f. 16, op. 1, d. 231, l. 597 ob.-598. Troitskii, SM 1974, *Russkii absol'utizm i dvorianstvo v XVIII veke (formirovanie burokratii)*, M., Nauka, p. 142.

<sup>37</sup> RGADA, f. 21, op. 1, d. 52, ll. 6-10.

<sup>38</sup> RGADA, f. 16, op. 1, d. 231, ll. 597 ob-598.

<sup>39</sup> RGADA, f. 286, op. 1, d. 305, ll. 83-86.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid, ll. 314, 318-319.

<sup>41</sup> PSZ. 8683, 9465, 9909, 10234. RGADA, f. 20, op. 1, d. 212, ll. 1-4.

<sup>42</sup> Fedyukin, II & Gabdrakhmanov, S 2014, *Cultural Capital in an Early Modern Elite School: The Noble Cadet Corps in St Petersburg, 1732-1762*, preprint.

<sup>43</sup> RGADA, f. 286, op. 1, d. 305, ll. 314, 318-319.

<sup>44</sup> See, for example, the petition of Petr Vishniakov, a student of an "admiralty school": RGVIA, f. 314, d. 1811, l. 21 ob.

<sup>45</sup> On patronage in the eighteenth-century Russia see: Hosking, G 2000, "Patronage and the Russian State", *Slavonic and East European Review*, vol. 78, no. 2 (April), pp. 301-320; Ransell, DL 1988, "Character and Style of Patron-Client Relations in Russia", *Klientelsysteme im Europa der Fruhen Neuzeit*, in A Maczak & E Mueller-Leuckner (ed.), Munich, pp. 214-224. See also Kivelson, VA 1998, "Kinship Politics/ Autocratic Politics: A Reconsideration of Early-Eighteenth-Century Political Culture", in J Burbank & DL Ransell (ed.), *Imperial Russia. New Histories for the Empire*, Bloomington, p. 5-31.

<sup>46</sup> The first attempt to measure the role of cultural capital within the Cadet Corps is performed in our work: Fedyukin, II & Gabdrakhmanov, S 2014, *Cultural Capital in an Early Modern Elite School: The Noble Cadet Corps in St Petersburg, 1732-1762*, preprint.

<sup>47</sup> RGADA, f. 286, op. 1, d. 116. Published in: Petrukhintsev, NN 2007, "Stanovlenie Kadetskogo korpusa pri Anne Ioannovne. 1731 – 1740", *Pervyi Kadetskii Korpus vo dvortse Menshikova. Materialy konferentsii*, SPb., pp. 137-138.

<sup>48</sup> See his 1731 letters in Tatishchev, VN 1990, *Zapiski. Pis'ma. 1717-1750 gg.*, Moscow, Nauka, pp. 140, 143, 144, 147.

<sup>49</sup> RGADA, f. 286, op. 1, d. 116.

<sup>50</sup> RGVIA, f. 314, op. 1, dd. 1678, 1712.

<sup>51</sup> RGADA, f. 286, op. 1, d. 178, l.176.

<sup>52</sup> RGADA, f. 286, op. 1, d. 305, ll. 131 ob, 135, 136 ob, 148 ob, 159 ob, 162 ob, 343.

<sup>53</sup> Danilov, MV 2000, *Zapiski Mikhaila Vasil'evicha Danilova, artillerii maiora, napisannye im v 1771 godu (1722-1762)*, pp. 309-310.

<sup>54</sup> RGADA, f. 286, op. 1, d. 305, ll. 196 ob-197 ob, 201 ob -203.

<sup>55</sup> RGADA, f. 286, op. 1, d. 116. Published in Petrukhintsev, NN 2007, "Stanovlenie Kadetskogo korpusa pri Anne Ioannovne. 1731 – 1740", *Pervyi Kadetskii Korpus vo dvortse Menshikova. Materialy konferentsii*, SPb., pp. 137-138.

<sup>56</sup> RGVIA, f. 314, op. 1, d. 650, l. 27.

<sup>57</sup> RGADA, f. 286, op. 1, d. 178; RGVIA, f. 314, op.1, dd. 2197, 2382.

<sup>58</sup> RGADA, f. 286, op. 1, d. 291, l. 36.

<sup>59</sup> RGVIA, f. 314, op. 1, d.1811, l. 21.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid, d. 1905, ll. 110-110 ob.

<sup>61</sup> RGVIA, f. 314, op. 1, d. 650, l. 27.

<sup>62</sup> RGADA, f. 286, op. 1, d. 178; RGVIA, f. 314, op. 1, dd. 1729, 1753.

<sup>63</sup> RGADA, f. 286, op. 1, d. 305, l. 22.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid, ll. 324-324 ob.

<sup>65</sup> RGVIA, f. 314, op. 1, d. 2259. Shamrai, DD 1940, "Ob izdatel'akh pervogo chastnogo russkogo zhurnala (po materialam arkhiva Kadetskogo korpusa)", *XVIII vek. Sbornik 2*, Moscow-Leningrad.

<sup>66</sup> RGVIA, f. 314, op. 1, dd. 1631, 2251.

<sup>67</sup> Bolotov, AT 1993, *Zhizn' i priklyuchenija Andreja Bolotova: Opisannye samim im dlia svoikh potomkov*, M., vol. I, pp. 25-39, 380-389.

<sup>68</sup> RGVIA, f. 314, op. 1, d. 2197, ll. 191-192.

<sup>69</sup> RGVIA, f. 314, op. 1, d. 2197; d. 1632, ll. 134, 196.

<sup>70</sup> Fedyukin, II & Gabdrakhmanov, S 2014, *Cultural Capital in an Early Modern Elite School: The Noble Cadet Corps in St Petersburg, 1732-1762*, preprint.

<sup>71</sup> RGADA, f. 286, op. 1, d. 178.

<sup>72</sup> Fedyukin, II & Gabdrakhmanov, S 2014, *Cultural Capital in an Early Modern Elite School: The Noble Cadet Corps in St Petersburg, 1732-1762*, preprint.

<sup>73</sup> RGVIA, f. 314, op. 1, d. 1678.

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