

Proactive Attitudes towards Integration and Intense Group Identification, in a Sample of the Swedish-speaking Minority of Western Finland

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Abstract

The aim of the study was to investigate proactive attitudes towards integration and intense group identification in a sample of the Swedish-speaking minority of Western Finland. A questionnaire was completed by 298 respondents (208 females and 90 males). The mean age was 32.7 yrs (*SD* 13.4) for women and 28.9 yrs (*SD* 13.4) for males. The questionnaire included scales measuring positive attitudes towards cultural and structural efforts to enhance the situation of immigrants, openness to diversity (Phelps, Eilertsen, Türken, & Ommundsen, 2011) and intense group identification. Positive attitudes towards cultural and structural efforts to enhance integration, and openness to diversity all correlated significantly positively with each other, and negatively with intense group identification. Age did not correlate with any of the scales in the study. Females scored higher than males on the three subscales measuring proactive attitudes towards integration, and males scored significantly higher on intense group identification. Respondents with a higher educational level scored higher on cultural efforts and on openness to diversity, and significantly lower on intense group identification. Social integration efforts could be fostered by enhancing prosocial traits, especially among males, and by encouraging people to study at the higher degree institutions. This could be applied not only among the Swedish-speaking Finns but also among other cultural groups in Finland and elsewhere.

Keywords: proactive attitudes towards integration, intense group identification, minority, Western Finland

Introduction

The current study examines proactive attitudes towards integration and intense group identification in a sample belonging to the Swedish-speaking minority of the west coast of Finland. Finland is situated in the north of Europe with a strong heritage of life-long learning, egalitarianism, and self-sufficiency. Until the 1990s, Finland was a quite homogenous country, known for emigration rather than immigration. In the recent decades, however, Finnish society has undergone ethnical and cultural changes, partly due to an increasing number of refugees and immigrants, and partly due to transnational employment and study migration (Antikainen, 2010; Korkiasaari & Söderling, 1998; Saukkonen, 2013). Keeping in mind the trends in globalization, technological developments, international travel, cross-cultural exchange, and/or forced migration, it is likely that Finland will continue to attract people with diverse backgrounds in the upcoming years. It is tending that future generations will be challenged by a society that is progressively diverse in terms of ethnicity, culture, and values. Hence, the topic of this study is timely, as it contributes to the understanding about the Swedish-speaking people's proactive attitudes towards integration and their perspectives about the other ethnic groups residing in Ostrobothnia.

Proactive attitudes towards diversity and values of multiculturalism encourage the acceptance of cultural diversity in a community with equal opportunities and mutual tolerance. Social integration is a dynamic and structured process during which all the members of the society participate in the creation of dialogue to maintain positive human social relationships. It brings together different ethnic groups without losing their identities, to give access to all the areas of the community life in order to eliminate segregation (Berry, 2011; Ratts & Pedersen, 2014). It is also a process of becoming and belonging through identifying such indicators as rights and citizenship, language and cultural knowledge, safety and stability, social bridges, bonds and links, employment, housing, education, and health (Ager et al., 2008; Cheung & Phillimore, 2017; Phillimore, 2016; Strang, Baillot, & Mignard, 2018; Wessendorf & Phillimore, 2019).

The Swedish-speaking Population of Finland

The Swedish-speaking population of Finland is a linguistic minority that often identifies themselves as Finland-Swedes (*finlandssvenskar*). The identity of the Finland-Swedes is based on the recognition of their situation as a minority in Finland, including loyalty to Finland as a nation state in combination with loyalty to the Swedish language and culture, which to some extent differs from that of the Finnish-speakers (Åström, Lönnqvist, & Lindqvist, 2001; Höckerstedt, 2000; McRae, Helander, & Luoma, 1997). In 2017, according to Statistics Finland, there were 289,052 citizens registered with Swedish as their mother tongue in the country (Official Statistics of Finland, 2018).

The current existence of the Swedish-speaking population in Finland is historically interconnected with the 600-year long period of time when Finland was a part of Sweden, ending with the Russian conquest in 1809 (Engman, 1995; Törnblom, 1993). Some scholars provide disputed archaeological and philological evidence that the Swedish-speakers have lived in the area that today constitutes Finland already in pre-historic times (McRae, Helander, & Luoma, 1997; Saxén, 1905). Another, more accepted, theory suggests that the Swedish-speaking population started to settle in Finland in the 12th or 13th century. The settlements mainly took place in the Western and Southern coastal areas of Finland (Allardt & Starck, 1981; Haggren et al., 2015; Tarkiainen, 2008). During the 19th century, after the separation from Sweden and while under Russian sovereignty, a national awakening took place, leading to the birth of Finland as a nation, and the country gained its independence in 1917. This fact drastically altered the Swedish-speakers' position from having been a majority to becoming a minority (Engman, 1995). The Finnish language became dominant in the newly founded nation, but the Swedish language was given an equal status in the 1922 constitution. This gave base for a shared identity creation including both Finnish and Swedish-speakers. Symbolically, the Finland-Swedes identify themselves with the coastal area and the sea, and so it became common to speak of "Swedish Finland", constituting of the Swedish-speaking parts of Nyland, Åboland, and Österbotten (in Eng., Ostrobothnia) (Hulden, 2004; Peltonen, 2000).

Throughout the history of Finland, the position of the Finland-Swedes has turned out to be quite unique compared with that of other minority groups in Western Europe, meeting the major criteria of ethnicity: self-identification of ethnicity, language, social structure, and ancestry (Allardt & Starck, 1981; Bhopal, 1997). It is classified as a resource-strong minority in terms of linguistics, economics, and politics. It is also considered as having a relatively high level of ethnic organization (Allardt & Starck, 1981), and it has even been regarded as a distinct nationality (Modeen, 1999). This is due to the conscious efforts to keep Swedish as an administrative and educational language in the country. Today, the Swedish-speaking community has a comprehensive network of educational institutions at all levels, a rich and versatile Swedish mass media supply, a great amount of civil societies, commercial companies, and a political party of its own. Finland-Swedes, especially in the Ostrobothnia region, choose to follow Swedish affairs and culture as well as to have Swedish media as a main source of information. Today, Ostrobothnia appears as a region where the Swedish language and culture have a stronger position than in other areas of Swedish-speaking Finland (Folktinget, 2006; Tarkiainen, 2008).

Proactive Attitudes towards Integration

Proactive integration efforts reflect individual's own responsibility in the integration processes. During the past decades, European countries have faced an increase of immigration from a number of non-Western countries around the world. Europeans have mixed attitudes towards multiculturalism and, therefore, cultural diversity brings forth such concerns as safety, security, trust, and economic and social wellbeing (e.g., Green & Staerklé, 2013; Hellwig & Sinno, 2017; Schaeffer, 2016; Wagner et al., 2008; Zick, Pettigrew, & Wagner, 2008). In the increasingly diversified modern society, there is a need for interaction with individuals whose worldview is different and, thus, diversity competence could be fostered by developing open attitudes towards social and cultural diversity (Chang, 2001). Verkuyten (2004; 2007; 2009) addresses openness to diversity as a phenomenon that goes beyond non-prejudice and reflects general evaluation of cultural diversity. Cultural efforts towards integration implicates the changes of a majority's cultural attitudes towards the others, including acceptance

and promotion of a minority's cultural values, norms, and customs. Social or structural efforts implicate the willingness to change the majority society's institutional structures, including changes in law, public services, or making welfare distribution more egalitarian (Phelps et al., 2011; Verkuyten 2007, 2009; Verkuyten & Brug, 2004).

From an evolutionary perspective, human evolution may have facilitated close-mindedness to diversity, since differences may be perceived as a threat to the survival of one's identity and cultural values (Cole & Teboul, 2004; Confer et al., 2010; Strauss, Connerley, & Ammerman, 2003). A perceived threat may lead to a negative evaluation and hostile behaviors towards culturally different people, and it may decrease tolerance towards outgroups (Stephan, Ybarra, & Rios Morrison, 2009). From an attachment theoretical perspective, individuals with both anxious and avoidant attachment styles (Bowlby, 1988), might not be open to diversity due to mistrust of the intentions of culturally different individuals. Attachment anxiety is associated with an ambivalent attitude toward diversity, and attachment avoidance is negatively associated with openness to diversity (Han, 2017; Strauss, Connerley, & Ammerman, 2003). In addition, attachment styles are related to relationship processes and personality traits. Such multicultural personality traits as opened-mindedness, flexibility, and cultural empathy predict openness to diversity (Yakunina et al., 2012).

The extent of openness to cultural and structural diversity is associated with educational background. Attendance of college has in itself been found to be associated with attitudes and a wide range of aspects of diversity (Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991, 2005). The weight of evidence suggests that during college, students tend to develop greater openness and tolerance (Bennett & Hunter, 1985; Chickering, 1969, 1970a, 1974; Clark et al., 1972; Elton, 1969; Elton, 1971; Feldman & Weiler, 1976; Katz & Korn, 1968; Kuh, 1976; Rich & Jolicoeur, 1978); an increase in openness to diversity is especially notable among students who participate in exchange programs and are fully socially integrated in the host culture (Wortman, 2002). Structural efforts of an institution to emphasize and support multicultural diversity among faculty and students has been shown to have a positive impact on an individual student's commitment to promote cultural and social understanding (Pascarella et al., 1996).

Barkley, Boone, and Hollowat (2005) examined, in a student sample, the determinants of openness to diversity including experience with diversity, gender, size of hometown, enrolled credit hours, desire to obtain an advanced degree, outside work experience, and major field of study. Students from small cities were slightly more likely to be open to diversity than respondents raised in the countryside. Personality plays an important role in attitudes toward diversity. Undergraduate students who study more than others and desire to seek an advanced degree are significantly more open to diversity than students who do not have a desire to further their education beyond the undergraduate level. Students who have a job and students who live with friends not enrolled in college are less open to diversity. Overall, student involvement with an institution itself, engagement with peers of different backgrounds, and collaborative communication and learning have a positive effect on openness to diversity. These results are quite consistent across studies, showing that attendance of college impact on students' openness to diversity over an extended period of time, as a result over a set of interrelated experiences rather than as a result of a single experience (Astin, 1984, 1993; Pace, 1984, 1987, 1990; Loes, Culver, & Trolan, 2018; Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991; Pacarella et al., 1996; Pike, 2002).

Regarding the association between gender and openness to cultural and structural diversity, results are mixed. Barkley and colleagues (2005) found that females are more open to diversity than males, which corresponds with theoretical and historical work suggesting that men and women understand and frame cultural differences in divergent ways, with women showing more openness, tolerance, and solidarity towards others (Black, 2006; Gilligan, 1997; Hochschild, 2003; Høy-Petersen, Woodward, & Skrbis, 2016; Skeggs, 2004; Vieten, 2013). However, findings by Pascarella et al. (1996) provide no reason to believe that the estimated net effects they observed differ significantly in magnitude for males and females.

In the Finnish context, empirical studies have been conducted pertaining to intercultural issues among both students and teachers. Among students, findings have shown that tolerance and openness to diversity are related to gender, with girls being more accepting of cultural and religious differences than boys (Holm, Nokelainen, & Tirri, 2009; Kuusisto et al., 2014; Tournay-Purta et al., 2001; Ruokonen & Kairavuori, 2012). Regarding the association between age and openness to cultural and structural diversity, the older the student is, the more open attitudes s/he show (Kuusisto & Kallioniemi, 2014). In terms of geographical location, students residing in the capital area are more open-minded than those living in smaller cities (Kuusisto et al., 2014). Finnish teachers assess their orientation to cultural differences as more positive than Finnish students do. In addition, differences between practicing teachers and student teachers were noticed: practicing teachers were more likely to notice shared principles and find similarities between cultures (Kuusisto et al., 2015). In general, Finnish teachers see themselves as ethical professionals (Tirri, 2011, 2012) with good ethical sensitivity skills (Gholami, Kuusisto, & Tirri, 2015; Kuusisto, Tirri, & Rissanen, 2012). However, the results from another study done by Rissanen, Tirri, and Kuusisto (2015) suggest that Finnish teachers are oriented towards supporting commonality, but they are less willing to

recognize diversity, and their views on Muslim student's integration in Finnish society are rather negative. Finnish teachers are still relatively unprepared for the current intercultural situation within the school context (Talib, 2006).

Intense Group Identification

Group identification is defined as member identification with an interacting group, and it is proposed to be based on cognitive (social categorization), affective (interpersonal attraction), and behavioral (interdependence) sources (Hinkle et al., 1989; Tajfel, 1978). Group identification occurs at the individual level, but the sources of group identification vary in level. The literature on social identity taps mostly on the cognitive sources focusing on how social identity and social categorization, which are aspects of individual cognition, affect group identification. The cohesion literature emphasizes the affective sources focusing on the effect of interpersonal attraction at the interpersonal level. The common fate literature stresses the behavioral sources, putting an emphasis on the group-level construct of cooperative interdependence (Henry, Arrow, & Carini; 1999).

In multi-ethnic societies, people tend to form hierarchies of their own ethnic group based on social distance (Hagendoorn et al., 1998; Lange, 2000). Apparent ubiquity of inequality and hierarchy in human societies could be explained by the social dominance theory that hypothesizes the existence of a social dominance orientation (Sidanius et al., 2001). Social dominance orientation may be seen as a general attitudinal orientation towards inter-group relations, reflecting whether one prefers such relations to be equal or hierarchical. Among other things, social dominance orientation predicts endorsement of racism, nationalism, and cultural elitism (Pratto et al., 1994). The tendencies for traits such as competitiveness and assertiveness are commonly associated with masculinity, and traits such as emotionality, concern for others, and being prosocial are commonly associated with femininity (Guimond et al., 2006).

Research on the effect of gender and age on ethnic ranking and prejudice towards outside groups are contradictory. In terms of gender, it seems that men express explicit ethnic prejudice and social dominance to a higher extent than women do; this has been shown in numerous samples from around the world (Bates & Heaven, 2001; Ekehammar, Akrami, & Araya, 2003; Pratto et al., 2000; Sidanius & Pratto, 1999; Torney-Purta et al., 2001). However, in a study by Pepels and Hagendoorn (2000), the strongest prejudice against immigrant groups were found in elderly women. In a Swedish context, a study by Snellman and Ekehammar (2005), found no general difference between men and women associated with social dominance orientation and ethnic prejudice, but in a Norwegian sample of adolescents, gender was seen to have one of the largest effects - girls were much more tolerant than the boys (Pedersen, 1996). Several studies indicate that women have developed more tolerant attitudes and have a more positive value orientation towards immigrants and other groups than men (Listhaug, 1985; Walker, 1994). It is known that gender differences in social dominance orientation do vary as a function of the social context (Guimond et al., 2006).

When it comes to level of education, a link was observed between prejudice against outside groups and low educational level already in the late 1950s (Lipset, 1959); the well-educated are more tolerant and possess more democratic values, while the poorly educated have a perspective of more simplistic and authoritarian values (Selznick & Steinberg, 1969). Later studies support the notion that highly educated groups have less fear of foreigners and less racist attitudes than those with lower education (e.g. Jackman & Muha, 1984). In the studies by Hagendoorn (1993; 1995) and Pedersen (1996), individuals with academic background showed less tendencies to stereotyping and inter-group discrimination than those with a working-class background. As mentioned, attendance of higher education institutions has in itself a positive impact on students in the direction of developing greater social, ethnic, and political tolerance, and support for individual rights (Bachman, O'Malley, & Johnston, 1987; Beaton, 1975; Chickering, 1970b; Finney, 1974; Jackman & Muha, 1984; Nosow & Roberston, 1973); likewise, students tend to become less authoritarian, dogmatic, and ethnocentric (Chickering, 1974; Clark et al., 1972; Elton, 1969; Kuh, 1976). In contradiction to this, Sidanius and Pratto (1999) report that the higher the education, the higher the tendency to express social dominance.

The first aim of the study is to investigate proactive attitudes towards integration, and the second one is to investigate intense group identification, in a sample of members of the Swedish-speaking minority in Ostrobothnia, Western Finland. It is hypothesized that women would score higher on the subscales measuring proactive attitudes than men would, and that men would score higher on intense group identification than women. It is also hypothesized that people with a higher educational background would demonstrate higher cultural and structural efforts to strengthen integration as well as be more open towards diversity and have lower levels on intense group identification. In terms of age, it is predicted that the older the participant, the lower she or he will score on intense group identification, and higher on the proactive attitudes towards integration.

Hence, the present study tests the replicability of the study conducted by Phelps and colleagues (2011) in the Norwegian context. The latter describes social psychological orientation of respectful openness and prosocial attitudes of Norwegian university students toward adapting to other cultural groups. This study examines proactive attitudes of the major minority group – Swedish-speaking Finns – toward the other minority groups residing in Ostrobothnia, Finland.

Method

Participants

A questionnaire “Life in Finland” data was distributed in 2018 in Western Finland. The participants were informed about the purpose of the research before completing volunteer and anonymous online or paper version of a questionnaire. Both, online and paper versions were available in 8 languages, including Swedish language. A questionnaire was shared with higher education institutions and various organizations and associations operating within the target area. Also, a snowball sampling procedure was utilized in online data collection.

In total, a questionnaire was completed by 298 Swedish-speaking Finns (208 females, 90 males). The mean age was 32.7 years (SD 13.4) for females, and 28.9 years (SD 13.4) for males, the age difference was significant [$t(296) = 2.25, p = .025$]. The age span was between 16 and 90 years of age. Of the respondents, 61.1% had a student matriculation exam or higher, and 35.6% had an education lower than that.

Instruments

The proactive attitudes towards integration were assessed with a scale “Multicultural Finland”. It consisted of three sub-scales measuring (1) cultural efforts, 7-items, (2) structural efforts, 8-items, and (3) openness to diversity, 6-items. The scale was developed by Phelps, Eilertsen, Türken, & Ommundsen (2011) and specifically adapted and pilot tested for this study. Respondents were asked to choose an alternative on a five-point scale (0 = strongly disagree to 4 = strongly agree). For the single items and Cronbach’s alphas see Table 1.

Table 1. *Single Items (Adapted from Phelps et al., 2011) and Cronbach’s Alphas for Scales Measuring Cultural Efforts, Structural Efforts, and Openness to Diversity (N = 298)*

Cultural Efforts (7 items, $\alpha = .82$)

1. If integration is taken seriously, both Finnish people and immigrants should accept that their cultures change
2. Finnish people are entitled to demand that their own traditions and practices stay dominant in comparison with immigrant cultures (R)
3. Finnish people should not let their own culture be influenced by immigrants (R)
4. Finnish people should accommodate to immigrant traditions
5. Finnish people should be more open and welcoming toward the customs of ethnic minorities
6. Finnish people should do more to get to know immigrants
7. Finnish people should accept that immigrants use their own traditional clothing when they are at work

Structural Efforts (8 items, $\alpha = .86$)

8. Immigrants should receive economic support to establish themselves in society
 9. Finnish authorities don’t do enough to make immigrants feel at home in Finland
 10. Immigrants cannot expect that public services are tailored for them (R)
 11. Laws and rules should be adjusted so that it is easier for immigrants to feel integrated in society
 12. To make integration easier, public services should be customised (health and social services for example) for different immigrant groups
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13. In order for ethnic minorities to feel more welcome, the state should economically support construction of place for worship for them.

14. Political parties should have a quota for ethnic minorities on election lists so that they have a better opportunity to be elected

15. The composition of personnel in the public sector should mirror a multicultural Finland

Openness to Diversity (6 items, $\alpha = .89$)

16. It's a positive thing to have a multicultural society where all groups can keep as much of their cultural traditions as possible

17. Ethnic minorities go too far in showing off their cultural heritage (R)

18. Finland belongs to immigrants just as much as it belongs to Finnish people

19. Finnish people have much to learn from immigrant cultures

20. People with other cultural backgrounds enrich the Finnish society

21. It is a positive thing to have ethnic minority cultures in Finland

(R) = Recoded

The intense group identification scale was specifically constructed for this study. It consisted of 6-items, measuring people's group identification to own culture. Respondents were asked to choose an alternative on a five-point scale (0 = strongly disagree to 4 = strongly agree). For the single items and Cronbach's alpha see Table 2.

Table 2. *Single Items of the scale Measuring Intense Group Identification (N = 298) ($\alpha = .81$)*

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1. The moral values of my culture are the best for me
 2. A person from another cultural group can never understand me as well as someone from my own group
 3. It is difficult interact with people from another cultural group
 4. People from different cultural groups should not mix too much
 5. One can never trust a person from another cultural group as well as one from one's own group
 6. I would not like my children to marry a person from another culture
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Ethical considerations

The study was conducted in adherence to the principles concerning human research ethics of the Declaration of Helsinki (World Medical Association, 2013) as well as the guidelines for the responsible conduct of research of the Finnish Advisory Board on Research Integrity (2012).

Current study was designed, reviewed and undertaken to ensure integrity and quality. The topic of the study constituted minimal risks to the human participants and its investigation was not of an extremely sensitive nature. That said, the main applied principles of the study were honesty, trustworthiness and confidentiality.

All data material is and will be protected from damage, tampering and loss. The proper handling and publication of data is done in accordance to the regulations of data protection by European Commission (2016).

Results

Correlations between the Scales

Cultural efforts, structural efforts and openness to diversity all correlated significantly positively with each other, while intense group identification correlated significantly negatively with the three scales measuring proactive attitudes towards integration. All correlations were at a $p < .001$ -level (Table 3). Age did not correlate with any of the scales in the study.

Table 3. *Correlations between the Scales in the Study*

	1.	2.	3.
1. Cultural Efforts			
2. Structural Efforts	.79 ***		
3. Openness to Diversity	.83 ***	.70 ***	
4. Intense Group Identification	-.61 ***	-.38 ***	-.61 ***

Note. *** $p < .001$

Sex and Educational Level

A multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) was conducted with the four scales as dependent variables, sex and educational level (high vs. low) as independent variables, and age as a covariate. The effect of the covariate age was not significant (Table 4, Fig. 1). The multivariate effect of sex was significant. The univariate analyses showed that sex had a significant effect on all dependent variables. Females scored significantly higher than males on the three subscales measuring proactive attitudes towards integration, and males scored significantly higher on intense group identification. The multivariate effect of educational level was also significant. According to the univariate analyses, respondents with a high educational level scored significantly higher on cultural efforts and on openness to diversity, and significantly lower on intense group identification. No interaction was found between sex and educational level.

Table 4. *Results of a Multivariate Analysis of Variance (MANOVA) with Four Scales as Dependent Variables and Sex and Educational Level (High vs. Low) as Independent Variables (N = 298)*

	F	df	$p \leq$	η_p^2
<i>Effect of Age (covariate)</i>	2.01	4, 281	.094	.028
<i>Effect of Sex</i>				
Multivariate Analysis	8.18	4, 281	.001	.104
Univariate Analyses				
Cultural Efforts	26.97	1, 284	.001	.087
Structural Efforts	25.34	"	.001	.082
Openness to Diversity	28.01	"	.001	.090
Intense Group Identification	6.11	"	.014	.021
<i>Effect of Educational Level</i>				
Multivariate Analysis	11.05	4, 281	.001	.136
Univariate Analyses				
Cultural Efforts	15.27	1, 284	.001	.051

Structural Efforts	2.31	"	ns	.008
Openness to Diversity	33.22	"	.001	.105
Intense Group Identification	19.09	"	.001	.063
<i>Interaction Effect Sex x Educational Level</i>	1.65	4, 281	ns	.023

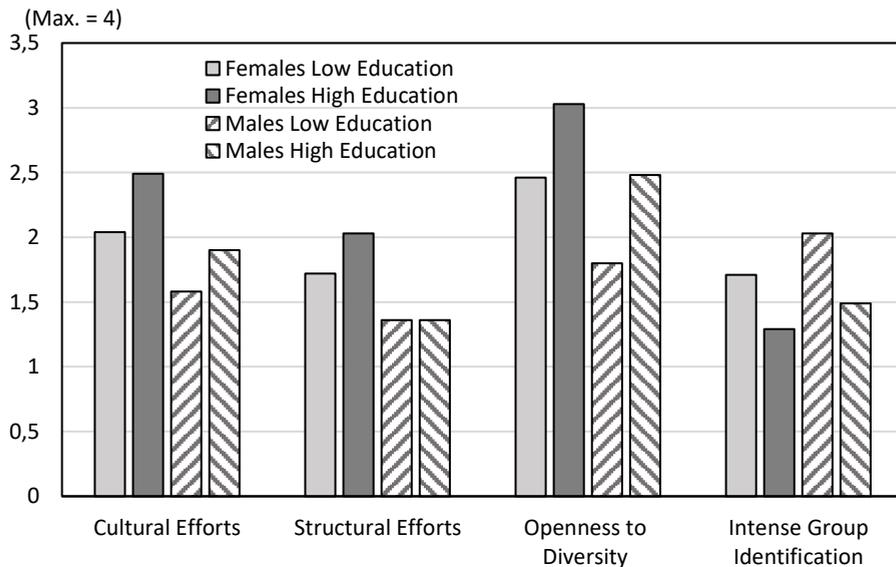


Figure 1. Mean values for females and males with high and low educational levels on the four scales of the study (N = 298).

Discussion

For centuries, the Swedish-speaking Finns have been a minority among the major Finnish population. First, they are familiar with a shared identity with other Swedish-speakers in Finland. Second, they are aware of their ethnic minority status; they are acquainted to the dynamics of belonging to a wider society, and accustomed to cultural and structural processes of integration.

Increased immigration and multiculturalism can have both positive and negative effects on the individual and society. Understanding individual and cultural dynamics concerning attitudes and sources of group identification may minimize the negative effects of cultural clashes and strengthen the positive effects of diversity.

This study replicated in part Phelps's (2011) study, using the Majority Integration Efforts Scale constructed by him, with the purpose to investigate attitudes toward one's own proactive contribution to the integration of immigrants in a sample of Norwegian university students. In the current study, using a sample from the Swedish-speaking minority in Finland, scales measuring cultural efforts, structural efforts and openness to diversity correlated significantly positively with each other, and correlated significantly negatively with intense group identification. In the Norwegian sample, the majority integration efforts scale showed no relationship with age or sex. The participants scoring high on right-wing authoritarianism and social dominance orientation were less positive to cultural and structural efforts and openness to diversity. In the current study,

age did not correlate with any of the scales. However, sex had a significant effect on all dependent variables. Females scored significantly higher than males on the three scales measuring proactive attitudes toward integration, and males scores significantly higher on intense group identification. The educational level was also significant. The participants with higher educational degree scored significantly higher on cultural efforts and openness to diversity, and significantly lower on intense group identification.

The weight of evidence from previous studies (e.g. Barkely, Boone, & Hollowat, 2005; Pascarella & Terenzini, 1995, 2005) suggests that if students spend an extended period of time in a higher education institution, they tend to develop greater tolerance and openness to diversity than if they spend less time or none at all. Links between low education and stronger authoritarian values, fear of foreigners, stereotyping, discrimination, and increased racism have been observed (e.g. Hagendoorn, 1993, 1995; Lipset, 1959; Pedersen, 1996). These results correspond well with the findings of the current study, indicating that participants with a higher educational level are more likely to support integration through their own cultural efforts, they are more open to diversity, and they have greater social and political tolerance towards other ethnic groups.

Previous research on sex differences on attitudes towards diversity have mixed findings. Findings from the studies by Pascarella and colleagues (1996) and Snellman and Ekehammar (2005) found no effects related to gender on openness to diversity and social dominance orientation. In other studies around the world including Finland (e.g. Barkley, Boone, & Hollowat, 2005; Høy-Petersen, Woodward, & Skrbis, 2016; Kuusisto et al., 2014; Pedersen, 1996; Sidanius & Pratto, 1999), it has been shown that females have more openness to diversity, are more tolerant and accept cultural and religious differences better, and express less ethnic prejudice than males do. The latter results are in consistence with the findings of the current study. In comparison with males, females were more willing to invest in efforts to accept immigrant groups, and they found immigrant cultural values to be as important as their own. They also think that institutions and authorities should facilitate immigrant integration and, generally, they view multiculturalism positively.

In the current study, age had no relationship with the investigated variables, it did not correlate with any of the scales. In a study by Pepels and Hagendoorn (2000), the strongest prejudice against immigrant groups were found among elderly women. In a Finnish school context, the older the student, the more open attitudes she or he would have towards other ethnic groups (Kuusisto & Kallioniemi, 2014). Levels of openness and acceptance towards other social groups are more effected by the length of time and quality of interaction with diverse individuals, personality traits, self-image, or size of hometown than age itself. A set of interrelated experiences determine attitudes and feelings of dominance of one's own social group more than a single experience (e.g. Barkley, Boone, & Hollowat, 2005; Blair, 2002; Guimond & Dambun, 2002).

This study applied the snowball sampling technique, a referral process allowing the researcher to reach populations that are difficult to sample when using other sampling methods (Hartnoll et al., 1997). This fact limits the results in terms of generalizability, and future research should address the issue of representability. In order to understand people's attitudes towards immigrant groups more comprehensively, further research could make distinctions within the immigrant sample. A common pattern in ethnic ranking seems to be that North Europeans are ranked at the top, followed by East and South Europeans, whereas Africans and Middle East groups are found at the bottom of the ranking list (e.g. Hagendoorn, 1993; Hagendoorn et al., 1998; Hraba et al., 1989). When we understand how the local population perceives and ranks different outgroups, we can receive a better understanding about the dynamics of a society.

The findings of this study could have valuable implications for the policy makers. There exists an opportunity to influence people's attitudes towards more cohesive cultural diversity and more sustainable integration. Such prosocial traits as emotionality, concern for others, openness, tolerance, and solidarity are more common among women, and therefore, social integration efforts could be fostered by enhancing those traits among all community members. Thus, the attendance of higher degree institutions itself cultivates greater social, cultural, and political tolerance, strengthens a support for individual rights and promotes appreciation of diversity. An appropriate target for intervention could be the creation of a positive multicultural environment by providing education, cross-cultural training, and exposure to diverse settings in order to support people's development of open attitudes toward cross-cultural differences and similarities.

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