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Pathways to Voting Intentions Among Swedish-Speaking Adolescents in Finland

Venla Hannuksela

Tampere University, Tampere, Finland
Email: venla.hannuksela@tuni.fi

Abstract

Political self-efficacy, the civic duty to vote, and a homogeneous political atmosphere have been identified as important antecedents of turnout. However, little is known about how they explain voting behavior among minorities, who have an inherent motivation to protect their minority rights. In this article, I examine how belonging to a minority, political self-efficacy, the civic duty to vote, and a shared party identification are connected to intentions to vote. Analyzing nationally representative panel data in a structural equation model, I compare Swedish-speaking minority adolescents and Finnish-speaking majority adolescents—groups that mainly share similar background characteristics in all but language and their minority or majority status. According to the results, the significantly higher voting intentions found among the minority can partly be derived from their higher level of political self-efficacy. The unilingually Swedish-speaking adolescents also seem to benefit from their more pronounced and homogenous political atmosphere.

In multicultural democracies, the inclusion of all societal groups in the political decision-making is essential. Minorities, particularly language minorities, often mobilize around minority issues to protect and advocate minority interests (Birnir 2007; Fagerholm 2016; Gherghina and Jiglau 2011). While previous research has highlighted how socioeconomic disadvantages and structural discrimination can affect political engagement among minorities, less is known about how political engagement manifests when these disadvantages are absent. Furthermore, while language glues language minorities together, it also creates additional challenges, such as language barriers, and the impact of these dynamics on political engagement is still understudied, particularly among well-integrated minorities.

To address these research gaps, I investigate why the Swedish-speaking Finns, a group that constitutes slightly over 5% of the population, express higher voting

intentions than the majority. This case provides a rare opportunity to study a minority that is constitutionally equal, socioeconomically well-off, and culturally integrated yet experiences the practical consequences of being a small linguistic minority, such as language barriers and a sense of threat. These conditions make the Swedish-speaking Finns an ideal case for exploring how minority status and linguistic identity intersect to shape political engagement in the absence of structural inequalities. More concretely, I focus on political self-efficacy, the considered importance of voting, and shared party preferences, all important predictors of voting behavior with the potential to explain differences between the majority and the minority (Arens and Watermann 2017; Blais and Achen 2019; Fieldhouse, Cutts, and Bailey 2022). To comprehend how socialization into the language minority and the language majority relates to political socialization and engagement, the three subgroups of unilingual Swedish-speakers, bilingual individuals with access to Swedish-speaking education, and bilingual individuals without access to Swedish-speaking education are compared.

The results of this study indicate that belonging to a language minority may enhance voting turnout. By analyzing two-wave panel data on 1,331 15- to 16-year-olds and 17- to 18-year-olds, of whom 263 belong to the Swedish-speaking minority, I have access to the crucial formative period of political socialization when long-lasting political attitudes and behaviors are formed, making it period with a vital impact on societies (Neundorf and Smets 2017). Moreover, this period represents years when the social surroundings of the minority and the majority are particularly likely to differ, potentially causing lasting differences between the two ethnic groups. The results indicate that belonging to the minority is positively connected to higher political self-efficacy and, through that, to higher voting intentions. For the unilingual Swedish-speaking Finns, a more homogeneous political environment can also play a part in explaining their higher intentions to vote. However, the minority does not have a higher civic duty to vote than the majority.

By focusing on a socioeconomically equal yet small linguistic minority, this study contributes to our understanding of how belonging to a language minority may impact on political socialization and participation without the interference of socioeconomic disparities and structural discrimination (see also Liebkind, Tandefelt, and Moring 2007). In essence, it shows what challenges and strengths language minorities may have when both successfully integrated and constitutionally and socioeconomically equal with the majority. Insights can be gained into how minorities engage with or become alienated from society, beyond the commonly recognized effects of socioeconomic disadvantage and discrimination.

Language Minorities and Ethnic Politics

Minorities are in an inherently more vulnerable societal position than majorities in democracies: because of the majority principle, they are always dependent on the goodwill of the majority (Branscombe, Schmitt, and Harvey 1999; Frost and Meyer 2012; Strubell and Boix-Fuster 2011). Therefore, they have an intrinsic incentive to guard their minority rights. Thus, minorities can be expected to want to socialize their youth to become active members of society and particularly to vote because of

the centrality of voting in representative democracies and the importance of numerical strength in determining election results.

Language is a strong identity builder (Anderson 1983/2006, 73–77) and particularly relevant politically (Birnir 2007). Therefore, the incentive to socialize active citizens may be especially strong for language minorities since language minorities need to protect their linguistic rights in addition to their more general minority rights. For a language minority to thrive, active societal life in the minority language is considered essential (UNESCO Ad Hoc Expert Group on Endangered Languages 2003). The discourse particularly revolves around mother tongue instruction and education in the native language. On the one hand, competences in the native minority language are integral for connecting with the minority and enhancing a wider development of people who belong to the language minority (Edele et al. 2023). On the other hand, a majority language functions as an essential means of communication with wider society (Edele et al. 2023).

Language minorities are also prone to suffer from language barriers, which impacts on their integration and the services they receive (Edele et al. 2023; Herberts 2023). The tendency to socialize within the minority (Scholten and Holzhacker 2009; Uekusa 2020) may also be reinforced by language barriers because discussions can be easier and more rewarding when a native language is shared (Theeboom, Schaillée, and Nols 2012). Thus, language minorities may be even more prone to forming strong bonding social capital than other minorities.

Moreover, ethnic and language minorities often unite politically and form ethnic parties, particularly when supported by historical presence, territorial attachment, and experience with autonomy (Fagerholm 2016; Koev 2019). Another option is to vote for co-ethnic candidates in other parties (Herberts 2023; Miller and Chaturvedi 2018). In both cases, ethnicity can function as a stable information cue for political choices, making it relatively easy for minorities, in particular language minorities, to choose a minority party or candidate if available (Birnir 2007; Van der Zwan, Tolsma, and Lubbers 2020). This ethnic voting can boost the turnout among the minority as it lowers the costs of participation (see, e.g., Miller and Chaturvedi 2018).

Political Socialization and Voting Among Minorities

Alongside contextual factors, socialization—the process through which people acquire politically relevant knowledge, attitudes, and behaviors (Almond and Coleman 1960, 27–29)—strongly influences voting decisions (Bhatti and Hansen 2012). It happens by observing and interacting with the environment in order to seek external approval and internal satisfaction (Bandura 1977; Campbell 2006; Langenkamp 2021; Quintelier 2015). While parents play a key role (Bhatti and Hansen 2012; Dahlgaard 2018), peers, schools, media, and social groups also matter, increasingly so when the children grow older and their social environment becomes more dominated by their friends (Bhatti and Hansen 2012; Quintelier 2015). Adolescents also influence the political socialization of their environment reciprocally (Dahlgaard 2018). Attitudes and behaviors obtained during the formative years of adolescence and young adulthood largely last throughout adult

life (Neundorf and Smets 2017), which is why studying the formative years is particularly important.

Voting is socialized by showing examples of voting and cultivating attitudes that foster electoral participation. These attitudes include political self-efficacy, which refers to the feeling of being able to understand politics and influence it (Niemi, Craig, and Mattei 1991, 1408), and the civic duty to vote, which denotes the normative belief that it is an obligation to cast one's vote (Blais and Achen 2019). External support, including encouragement or pressure to vote, and feelings of connectedness through participation also foster voting (Bhatti and Hansen 2012; Fieldhouse and Cutts 2016; Fieldhouse, Cutts, and Bailey 2022).

Different minorities—such as the discriminated and socioeconomically disadvantaged Black community in the United States (Sherrod, Torney-Purta, and Flanagan 2010), and the constitutionally and socioeconomically equal Swedish-speaking minority in Finland (Hannuksela 2024; Hannuksela and Tiihonen 2024)—have been shown to socialize their youth into high political self-efficacy, particularly considering the socioeconomic and societal situation, yet this association is not universal (Diemer and Rapa 2016). Not surprisingly, the high political self-efficacy found among minorities is often explained by a conducive socialization environment, particularly by the strong and supportive communities that are frequently observed among minorities (Frost and Meyer 2012; Theeboom, Schaillée, and Nols 2012), such as active church environment for the US Black community (Sherrod, Torney-Purta, and Flanagan 2010), or a deliberative school environment (Hannuksela 2024) and a community with high social capital (Hannuksela and Tiihonen 2024) for the Swedish-speaking Finns. Thus, belonging to a minority can be expected to be connected to a higher political self-efficacy compared with the majority when structural inequalities have been considered. Since political self-efficacy is one of the strongest predictors of political participation among both adults (Oser et al. 2022) and youth (Arens and Watermann 2017), I set the following hypothesis:

H1: Belonging to the Swedish-speaking minority is positively associated with intentions to vote through political self-efficacy.

One central reason to vote when not believing that one's vote matters is one's civic duty to vote (Blais and Achen 2019) or the perceived importance of voting (Bolzendahl and Coffé 2013). On the one hand, this attitude depends on the context (Campbell 2006, 22–26; Feitosa 2020). In particular, the perceptions of the responsivity of the political system to the needs and wishes of the voter have been connected to civic duty (Bowler and Donovan 2013; Feitosa 2020). In other words, the less the citizens' votes (are perceived to) matter for the driven policy, the less important voting is perceived to be. For minorities, this can be an important factor since, in democratic systems, the majority's preferences weigh heavier in election results. Consequently, some minorities have been found to feel that their political system responds better to the majority's wishes (Koch 2018; Pachi and Barrett 2012). Thus, a minority may feel less obliged to vote than the majority. Supporting this idea, language minorities in a local majority position have been demonstrated to have a significantly higher sense of civic duty in local elections than they do in

national elections, while national majorities in a local minority display the opposite pattern (Lago et al. 2018).

On the other hand, socialization plays an important part in building civic duty or the perceived importance of voting (Campbell 2006; Galais 2018; Wilson-Daily and Kemmelmeier 2021). A minority may be particularly motivated and even able to socialize adolescents into such a norm due to their vulnerable societal position (Strubell and Boix-Fuster 2011). First, tightly connected minorities appear to have a higher sense of civic duty than majorities due to their greater homogeneity (Lee 2022). Homogeneity is shown to be associated with higher sense of civic duty because common background and beliefs facilitate norm consensus, the mutual recognition of valuable opinions, and social cohesion (Campbell 2006). Second, minorities typically develop relatively tight communities that are rich in (bonding) social capital (Scholten and Holzhacker 2009; Uekusa 2020). Such tight minority groups are conducive for strong in-group loyalties and specific reciprocal solidarity ideas (Lee 2022), which, in turn, can be assumed to lead one to feel obliged to participate in order to help one's minority group. Third, civic duty has empirically been shown to be associated with social networks that shield people from feeling lonely, further emphasizing the positive impact of social capital (Langenkamp 2021).

Regarding the Swedish-speaking minority in Finland, I expect that the strong bonding social capital (see, e.g., Nyqvist et al. 2008) and strong integration into the political system weigh stronger than the potentially lower perceived responsivity or the political system. Therefore, I hypothesize that:

H2: Belonging to the Swedish-speaking minority is positively associated with intentions to vote through the perceived importance of voting.

Finally, the environment may encourage or discourage voting (Bhatti and Hansen 2012; Fieldhouse and Cutts 2016; Fieldhouse, Cutts, and Bailey 2022). Besides being exposed to norms of voting, individuals can enjoy the benefits of being able to express their views and thereby identify with a group that they regard as socially desirable (Bhatti and Hansen 2012; Fieldhouse and Cutts 2016). Literature suggests that it matters whether one's family and peers find voting important—or more accurately, it matters whether the individual perceives that they value electoral participation (Bhatti and Hansen 2012; Fieldhouse and Cutts 2016). If they vote and urge the individual to vote, the individual can expect social rewards from casting their vote and disapproval from abstaining (Bhatti and Hansen 2012; Fieldhouse and Cutts 2016; Fieldhouse, Cutts and Bailey 2022). Conversely, if they do not care, the benefits of participation and disadvantages of abstention are reduced.

Importantly, the encouragement is likely to depend at least partly on whether the environment shares political preferences with the individual because people have incentives to try to influence the election result in their preferred direction. Like-minded individuals have been found to be more likely to encourage each other to vote, indicating that these individuals get more social support for their political participation (Fieldhouse, Cutts and Bailey 2022). A disagreeing or heterogeneous political atmosphere can also lead to depressed political participation because it is more difficult and less rewarding to engage when cues on how to engage conflict

with each other (Brader, Tucker and Therriault 2014; Hayes, Matthes, and Eveland 2013; Mutz 2006). When an individual experiences more of these so-called cross-pressures, no political alternative is unequivocally supported and political engagement becomes less rewarding and has a greater risk of unwanted conflicts (Brader, Tucker and Therriault 2014).

When relevant resources and political opportunities exist, the prevalence of ethnic identities that share common interests tends to lead to the politicization of the minority issue and ethnic mobilization (Branscombe, Schmitt, and Harvey 1999; Frost and Meyer 2012; Gherghina and Jiglau 2011). In many multiparty systems, ethnic mobilization has driven the formation of regional or ethnic parties that frequently gain substantial support among the minority (Fagerholm 2016). When largely gathered under the minority party, the minority is politically more homogeneous than the majority, whose support is seldom concentrated on one party (Karv, Lindell and Rapeli 2022). This can be assumed to lead to decreased cross-pressures among minorities, given that minority members tend to engage with each other a lot. Thus—due to the minority status, a minority party, and a politically more homogeneous context—minorities can be assumed to be prone to being more pronounced about their political views to their family and friends than majorities.

Furthermore, evidence from Catalonia indicates that citizens who identify with either the majority or the minority become more polarized when experiencing a conflict between the groups, while citizens identifying with both groups do not (Hierro and Gallego 2018). These dual identifiers seem to become more disengaged when a conflict intensifies, supposedly due to cross-pressures (Hierro and Gallego 2018). Alternatively, conflicts can push dual identifiers into aligning with one side of the cleavage, thus increasing polarization (Lipset and Rokkan 1967). Thus, the unilingual may experience more benefits than bilinguals due to their more homogeneous environment. Thus, I hypothesize that:

H3: Belonging to the Swedish-speaking minority is positively connected to more support for voting from family and friends (via expressed party preferences and shared party identification), leading to more intentions to vote.

Case Study: Swedish-Speaking Finnish Adolescents

While all minorities, including the Swedish-speaking minority in Finland (Lindell 2020), are vulnerable because of being a minority (Frost and Meyer 2012; Strubell and Boix-Fuster 2011), Swedish-speaking Finns are well integrated and constitutionally and socioeconomically equal to the majority. Moreover, despite some differences, the ethnic minority and the majority share their nationality, origin, and the predominantly Evangelical-Lutheran religion, so apart from the minority/majority dynamics and the language, they are quite similar and thus comparable.

Like many minorities, the Swedish-speaking Finns have an ethnic minority party, the Swedish People's Party, to protect their interests, and it enjoys considerable support among the minority, arguably exemplifying ethnic voting (Fagerholm 2016; Koev 2019). The Swedish People's Party also exemplifies the grade of political

integration of the minority. It has been involved in coalition governments for over 45 years during the last 50 years despite only having an electoral support of around 5 per cent. This access to high political power can be expected to have improved or at least safeguarded the minority's rights and interests, which manifest throughout the Finnish legislation. For example, the legislation guarantees the same linguistic rights for Finnish and Swedish speakers to use their language with public officials, and the minority has access to Swedish-speaking education ranging from daycare to university. This separated school system has been connected to a conducive political socialization to political self-efficacy among the minority (Hannuksela 2024).

The Swedish-speaking Finns are also known for their high (bonding) social capital, particularly their active and supportive communities (Hannuksela and Tiihonen 2024; Nyqvist et al. 2008). This has been associated with, for example, their higher political self-efficacy (Hannuksela and Tiihonen 2024), and it could also contribute to civic duty. Like other minorities who are predominantly mobilized through a minority party around the minority issue, the Swedish-speaking Finns can also be regarded as relatively homogeneous politically (Fagerholm 2016; Karv, Lindell, and Rapeli 2022). This is because an ethnic majorities' votes are divided between many parties and issues in multiparty systems. Therefore, the minority can be expected to experience a relatively low number of cross-pressures.

Despite their relatively good situation, the majority of Swedish-speaking Finns feel constantly threatened and find that their societal situation has worsened in recent years (Herberts 2023; Lindell 2020). From a comparative perspective, the Swedish-speaking Finns have been considered a privileged minority, but they still experience practical difficulties due to being a minority (Liebkind, Tandefelt, and Moring 2007), which may affect their political socialization. Within the minority, important differences result from whether an individual is also fluent in Finnish and whether they have access to the Swedish-speaking education (Hannuksela 2024; Lindell 2020, 24).

Data and Methods

Sample and Procedure

This study makes use of both waves of the FAPEP data (Kestilä-Kekkonen et al. 2023), collected during spring 2021 from 15- to 16-year-olds and during the spring 2023 among 17- to 18-year-olds. The sample consists of 1,331 adolescents, including an oversample ($n = 263$) of adolescents who studied in Swedish in 2021. The first wave was collected in 79 schools around Finland, and the second wave followed the volunteering individuals out of this group. The participants were informed about the relevant aspects of the study, and they gave an informed consent upon participating.

The sample of the first wave forms a strategic cluster sample. Geographic diversity and representation, population density, language diversity, the average education level of the municipality, the schools' size and the school's type were considered when recruiting municipalities and schools. The first wave can be considered a good mini-representation of the age group in Finland since collecting the data during lessons enabled us to reach out to all pupils regardless of their

background, although the sample was not random on municipality and school levels. The second wave, however, is somewhat biased to adolescents who are more interested in politics, come from more advantaged backgrounds, and are more academically oriented. Due to this bias, I ran a robustness check only using the data from the first wave, which yielded quite similar results to the main analysis (see Appendix C).

The data collection of the first wave was adapted to the COVID-19 situation by replacing the presence of a researcher with a professionally produced video, using electronic devices for responding to the survey and offering the teachers the possibility to implement the study in remote learning arrangements. When answering, the students were asked to give their contact details in case they wanted to participate in the follow-up wave, which 53.3% ($n = 2,813$) did. In the spring of 2023, all of them were contacted and 47.3% of them responded ($n = 1,331$). 276 of these individuals indicated speaking Swedish at home.

Measures

All items used for each measure are specified in Appendix A and recoded to a scale ranging from 0 to 1.

Dependent Variable: Voting Intentions (W2)

Voting intentions, although not the equivalent of voting, strongly indicate future voting behavior. Because most respondents were slightly under the legal voting age when the second wave of the survey was conducted and when the parliamentary election was held in Finland the same spring, voting intentions were the only available measure for the respondents' electoral behavior. They were measured at the second wave while most of the independent and control variables were measured at the first wave to minimize the risk of endogeneity. They are estimated using a scale consisting of voting intentions in five different types of elections (parliamentary, presidential, municipal, county, and European elections). For each election, the respondents estimated whether they were certainly going to vote, probably going to vote, probably not going to vote, or certainly not going to vote. The Cronbach's alpha for the scale is 0.91.

Independent Variables
Political Self-efficacy (W1). Political self-efficacy was measured in the first wave using a six-item scale with a Cronbach's alpha of 0.84. The six items, answered on a five-point Likert scale, are (1) Sometimes politics seems so complicated that I do not quite understand what is going on (reverse coded); (2) I trust in my own abilities to participate in politics; (3) I understand the most important political issues in Finland; (4) I know more about politics than most people my age; (5) When political issues or problems are discussed, I usually have something to say; and (6) I have political opinions that are worth hearing.

Civic Duty (W1). Civic duty was measured with a question: How important is it to do the following things as an adult?: Vote in all national elections. The respondents could choose between four alternatives (very important, quite important, not very

important, and not at all important). The two last categories were combined because of their low n.

Relational Partisanship (W2). Social support was measured in the second wave, unlike most other test and control variables, because most of the respondents were unlikely to have a party identification in W1 (Rekker et al. 2018), and thus, to have the same party identification as their family members or friends. The respondents were first asked which party they would vote for in a parliamentary election. Those not naming a party are considered the no partisanship group. The party identifiers were asked how large a share of their family and how large a share of their friends would vote for the same party as them. Those who stated that all or almost all of them would vote for the same party as they form the shared partisanship group. Those replying that about a half of them would vote for their preferred party form the mixed partisanship group, and those replying that almost none of them or none of them would vote for their preferred party form the different partisanship group. Those who had no clue of who their family or friends would vote for or whose family or friends did not vote form the sole partisanship group, which does not get any support for their party choice and therefore acts as the control group.

Language Group (W1). The research questions focus on the connection between minority status and voting intentions through political self-efficacy, civic duty, and cross-pressures. However, the minority individuals have different grades of socialization in minority contexts due to their home and school backgrounds. Previous studies have found different identities between people living in unilingual and bilingual households (Hierro and Gallego 2018), and the socialization can also differ between households with one minority-belonging parent and one majority-belonging parent compared with households with two minority-belonging parents (or corresponding combinations). Additionally, school is an important socialization agent, and evidence points to differences in political socialization between Finnish-speaking and Swedish-speaking schools in Finland (Hannuksela 2024). Therefore, the minority is divided into three groups: the Swedish-speaking who speak Swedish but not Finnish at home and go to Swedish-speaking schools (hereafter: *Swedish-speaking*), the bilingual who speak both Swedish and Finnish at home and go to Swedish-speaking schools (hereafter: *bilingual*), and the Swedish-speaking Finns who go to Finnish-speaking comprehensive education (hereafter: *minority in majority schools*). The last group is not divided based on home language because the n would become too low and because even Swedish-speaking individuals in Finnish-speaking schools are largely integrated to Finnish-speaking socialization environments.

Control Variables

SES (W1). Socioeconomic status (SES) is one of the most robust predictors of political participation, with those with higher SES being more inclined to vote than less advantaged individuals (see, e.g., Lago et al. 2018). Therefore, SES is controlled for with a categorical variable regarding how good or bad the family's economic situation is according to the adolescents' estimation. Although this measure is prone to subjectivity, it is used as a proxy because a large share of the respondents seems

unaware of their parents' educational level and professional status (see also Engzell and Jonsson 2015).

Discussion with parents (W1). Discussing politics is a significant predictor of voting (Quintelier 2015), making it essential to control for the frequency of political discussions with key socialization agents like parents. Importantly, family discussions are also probably the most common way to learn and understand the family's political views, which is crucial for knowing them and potentially influences party identification. Thus, it can be assumed to correlate with knowing the party identification as one's family members and sharing it. The measure used is a categorical variable, which measures the frequency of discussing politics or societal issues with one's parents.

Discussion with peers (W1). Like parents, even peers are an important socialization agent, particularly for adolescents (Quintelier 2015). The same reasoning that applies to political discussion with parents also applies to political discussion with peers: discussion helps one to learn about and possibly share one's friends' views. The measure used is a categorical variable that measures the frequency of discussing politics or societal issues with one's friends.

Analytical Strategy

To investigate how belonging to the Swedish-speaking minority is connected to voting intentions through political self-efficacy, civic duty, and relational partisanship, I utilize a generalized structural equation modeling (GSEM) approach with mediation analysis and maximum likelihood estimation (MLE) in Stata. This method allows for incorporating both continuous and categorical variables and is well-suited for examining direct and indirect effects and thus testing the mediated effects of language groups. Additionally, a means comparison provides descriptive insights into differences across linguistic groups.

The GSEM model is specified in two parts. In the first part, voting intentions are modeled as the dependent variable predicted by political self-efficacy, civic duty, relational partisanship, language group, and the control variables. In the second part, political self-efficacy, civic duty, and relational partisanship are simultaneously modeled as dependent variables, predicted by language group and the control variables.[1] The hypotheses are addressed by fitting the partial mediation model as shown in Fig. 1.

The first wave of the sample has a hierarchical structure, yet the second wave no longer reflects this. Thus, a hierarchical model is not employed in the analyses.[2]

Results

Descriptive Statistics

Means and independent samples t-tests show statistically significant differences in voting intentions between different groups of respondents organized by background variables (see Table 1 below for all estimates). The higher the political self-efficacy and the higher the civic duty, the more likely the respondent is to intend to vote, which lines up with previous research (Blais and Achen 2019; Oser et al. 2022).
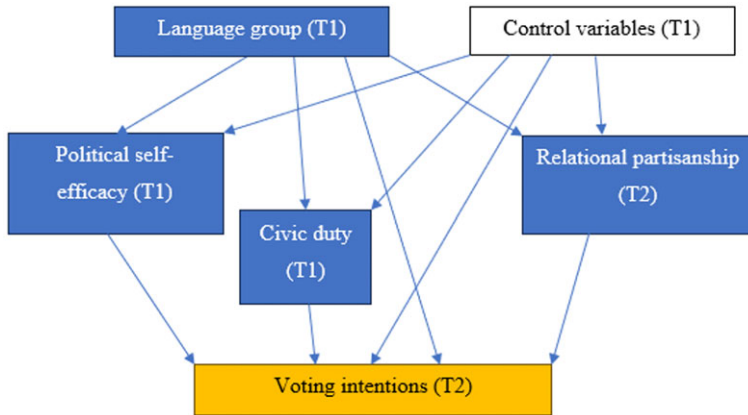
Figure 1. The theoretical model.

Moreover, the respondents who identify with a party and have family or friends who the respondent knows to identify with a party are more likely to report voting intentions than those who cannot choose a party or who do not have loved ones with a known party identification. On the other hand, it seems to have less relevance whether family and friends identify with the same party as the respondent or with some other party, which is in line with the relational model of voting (Fieldhouse and Cutts 2016), rather than the theory of cross-pressures (Brader, Tucker and Therriault 2014; Hayes, Matthes, and Eveland 2013; Mutz 2006).

Voting intentions are also associated with the ethnic background of the respondents, with both the Swedish-speaking and the bilingual respondents reporting higher voting intentions than the non-Swedish-speaking group. However, there is no statistically significant difference between the minority respondents in majority schools and the non-Swedish speakers, which can, in addition to the socialization environment, also reflect the small number of minority respondents in majority schools. As expected, more political discussion with family and friends and higher SES are also associated with more voting intentions.

Structural Equation

Table 2 presents the results of the generalized structural equation model testing the hypotheses (the full model with control variables and a table presenting indirect and total effects are presented in Appendix B). It shows that political self-efficacy, civic duty, and relational partisanship are associated with voting intentions among Finnish adolescents. The indirect effect of being either Swedish speaking or bilingual with a Swedish-speaking comprehensive school background on voting intentions, transmitted through political self-efficacy, is statistically significant and positive, which is in line with H1. However, being Swedish speaking has a statistically significant and negative indirect effect on voting intentions through civic duty, which is in contrast to H2. The bilingual, on the other hand, are more likely to have

Table 1. Voting intensions by background variables (mean, standard deviation, group *n*, independent samples t-test)

	Mean of voting inten- tions (0–1)	Standard devi- ation	Group n
Political self-efficacy			
ref. low (0–.2)	0.63	0.24	147
quite low (.2–.4)	.73***	0.2	363
medium (.4–.6)	.79***	0.21	460
quite high (.6–.8)	.86***	0.16	239
high (.8–1.0)	.89***	0.18	92
Civic duty			
ref. high	0.86	0.17	597
quite high	.72***	0.21	595
quite low/low	.60***	0.24	124
Relational partisanship (family)			
ref. sole partisanship	0.72	0.24	119
shared partisanship	.86***	0.17	206
mixed partisanship	.82***	0.19	157
different partisanship	.83***	0.19	132
no partisanship	0.74	0.22	705
Relational partisanship (friends)			
ref. sole partisanship	0.75	0.23	183
shared partisanship	.85***	0.18	137
mixed partisanship	.85***	0.17	199
different partisanship	.81*	0.21	91
no partisanship	0.74	0.22	709
Language group			
ref. non-Swedish- speaking	0.76	0.22	1045
Swedish-speaking	.84***	0.19	160
bilingual	.84***	0.17	86
minority in majority school	0.8	0.19	26
SES			
ref. very good	0.81	0.2	335
quite good	.77**	0.21	651

(*Continued*)

Table 1. (*Continued*)

	Mean of voting intentions (0–1)	Standard deviation	Group n
OK	.74***	0.23	273
quite or very bad	0.76	0.23	56
Discussion with parents			
ref. more seldom or never	0.68	0.23	363
monthly	.77***	0.2	421
weekly or daily	.84***	0.18	527
Discussion with peers			
ref. more seldom or never	0.7	0.23	340
monthly	.76***	0.21	418
weekly or daily	.83***	0.18	552

Independent samples t-test compared to the reference group
*Significant at the .05 level.
**Significant at the .01 level.
***Significant at the .001 level.

high than quite high civic duty compared with the majority, which is in accordance with H2.

H3, too, yields mixed results. First, having shared preferences with one's family appears to be more important than having shared preferences with one's friends for adolescent voting intentions as the friends' party identification yields insignificant results. Adolescents with shared partisanship (those who share their party identification with most of their family members), mixed partisanship (those whose identification aligns with about a half of their family), and different partisanship (those aligning with either few family members or none) are all significantly more likely to vote than sole partisans (those unaware of the party identification of their family). Yet, sole partisans' voting intentions do not differ from those who have no party identification. This suggests that adolescents only benefit from having a party identification if their family is explicitly political as a party identification correlates with the likelihood of voting. Differences between those who agree with most of their family members and those who do not are small, but they suggest that adolescents benefit the most from a family where most members share their party identification.

Regarding relational partisanship, there are interesting differences within the minority. Only the unilingually Swedish-speaking adolescents differ statistically significantly from the majority, being more likely to share their partisanship with both their family and their friends and thereby having higher voting intentions, which is in line with H3. This result is logical as the Swedish-speaking people live in a predominantly Swedish-speaking environment where most support the Swedish

Table 2. The impact of political self-efficacy, civic duty, relational partisanship, and language group on voting intentions. Generalized structural equation model. Control variables omitted from the table but included in the model. (Standard errors in parentheses)

To voting intentions	
Political self-efficacy	.12*** (.03)
Civic duty *(ref. high)*	
quite high	−.10*** (.01)
quite low/low	−.20*** (.02)
Relational partisanship (family) *(ref. sole partisanship)*	
shared partisanship	.09*** (.02)
mixed partisanship	.06* (.02)
different partisanship	.06* (.03)
no partisanship	.03 (.11)
Relational partisanship (friends) *(ref. sole partisanship)*	
shared partisanship	.03 (.02)
mixed partisanship	.04 (.02)
different partisanship	.02 (.03)
no partisanship	.00 (.11)
Language group *(ref. non-Swedish-speaking)*	
Swedish-speaking	.09*** (.02)
bilingual	.08*** (.02)
minority in majority school	.03 (.04)
Constant	.68*** (.03)

(*Continued*)

Table 2. (Continued)

To voting intentions				
Variance				.03** (.00)
To political self-efficacy				
Language group *(ref. non-Swedish-speaking)*				
Swedish-speaking				.04*** (.01)
bilingual				.04*** (.01)
minority in majority school				.03 (.02)
Constant				.31*** (.01)
Variance				.03*** (.00)
To civic duty *(ref. high)*		*Quite high*		*Quite low/low*
Language group *(ref. non-Swedish-speaking)*				
Swedish-speaking		.06 (.10)		.32* (.13)
bilingual		−.28* (.13)		−.05 (.17)
minority in majority school		.13 (.20)		.42 (.26)
Constant		.78*** (.09)		.54*** (.11)
To relational partisanship (family) *(ref. sole partisanship)*	Shared partisanship	Mixed partisanship	Different partisanship	No partisanship
Language group *(ref. non-Swedish-speaking)*				
Swedish-speaking	1.01** (.38)	.63 (.40)	−.15 (.46)	.32 (.34)
bilingual	−.29 (.42)	−.31 (.44)	−.59 (.48)	−.36 (.31)

(Continued)

Table 2. (Continued)

To relational partisanship (family) (ref. sole partisanship)	Shared partisanship	Mixed partisanship	Different partisanship	No partisanship
minority in majority school	.62 (.83)	−.95 (1.23)	.15 (.93)	.55 (.72)
Constant	−.02 (.32)	−.73* (.36)	−.79* (.37)	3.65*** (.24)

To relational partisanship (friends) (ref. sole partisanship)	Shared partisanship	Mixed partisanship	Different partisanship	No partisanship
Language group *(ref. non-Swedish-speaking)*				
Swedish-speaking	.91* (.35)	.93** (.33)	.20 (.45)	.38 (.28)
bilingual	−.50 (.47)	−.19 (.39)	.18 (.44)	−.20 (.27)
minority in majority school	−.05 (.92)	.54 (.74)	.33 (.93)	.63 (.59)
Constant	−.71* (.34)	−.37 (.30)	−1.17** (.39)	3.52*** (.21)

*Significant at the .05 level.
**Significant at the .01 level.
*** Significant at the .001 level.

People's Party. This trend does not apply to the bilinguals and the minority in majority schools, because a large share of their surroundings are Finnish-speaking and therefore unlikely to vote for the Swedish People's Party.[3] To account for these different contexts, I ran a robustness check controlling for the share of the officially Swedish-speaking population in the municipality and its interaction with belonging to the language minority. Apart from a positive association between the share of Swedish speakers in the municipality and voting intentions, these controls had insignificant effects. Otherwise, the analysis yielded almost identical results to the main analysis, but some statistical significances were lost due to multicollinearity.

Hence, the minority's higher voting intentions can be partly explained by their greater political self-efficacy (H1). For the bilinguals, higher levels of civic duty (H2) contribute, while for the unilingual Swedish speaking, the political homogeneity of their families plays a role (H3). However, the Swedish-speaking exhibit lower civic duty, weakening their voting intentions. Nevertheless, the minority has higher voting intentions even when controlling for political self-efficacy, civic duty, and relational partisanship, apart from the minority-belonging respondents in majority schools. Thus, there are probably also other explanations for the higher voting intentions among the minority adolescents, such as having more voting role models.[4]

Regarding the control variables (see Appendix B), SES is only weakly associated with the test variables when political socialization is controlled for, which is in line with previous results from the Finnish context (Hannuksela 2024). Socialization by both parents and peers seems to mainly be connected to voting intentions through political self-efficacy and civic duty, with which both socialization agents are associated about equally. More discussion with parents is also linked to more shared party identifications with family members, and more discussion with friends is linked to more shared party identifications with friends.

Discussion and Conclusions

Even though modern democracies are increasingly multicultural, even well-integrated minorities experience structural vulnerability, a factor with an under-studied impact on political socialization and involvement. In this study, I thus ask how belonging to the Swedish-speaking minority in Finland is connected to voting intentions through three potential politically socialized pathways. The results shed some light on the issue, suggesting that minority political engagement can differ from majority political engagement even when the minority and majority groups are similar. According to the results, the higher voting intentions among the Swedish-speaking minority partly result from higher political self-efficacy. If living in a homogeneous minority context, minority-belonging individuals can also benefit from the political homogeneity within the minority. However, unilingually Swedish-speaking adolescents suffer from a lower perceived importance of voting, possibly due to the lower perceived responsivity of the political system (Koch 2018; Lago et al. 2018; Pachi and Barrett 2012). Since this result does not apply for the bilingual respondents, fluency in the majority language can play a part and the difference could potentially be related to shortcomings in Swedish-speaking services or to there being limited political information in Swedish.

The higher political self-efficacy among the Swedish-speaking minority is likely to result from conducive socialization. It has previously been explained by a deliberative school environment (Hannuksela 2024) and a community with high social capital (Hannuksela and Tiihonen 2024). This study shows that they matter in making the minority more committed to voting than the majority, although the effect sizes are modest. Consequently, this study underlines the importance of creating school environments and communities that are conducive for political self-efficacy as such environments and communities also benefit minorities.

Interestingly, family seems to be a more important socialization agent for voting intentions than friends. Friends' party identification is not statistically associated with voting intentions, unlike family members' party identification, and political discussion with friends is clearly a weaker predictor than political discussion with parents. Hence, future studies should intend to find out whether other socialization agents can compensate for an apolitical family in order to reduce inherited differences in political participation and political alienation.

Whether the family identifies with the same party as the respondent or some other party seems to have less relevance, which is in line with the relational model of voting (Fieldhouse and Cutts 2016) rather than the theory of cross-pressures (Brader, Tucker and Therriault 2014; Hayes, Matthes, and Eveland 2013; Mutz 2006). However, one should note that the Finnish political system is a multiparty system, where differences between various parties are not equal in size. For example, it is likely that a left-wing party supporter (e.g., a supporter of the Left Alliance) whose family supports another left-wing party (e.g., the Social Democratic Party) feels less cross-pressured than a left-wing party supporter whose family supports a right-wing populist party (e.g., the Finns Party). This cannot be controlled for because the analysis is limited to the share of those close ones voting for the same party as the respondent. Therefore, further research should consider relative distances between parties in multiparty systems, given that cross-pressures have mainly been studied in two-party systems, such as that of the USA.

Another limitation of this study is that the minority tested here is only one minority with its own characteristics, and therefore, the generalizability of these results remains an empirical question. It can be expected, for example, that the Swedish-speaking Finns feel more cohesion because of having a strong minority community and more empowered because of having their own party. Hence, in systems without minority parties and in systems without separate schools for the minority, associations between belonging to the minority and both political self-efficacy and relational partisanship may be different. Importantly, the minority raised in minority-language schools has higher voting intentions than the majority, even after controlling for all other tested variables. This could be due to the simplifying heuristic of ethnic voting—making a voting choice is easier if it is limited to an ethnic party or co-ethnic candidates (Birnir 2007; Miller and Chaturvedi 2018; Van der Zwan, Tolsma, and Lubbers 2020)—an explanation that cannot be fully tested in this study.

Considering these limitations, this study sheds some light onto the development of voting intentions among minority adolescents. Using panel data can diminish the risks related to reverse causality, and the oversampling of the minority respondents allows for comparisons within the minority. While earlier research has underscored

the importance of ethnic mobilization for minorities' voting behavior, this study suggests that minority dynamics may also lead to distinct socialization patterns that influence voting behavior among minorities. Thus, the study underscores that successful integration can lead minorities to be equally politically active as the majority or more politically active than the majority, particularly through political self-efficacy (see also Sherrod, Torney-Purta, and Flanagan 2010). Consequently, I suggest that the development of political self-efficacy and civic duty should be emphasized, especially at school where the emphasis reaches all adolescents. In addition to integration, societies should pay attention to the perceived responsivity of the political system to minorities' needs, considering the accessibility of both relevant services and political information in minority languages.

Notes

1 The full syntax can be accessed by request.

2 If estimating a multilevel model, no results change significantly.

3 When looking at the individual party choices, this trend can also be identified. Most Swedish-speaking and almost as many bilingual respondents responded that they would vote for the Swedish People's Party, although it is more common for the bilingual respondents to hesitate between two or three parties. The respondents who would vote for the Swedish People's Party tend to share their party identification with their family and friends, but this applies almost predominantly to the unilingual Swedish-speaking respondents who would vote for the Swedish People's Party.

4 When controlling for whether the parents of the respondents vote, the estimates for the minority drop somewhat but remain significant since the minority has voting parents significantly more often than the majority. The lower civic duty among the Swedish-speaking respondents is more accentuated when the parents' voting habits are controlled for and also becomes significant for minority respondents with a Finnish-speaking comprehensive school background.

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Venla Hannuksela is a doctoral researcher (Master of Political Sciences) at Tampere University. Her PhD focuses on political self-efficacy among minority youth.