DOES ETHNICITY MATTER IN INTENTIONS TO STUDY ABROAD?

ANALYSIS OF HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS IN ESTONIA

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Abstract. This paper examines factors that shape intentions to study abroad. Previous research highlights the importance of various forms of capital—human, economic, social, cultural and mobility capital—as well as of personality traits in the formation of the intention to complete education in foreign countries. Our specific focus is on ethnic differences in going to study abroad. The data comes from a representative survey of high school graduates in Estonia. We apply multilevel binary regression in order to capture both individual and school effects in the formation of study intentions. Our key findings reveal, first, that there exist significant ethnic differences in the willingness to continue studies abroad despite controlling for individual characteristics, including various forms of capital and the personality traits. Second, ethnic differences disappear once we control for the study language of the school. The institutional context thus
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INTRODUCTION

In recent years, more and more students have been choosing to study abroad in order to obtain university education (King and Raghuram 2013). In 2011, almost 4.3 million students were enrolled outside their country of citizenship (OECD 2013). Studying in a foreign country has been identified as an increasingly important dimension of the ongoing internationalization and globalization processes and contemporary population mobility (Findlay et al. 2012). Research underscores many positive effects of studying abroad on students themselves. For example, it
facilitates learning and personal development and broadens students’ world perspective, making them more globally minded and aware of cross-cultural similarities and differences (BaileyShea 2009; Findlay et al. 2012). Increased tolerance towards others and establishing of social networks in more than one country allows people with foreign education to act as a human bridge between cultures (Brown 2009), and to develop a shared sense of belonging and identity in Europe (King and Raghuram 2013). In this study, we focus on the ethnic differences in intentions of studying abroad. European countries have become increasingly multi-ethnic—even ethnically super-diverse (Vertovec 2007)—in the last two decades, but we know little about the differences in intra-European studies related to mobility between various ethnic groups.

Studies related to mobility, like any other form of human behaviour, can be divided in two: the formation of intentions; and the actual move (cf. de Groot et al. 2011). There is no one-to-one relationship between intentions and human behaviour (Manski 1990) and, obviously, due to the restrictions and constraints that people could come across in their lives, intentions do not always translate into actual moves (Constant and Massey 2002). What is important, however, is that (a) intentions usually precede actual moves; and (b) intentions are the strongest predictor of actual moves (de Groot et al. 2011). But it is not just the predictive value of actual moves that is interesting, since migration intentions also provide important signals about people’s place attachment and life aspirations (Olofsson 2012; Permentier et al. 2009). Analysis of the ethnic differences in intentions of studying abroad can thus shed light on how different ethnic groups—especially members of the minority population—perceive their lives in their homeland.
The objective of this article is to determine the role of ethnicity in the formation of intentions to move abroad for studies upon graduating from high school/gymnasium, thus expanding previous research that usually focuses on the role of gender and social class/status in studies related mobility (Dessoff 2006; Salisbury et al. 2009). Starting university studies is a crucial moment in an individuals’ life course and mobility is an inherent part of the decision-making process. In addition to ethnicity, we also include other important factors that may influence the intention to opt for foreign education—at both individual (personality traits, attachment to home country, and various forms of capital) and school (school language, location, and average grades of peers) levels—(cf. Brooks and Waters 2010; Findlay et al. 2012; Salisbury et al 2009; Waters and Leung 2013) into our analysis. We draw our empirical evidence from Estonia, a country that mainly sends its students to the UK universities, but also elsewhere in Europe (OECD 2013). Estonia is a good case to study the ethnic dimension in the mobility decision since in addition to the Estonian majority it has a sizeable Russian-speaking minority population that mainly formed in years 1944–1991 and accordingly, has a long residential history in this country. Estonia is also an emigration country, i.e. our-migration out-numbers in-migration. This way, our study sheds also new light on the main intra-European migration flow from East to West Europe that typically focusses on labour migration (Johnston et al. 2015). Our research population consists of young people around 18 years of age which implies, given that immigration to Estonia has been almost non-existent since 1991, that almost all these young people we study were born in Estonia (being either native Estonians or the descendants of Russian-speaking migrants) and they have been schooled in Estonia (Toots and Idnurm 2011). King and Raghuram (2013) recently called for survey-based research on study migration since there is still very little statistical evidence on this important type of mobility in Europe despite the dramatic increase in it. We carried out a representative survey in Estonian-language and Russian-language schools in 2011 and 2012 to find out how many
high school graduates (usually 18–19-years old) intend to continue their studies abroad and how these intentions differ between members of the minority and majority population. Next, we will discuss these factors in greater detail.

FACTORS SHAPING ETHNIC DIFFERENCES IN INTENTIONS TO STUDY ABROAD

Only a few studies (e.g. BaileyShea 2009; Salisbury et al. 2006) so far have taken an explicit interest in the ethnic, racial, or immigrant-native differences in intentions to study abroad. Therefore, we contextualize our paper within broader literature on the factors that potentially shape the ethnic differences in such intentions. We start with attachment to the home country. Terms like “place attachment”, “place identity”, “sense of place”, and “sense of belonging” are often used interchangeably in literature to refer to the bonds that form between people and places (Hernández et al. 2007; Olofsson 2012). Place attachment and mobility are often seen as opposite and mutually exclusive phenomena (Gustafsson 2001) so that stronger place attachment tends to increase individual rootedness and reduce spatial mobility. For members of the ethnic minority population, a complex correlation between economic disadvantage, social exclusion, and feelings of insecurity can contribute to lower attachment to their homeland compared to members of the majority population (cf. Thomson and Crul 2007; Ivlevs and King 2012). If minority youth does not see a bright future in their homeland, an important moment for the “exit type” migratory behaviour can emerge when they graduate from school and choose the university not in their home country, but abroad. This implies that ethnicity tends to intersect with many other important individual characteristics that have been found to be important in shaping the intentions to study abroad.
Social class/status has been identified as an important factor shaping study migration, and there is a complex intersection between class and ethnicity in today’s multi-ethnic societies, often rooted in the very specific context and historical circumstances in each country (Anthias 2013; Crul and Schneider 2010). Previous research shows that willingness to study abroad is linked to various forms of capital, such as human, economic, social, and cultural capitals, as well as to the mobility capital of young people (see e.g. Brooks and Waters 2010; Findlay et al. 2012; Perna and Titus 2005; Salisbury et al. 2009; Waters and Leung 2013). Many of these forms of capital are either explicitly or implicitly related to social class. Given the complex connection between class and ethnicity, we can also assume that all of these forms of capital vary between members of the ethnic majority and ethnic minority populations, potentially leading to ethnic differences in intentions to study abroad as well. Each of the various forms of capital have many different meanings and operationalizations; here, we restrict ourselves to the studies that explicitly focus on studying abroad.

*Human capital* refers to productive capacities such as knowledge, abilities, and learning outcomes. Previous research has found a positive correlation between school grades and going to study abroad (Boneva and Frieze 2001; Carlson et al. 1990; Findlay and King 2010). Previous research also shows that children with an immigrant background and ethnic and racial minorities systematically underperform at schools compared to members of the native majority population (Azzolini 2012; Condron 2009; Condron et al. 2013). An individual’s actual or perceived financial resources form the *economic capital* that is often explicitly related to parental resources (Perna and Titus 2005). Ethnic minorities tend to perform worse on the labour market—both in terms of labour market participation and wages—compared to members of the majority population (Hayfron 2001; Leping and Toomet 2008). It follows that
young members of the minority population have often less resources to invest in foreign education than young members of the majority population.

*Cultural capital* generally refers to values and beliefs—partly formed in the parental home—that, among other things, shape the attitudes towards education in general and university education in particular (Bourdieu and Passeron 1977; Perna and Titus 2005; Salisbury et al. 2009; Waters 2006; 2012). Educational level of parents is thus the most important means by which cultural capital is passed from parents-to-children and which children can later capitalize on in their lives (Bourdieu and Passeron 1977). For example, Findlay et al. (2012) demonstrate that studying at leading international universities has become important in the intergenerational transmission of cultural capital by reproducing the highly mobile transnational managerial class. If the class and ethnicity intersect, the transmission of cultural capital can vary between members of the majority and minority populations, too. However, cultural capital is not merely a narrow, class-based phenomenon. For example, Kim and Goldstein (2005) demonstrate that possible factors that shape intentions to study abroad include lower levels of ethnocentrism and prejudice towards people from other cultures, the wish to gain new experience, and interest in learning a foreign language.

In previous research on studies related mobility, *social capital* is usually linked to knowledge and information, and to the importance of access to networks and support systems (Massey et al. 2003; Perna and Titus 2005). These networks and support systems are not only class but also ethnic group based (McPherson et al. 2001). Modern means of information and communication technology and social media channels allow migrants and diaspora communities to easily keep strong transnational ties with the co-ethnics living in their
ancestral homeland (Christensen 2014; Gillespie 2000; Sreberny, 2000; Vertovec 1999). Ethnic networks are even more important if schools are segregated along ethnic lines, as is often the case in multi-ethnic countries (Andersson et al. 2010; Condron 2009); intense everyday peer-to-peer social interaction at schools is often crucial in the formation of the intentions to continue studies abroad (Waters and Leung 2013).

Increasing mobility is an important factor that leads to new social networks. Furthermore, mobility capital has recently been conceptualized as an important form of capital in itself that helps us understand the growing international student mobility (Murphy-Lejeune 2002). It can be defined as a previous mobility experience that generates new mobility by lowering the barriers for making the next move (Carlson 2013; Hannam et al. 2006; King and Ruiz-Gelices 2003; King 2012). People with a mobility experience often become more open-minded and cosmopolitan, and less attached to particular places (cf. Cohen and Vertovec 2003). Tourism has become the most important form of short-term mobility that broadens people’s worldview and therefore, may lead to new mobility. Many international students have travelled abroad extensively or even lived there before, being more knowledgeable about life and educational opportunities in other countries (Carlson et al. 1990; Carlson 2013). The increasing popularity of a gap-year between school and university, on reasons such as to experience different people, culture, and places, to broaden their horizons and experience life (Jones 2004; Snee 2013), is a good example of such extended travelling. This way of thinking is a part of the “new mobility paradigm” that argues that the increasing complexity of spatial mobility is central to the multiple transformations in contemporary societies (Sheller and Urry 2006), and it includes aspirations with regard of educational and occupational careers and thus, study migration.
Previous mobility experience serves as a capital on the one hand, but the willingness to move varies systematically between people with different personality traits as well. Jennings (1970) introduced the term “mobicentric man” to characterize the behaviour of individuals who value motion and action very highly and who are constantly “on the move”. Recent studies have suggested that the so-called “Big Five” personality traits (Costa and McCrae 1992; Gallego and Pardos-Prado 2013; McCrae and Costa 1999)—Neuroticism, Extraversion, Openness to experience (Openness), Agreeableness, and Conscientiousness—also help to predict and explain individual mobility differences (Silventoinen et al. 2008). Individuals who are more extraverted and/or more open to new experiences actively seek new opportunities which also make them more mobile (Camperio Ciani et al. 2007; Jokela 2009; Paulaiskaite et al. 2010).

In conclusion, we find that lower levels of attachment to homeland, having more of various forms of capital as well as being more extraverted and open to new experiences tend to increase the probability of going to study abroad. However, class and ethnicity tend to intersect with each other and less is known about whether ethnic differences vary in student mobility per se, i.e. to what extent ethnicity itself is the driver of migration or to what extent do all the factors discussed above mediate such ethnic differences. We draw our empirical evidence from a student-sending country, Estonia, which has two distinct ethno-linguistic groups—the Estonian-speaking majority and a sizeable and largely Russian-speaking minority. We focus on institutional arrangements in education since this is one of the important contextual factors for ethnic integration and social belonging (Crul and Schneider 2010) that potentially shapes the ethnic differences in intentions to study abroad.
ETHNICITY IN STUDY MIGRATION: ESTONIAN CASE IN CONTEXT

The combination of factors shaping study migration could vary in different countries since every country has its specific history when it comes to the formation, size and characteristics of the minority population. According to the 2011 Census, ethnic minorities form 30% of the population of Estonia. Most of Estonia’s ethnic minority groups migrated to the country between 1944 and 1991 when Estonia was annexed by the Soviet Union and became one of its 15 republics (Tammaru and Kulu 2003). Language is the main factor that distinguishes ethnic groups in this country, and the minority groups are often referred to as the “Russian-speaking population” since 90% of them speak Russian—that used to be the *lingua franca* in the former Soviet Union—as their mother tongue. The minority population group size, especially when geographically clustered, is often considered one of the crucial factors that shapes ethnic relations. According to the group affinity hypothesis, ethnicity-based networks and institutions flourish more likely in large ethnic communities, leading to the establishment of ethnic infrastructure there (churches, schools, ethnic restaurants etc.) (Hou 2006; Kamenik et. al. 2015; McPherson et al. 2001; Muñoz 2011). In Estonia, minorities are geographically unevenly distributed, too, forming about 80% or regional majority in North-East Estonia, and about 45% in the capital city Tallinn.

The most important element of ethnic infrastructure in Estonia pertains to separate Estonian-language and Russian-language schools established during the Soviet period (Lindemann and Saar 2011; Verschik 2005; Tammaru et al. 2013). Since the share of Russian-speaking minorities in the Estonian population is relatively high, it proved very difficult—mostly because of political reasons—to fundamentally restructure the Estonian school system upon regaining independence and, therefore, such ethnicity-based dual school system is still in
place today (Hogan-Brun et al. 2007; Lindemann 2013). Such dual school system is one of the important reasons why the social networks of Estonians and Russian-speaking minority population do not overlap (Korts 2009). On average, the study outcomes of students at Estonian-language schools are better compared to pupils at Russian-language schools (Lindemann 2013). The last 2011 census returns indicate that this poses serious problems to the labour market outcomes of the minorities. Like in many other European countries, ethnicity thus intersects also with social class and many important disadvantages.

At the same time, members of the Estonia’s minority population are much more cosmopolitan and less centred to nation-state than both Estonians as well as Russians living in Russia (Toots and Idnurm 2011, p. 127); their world view is very similar to other ethnic diasporas and transnational communities that tend to have ‘… more complex affiliations, meaningful attachments and multiple allegiances to issues, people, places and traditions that lie beyond the boundaries of their resident nation-state’ (Vertovec and Cohen 2002, p. 2). The combination of values not centred around nation state and not seeing a bright future on the Estonian labour market would make them much more footloose as compared to ethnic Estonians. This makes us to expect that ethnic minorities in Estonia, especially those who graduate from Russian-language high schools, express an elevated intention to study abroad compared to ethnic Estonians.
DATA AND METHODS

Data and variables

The data used in this research comes from a survey carried out among the graduates from high school/gymnasium (12th grade, students usually around 18–19 years of age) in Estonia in the winter of 2011–2012. Its main focus was on intentions to continue university studies abroad. There are 242 high schools in Estonia, of which 189 have Estonian as their main language of instruction and 53 have Russian. Our sample consisted of a random selection of Estonian-language high schools (68, which is 36% of all schools) and of all Russian-language high schools. All 12th grade students or high school graduates present on the day of the survey were asked to complete a questionnaire. The questionnaire consisted of 96 questions and it took approximately 30 minutes to fill it out. Our final data consists of 3,214 respondents (2,003 at Estonian-language and 1,211 at Russian-language schools) from 185 classes from 121 schools. The share of Estonians and minorities is 69% and 39%, respectively.

The dependent variable in our analysis is based on the question “After graduating from high school, do you plan to continue your studies in Estonia or abroad?”, with two possible answers: 1) in Estonia; or 2) abroad. The question was asked from all students who intended to continue their studies after graduating from high school (N = 3,029, i.e. 94.2% of all respondents), of whom 636 (21%) stated that they planned to continue their studies abroad. Regarding the controls, the loss of data due to missing cases was less than five per cent. Our main variable of interest is ethnicity, which was asked as follows: “What is your ethnicity?” 1) Estonian; 2) Russian; 3) Other, please specify. Sixty-four per cent of respondents identified themselves as Estonians, 33% as Russians and 3% as representatives of other ethnic groups. Of the latter group, 81% gave Russian as their mother tongue. For analysis, the ethnicity
variable is collapsed into two categories: Estonian majority (64%) and mainly Russian-speaking ethnic minorities (36%). Given this ethno-linguistic context, respondents could fill in the questionnaires either in Estonian or in Russian.

In order to measure personality traits, all participants were asked to complete the NEO Five Factor Inventory-3 (NEO-FFI-3; McCrae and Costa 2007), which consists of 60 items, with each of the five major personality dimensions—Neuroticism, Extraversion, Openness to Experience (Openness), Agreeableness and Conscientiousness—represented by 12 items. The items were answered on a five-point scale, ranging from “strongly disagree” (0) to “strongly agree” (4). Individual scores were computed as a total of the response values for each dimension, after inverting the scale for negative items. Cronbach alphas of the five personality domain scales were .77, .84, .72, .73, and .80 for Neuroticism, Extraversion, Openness, Agreeableness, and Conscientiousness, respectively.

Following previous research, we analyse various forms of capital that, explicitly or implicitly, measure the social class/status of the 18–19-year old respondents. As the human capital indicator we include variables reflecting pupils’ study achievements, measured by participation in Estonian or international student competitions and engagement in extra-curricular activities. Cultural capital is represented by the educational level of parents—more precisely whether at least one of the parents of a student has a university degree. Economic capital is measured as the financial situation of the household, which is based on the respondents’ relative assessment of their families’ financial possibilities (on a 10-point scale). We operationalize social capital through existing contacts abroad (respondents were asked whether they have friends or family members currently living or studying in another country) and mobility capital via respondents’ previous study experiences abroad.
We examine attachment to the home country based on the following statement which respondents were asked to assess: “Estonia is my home—I don’t want to leave”. This is measured on a 3-point scale where 3 refers to weak attachment and 1 refers to strong attachment. In this context, feeling not like at home in Estonia could also be interpreted as a push factor that “motivates” high school graduates to go abroad as an “exit strategy” from Estonia. As a counter-argument to attachment to (indeed, detachment from) Estonia, or in other words a pull factor, we introduce a measure that refers to the respondents primarily driven by “academic interest” to the analysis. School graduates were asked to evaluate the importance of the statement “I prefer foreign education over education in Estonia” in taking decisions on further studies and study destinations. Measured on a 3-point scale, 3 means that studying at a foreign university is an important aspect in the decision-making process; 1 in turn refers to a situation where academic concerns are not important in taking the decision regarding further study plans. Finally, the school context is also important since study related intentions are often subject to peer influences (Waters and Leung 2013). We take this into account in our modelling design.

Analytical Strategy

In our study, we are simultaneously dealing with several levels of analysis—students, classes and schools—so we apply multi-level analysis. After assessing unexplained variance on each level, we reduce the analysis to two levels: students and schools. Class-level variation turned out to be marginal (2% of unexplained variance compared to 14% at the school level) and it was therefore left out of analysis (cf. Hox 2010). We include the school language in the analysis as a central school-level variable characterizing school environment. As the proportion of subjects taught in Estonian is already considerably high in some Russian-
language schools, we differentiate between three language-based school types: Estonian (61% of schools); Russian (34% of schools); and mixed Estonian and Russian (5% of schools). As school type and ethnicity are closely related (native Estonians tend to study at Estonian-language schools and Russian-speaking minorities at Russian-language schools, respectively), we face a potential multi-collinearity problem. However, we have two ethnic groups and three school types in our analysis. Including school type in the model also improves the model fit. In order to take into account school effects, we also control the mean score in state exams of the respective school. We also consider the location of the school, measured in three categories: capital (Tallinn); North-East Estonia; and rest of Estonia following the ethno-linguistic context of the country (Lindemann 2014; Tammaru and Kulu 2003). As our method of analysis, we use multi-level binary logistic regression. Our first three models focus on student level (Level 1) variables: baseline Model 1 includes ethnicity; Model 2 adds the “Big Five” personality traits; Model 3 adds all types of capital (human, cultural, financial, social, and mobility capital); and Model 4 adds attachment to Estonia. We introduce school level (Level 2) variables in Model 5. Our last model, Model 6, includes the cross-level interactions of Level 1 and Level 2 variables. In the analysis, list-wise deletion procedure has been applied (missing cases causing less than five per cent of loss of the data); the data was beforehand checked for the potential bias due to missing cases.
RESULTS

Intentions to continue studies abroad

The share of respondents who intend to continue their studies abroad after graduating from high school is 12% among Estonians and 36% among Russian-speaking minorities. The differences are similar across school types (see Appendix A1): at Estonian-language schools, around 12% of respondents intend to continue their studies abroad; at Russian-language schools, 35% of graduates intend to do so; and at schools with mixed-language instruction (Russian and Estonian) the share is, somewhat surprisingly, even higher (39%). Thus, our preliminary findings suggest that there is a clear ethnic divide among high school graduates in Estonia concerning their further study plans. The question here is whether the division can be explained by ethnic background per se, whether it mediates other important individual characteristics (personality traits, various forms of capital and country attachment), or whether it is more a case of a certain school environment.

Individual-level characteristics shaping intentions to study abroad

The dependent variable in our regression analysis measures intentions to pursue studies either abroad or in Estonia after graduating from high school. As already said above, ethnic minorities are more willing to study abroad (Table 1, Model 1). What we see, most interestingly, is that these differences remain fairly unchanged after adding the other important individual-level variables in Models 2 through 4. This implies that ethnic divides run deep regarding the intentions to study abroad and are not mediated by the other relevant individual level characteristics (including social class/status indicators). Of the “Big Five” personality traits (Model 2), Extraversion and Openness associate positively with the probability of willingness to continue studies abroad, which is in line with previous research
(Paulauskaite et al. 2010, Silventoinen et al. 2008). Of these two personality traits, however, only Openness remains significant after adding various forms of capital in Model 3.

TABLE 1

Of the capital variables, parents’ education matters. Children of parents with a university degree are much more willing to continue their studies abroad. This confirms the results of previous research that there is a cross-generational transmission of aspirations for university education (cf. Bourdieu and Passeron 1977; Findlay et al. 2012). Mobility capital and social capital—having studied abroad before and having friends or family members abroad, respectively—also matter. Such experience and networks make the decision to study abroad more likely. In other words, personal contact abroad and previous mobility tend to generate new mobility (cf. Hannam et al. 2006; King 2012; Sheller and Urry 2006). Somewhat surprisingly, no other forms of capital are statistically significantly related to intentions to study abroad. Although family’s financial situation is positively associated with intentions to continue studies abroad, this relationship is not statistically significant. Likewise, good study results (participation in national and international student competitions) or activities outside of school (extra-curricular activities) are not related to intentions to continue studies in another country.

Attachment to Estonia is related to intentions to study abroad, but in a way that is in contrast to our expectations; stronger attachment to Estonia correlates to a greater willingness to proceed university level education in another country (Model 4). However, a closer look
(Appendix A2) reveals that this effect is ethnicity-specific. More precisely, for Estonians, there is a positive relationship between attachment to Estonia and intentions to study abroad; for ethnic minorities, the relationship is negative (but statistically insignificant). Low attachment thus tends to increase minorities’ intentions to leave Estonia, making it a push factor for them. This is in line with previous research that shows that social integration and attachment to their homeland are very important for the migration of minority population (Olofsson 2012).

The importance of other “motivation” to go abroad to study in addition to attachment to home country—the desire to receive a foreign education or a pull factor—helps shed additional light on the ethnic differences in intentions to continue studies abroad. The results across ethnic groups show that the attraction of foreign education is an important factor in elevating willingness to study abroad, i.e. there is a positive relationship between the variables (Model 4). However, ethnic differences exist again (Appendix A2, statistical test for interaction terms with ethnicity available upon request); although the relationship is positive for both ethnic groups, the association is stronger for ethnic minorities, i.e. the value of foreign education shapes their study intentions much stronger than in the case of native Estonians. Ethnic minorities are therefore more prone to leave Estonia to study abroad, the reasons behind this possibly not feeling like at home in Estonia (“exit strategy”) and the attraction of foreign education (“academic achievement mobility”).
School-level characteristics shaping intentions to study abroad

When controlling for various individual-level characteristics that could shape the study intentions of high school graduates, there remains a considerable amount of unexplained variance at the school level. As the next step, we therefore added school-level variables (second level) to the analysis (Models 5 and 6 in Table 1). First, we controlled the school type (Estonian-language, Russian-language and mixed-language schools where teaching is done in both languages) in Model 5 that reduced the unexplained variance in the model remarkably. The impact of ethnicity reduces somewhat as well, but is still significantly related to intentions to go to study abroad. At the same time, differentiation between school types shows that compared to graduates from Estonian-language schools, graduates from Russian-language schools are significantly more willing to continue their studies abroad—and surprisingly, intentions to leave are even stronger among graduates from mixed-language schools. These differences do not hold when looking at ethnic groups separately (Appendix A2, Model 2), which may, however, be partly due to the small number of cases in the group of mixed schools. Still, those respondents who identify themselves as ethnic Estonians but study at Russian-language schools are more prone to continue their studies abroad compared to ethnic Estonians studying at Estonian-language schools. All in all, these findings raise the issue of the extent to which it is the institutional context (e.g., school) and ethnicity per se that make certain high school students more likely to leave Estonia after graduating. In other words, does the impact vary across school types as well?
Cross-level interaction of characteristics shaping intentions to study abroad

When looking at cross-level interactions, we see (Model 6) that Estonians and minorities at Russian-language or mixed-language schools do not differ significantly in their plans to go to study abroad compared to Estonian-language schools. What we do observe is that the impact of attachment varies across school type—strong attachment to Estonia (“Estonia is my home—I don’t want to leave”) reduces the otherwise strong intentions to leave among the respondents studying at Russian-language schools compared to Estonian schools. In other words, the “feeling of not being attached to Estonia” (push factor) is a very important predictor for leaving abroad among members of the minority population no matter what school type they attend. However, there are no differences between Estonian-language, Russian-language, and mixed-language schools when it comes to the impact of the “desire to attain foreign education” (pull factor) on plans to continue studies abroad.

DISCUSSION OF MAIN FINDINGS

Previous research has focused mainly on social class and gender difference in study related mobility. In this paper, we focussed on differences between members of the ethnic majority and minority populations on intentions to continue studies abroad upon graduating from high school. Our empirical evidence comes from Estonia, an out-migration country with a sizeable and long established minority population. Our most important finding is that ethnic minorities are much more willing to continue studies abroad than members of the majority population. Since ethnicity and social class intersect with each other (Anthias 2013), we expected that ethnic differences in the willingness to obtain foreign education change once we take it into
account in our analysis. Contrary to this expectation, ethnic differences remain largely unchanged in the regression model with all individual level characteristics included. This is a very important finding showing that ethnic differences are deep and they are not mediated by other individual characteristics identified in previous research. In other words, even if ethnicity and class intersect with each other, ethnicity is still an important driver of study related migration.

There are several other mechanisms that potentially help us to understand the ethnic differences in intentions to opt for foreign education. The first potential mechanism pertains to integration\(^1\). For example, the neoclassical migration theory explains that the low willingness to leave among minorities with high level of integration can be explained with an investment that has been made for increasing ones productivity and makes it thus, *ceteris paribus*, more “costly” to leave (de Haas and Fokkema 2011). However, many factors that characterize structural (e.g. economic resources) and sociocultural (e.g. values and attachment to homeland) integration (Heckmann 2005) are captured by our analysis, and our main finding is that ethnic differences in intentions to study abroad change little once we take them into account. True, we also find that those minorities who are more strongly attached to their country of origin have lower intentions to leave. This implies that integration failure related factors have some push effect, but this is also not enough for explaining our main finding. It might thus be that explanations should also consider pull factors—i.e. minorities seem to be more responsive to the differences in the opportunity structures within Europe (cf. Ivlevs 2013), probably as a complex *combination* of various push and pull factors. This explains why the willingness to leave can spread among the minorities who are strongly attached to

\(^1\) The concept of integration is complex with its structural and sociocultural dimensions often considered most important (Heckmann 2005). It is not our aim to go into the debate, but it is important to be aware of its normative, contested and politicized nature (de Haas and Fokkema 2011).
Estonia, although to a somewhat lower degree compared to those minorities who are less attached to Estonia. This is supported by de Haas and Fokkema (2011) who demonstrated that, at certain conditions, both the minorities who are well integrated (e.g. the group of confident people) as well as those who are not well integrated (e.g. the group of the disappointed) can have high intentions to leave.

Such reasoning also brings us to a shared sense of belonging and identity in Europe (King and Raghuram 2013), and to the *cosmopolitanization* debate (Anthias 2013; Christensen 2014; Vertovec 2007) in more general terms. Although young Russian-speakers who intend to continue studies abroad do opt for Russian universities, too, a lions’ share of them would, similarly to ethnic Estonians, rather mainly go to European universities. This implies that shared language and ethnic transnational ties to Russia are not the key factors that impact their decision-making with regard to foreign education. Being part of the EU, and the spread of global mass culture has had a homogenized impact on the value system and cultural orientation of the Estonian-speaking majority and the Russian-speaking minority (Vihalemm 2007), and this is clearly revealed in the orientation towards Europe in both groups.

The impact of such orientation on mobility is stronger for minorities, though. On the one hand, having been born and schooled in Estonia has created a mental distance from Russia; on the other hand, being less attached to Estonia has developed a worldview that is less centred around nation state among the Russian-speaking minorities as compared to ethnic Estonians (Toots and Idnurm 2011). In other words, ethnic minorities are more willing to take an advantage of the free mobility opportunity within the European Union compared to members of the majority population. The very few existing studies on ethnic differences in emigration from East Europe also reveal that minorities are more prone to leave to Western Europe than
the members of the majority population (see, e.g., Ivlevs 2012). The results are opposite in wealthier European countries. For example, the studies from UK show that none of the minority groups expressed elevated intentions and Asian Pacific Islanders expressed lower intentions to study abroad compared to whites (Salisbury et al. 2006). Such contrasting findings indicate that minorities living in countries where immigration prevails seem to behave differently compared to minorities living in countries where emigration prevails, with minority migration contributing strongly to the intra-European migration from the East to the West.

Our research further underscores the importance of the institutional setup in the origin country in understanding the ethnic differences in study migration (cf. Crul and Schneider 2010). The most important institutional factor in Estonia pertains to the linguistically divided school system that was established during the Soviet period and that sorts different ethnic groups into different schools to this day (Lindemann and Saar 2012). Estonia is rather well known for its very radical reforms in almost all aspects of society after the demise of the Soviet Union in 1991 (Hamilton 2005), but the ethno-linguistically divided school system, apart from some modifications, has been among the most resistant to reform (Hogan-Brun et al. 2007; Lindemann 2013). The Estonian case thus shows that ethnic institutions tend to be very persistent even in otherwise radically reforming countries on the one hand, and they play a very important role in individual lives on the other hand.

To conclude, we find that important ethnic differences exist in intentions to study abroad—members of the minority population are more willing to leave than members of the majority population—and they are not mediated by relevant individual-level background characteristics while lower attachment to the home country and intra-European wealth differences seem to matter. We also find that school context is important in the formation of
migration intentions and it needs, therefore, more attention in future studies. Although explicit institutional sorting is specific to the former Soviet context, other mechanisms lead to school segregation even in such egalitarian countries like Sweden (Andersson et al. 2010). Finally, although intentions are the strongest predictor of actual migration (de Groot et al. 2011), future research is needed on to what degree realization of the intentions of foreign education differs between ethnic groups, taking into account the sorting of young people into different schools.
REFERENCES


Thomson, Mark, and Maurice Crul 2007. ‘The second generation in Europe and the United States: how is the transatlantic debate relevant for further research on the European second


Table 1 Impact of individual- and school-level characteristics on post-high school study intentions\(^1\); logistic regression coefficients (standard errors)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>INDIVIDUAL LEVEL (LEVEL 1)</th>
<th>Model 1</th>
<th>Model 2</th>
<th>Model 3</th>
<th>Model 4</th>
<th>Model 5</th>
<th>Model 6</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ethnic minority</td>
<td>1.16 (0.15)</td>
<td>1.07 (0.14)</td>
<td>1.06 (0.14)</td>
<td>1.15 (0.15)</td>
<td>0.46 (0.22)</td>
<td>0.86 (0.44)</td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neuroticism</td>
<td>-0.01 (0.01)</td>
<td>-0.00 (0.01)</td>
<td>-0.01 (0.01)</td>
<td>-0.01 (0.01)</td>
<td>-0.01 (0.01)</td>
<td>-0.01 (0.01)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>0.02 (0.01)</td>
<td>0.01 (0.01)</td>
<td>0.01 (0.01)</td>
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<td>0.01 (0.01)</td>
<td>0.01 (0.01)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>0.04 (0.01)</td>
<td>0.04 (0.01)</td>
<td>0.04 (0.01)</td>
<td>0.04 (0.01)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>-0.00 (0.01)</td>
<td>-0.01 (0.01)</td>
<td>-0.01 (0.01)</td>
<td>-0.01 (0.01)</td>
<td>-0.01 (0.01)</td>
</tr>
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<td>-0.01 (0.01)</td>
<td>-0.01 (0.01)</td>
<td>-0.01 (0.01)</td>
<td>-0.01 (0.01)</td>
<td>-0.01 (0.01)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>At least one parent with higher education</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family’s financial situation</td>
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<td>-0.01 (0.03)</td>
<td>-0.03 (0.03)</td>
<td>-0.02 (0.03)</td>
<td>0.22 (0.11)</td>
<td>0.24 (0.11)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participating in student competitions</td>
<td>0.17 (0.11)</td>
<td>0.11 (0.11)</td>
<td>0.10 (0.11)</td>
<td>0.09 (0.11)</td>
<td>0.19 (0.17)</td>
<td>0.57 (0.17)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Extra-curricular activities</td>
<td>0.96 (0.16)</td>
<td>0.95 (0.16)</td>
<td>0.89 (0.16)</td>
<td>0.87 (0.17)</td>
<td>0.56 (0.17)</td>
<td>0.56 (0.18)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Has studied abroad before</td>
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<td>0.34 (0.07)</td>
<td>0.87 (0.11)</td>
<td>0.68 (0.10)</td>
<td>0.68 (0.10)</td>
<td>0.55 (0.14)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do have friends/family abroad</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attached to Estonia</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Values education abroad</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| SCHOOL LEVEL (LEVEL 2)      |         |         |         |         |         |         |
| Language of school (Ref = Estonian) |         |         |         |         |         |         |
| Russian                     |         |         |         |         |         |         |
| Estonian and Russian        |         |         |         |         |         |         |
| Do have friends/family abroad |         |         |         |         |         |         |

<p>| CROSS-LEVEL INTERACTIONS    |         |         |         |         |         |         |
| School: Russian-language<em>Minority | -0.76 (0.52) |         |         |         |         |         |
| School: Mixed-language</em>Minority |         |         |         |         |         |         |
| School: Russian-language<em>Attached to Estonia |         |         |         |         |         |         |
| School: Mixed-language</em>Attached to Estonia |         |         |         |         |         |         |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Model 1</th>
<th>Model 2</th>
<th>Model 3</th>
<th>Model 4</th>
<th>Model 5</th>
<th>Model 6</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>School: Russian-language*Values education abroad</td>
<td>0.21 (0.19)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School: Mixed-language*Values education abroad</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.41 (0.39)</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constant</td>
<td>-1.91 (0.12)</td>
<td>-3.50 (0.49)</td>
<td>-9.92 (0.52)</td>
<td>-4.53 (0.62)</td>
<td>-4.42 (0.87)</td>
<td>-3.10 (0.91)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$U_{ij}$</td>
<td>0.50 (0.11)</td>
<td>0.42 (0.10)</td>
<td>0.32 (0.09)</td>
<td>0.36 (0.09)</td>
<td>0.15 (0.06)</td>
<td>0.15 (0.06)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$X^2$ (df = 1)</td>
<td>20.17</td>
<td>17.72</td>
<td>13.77</td>
<td>14.77</td>
<td>6.27</td>
<td>5.93</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Data: Survey of study intentions of high school students in Estonia (2011/12), authors’ calculations

Note: 1—After graduating from high school, do you plan to study in Estonia or abroad? 0—Estonia; 1—abroad. Statistically significant coefficients are highlighted in **bold**.

The model controls on the individual level gender and on the school level the mean score of state exam results and school location.
APPENDIX A1

Distribution of students’ ethnicity across school types in Estonia, % (N)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Language of school</th>
<th>Ethnicity</th>
<th>Sum (ethnicity)</th>
<th>Total (study language)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Estonian</td>
<td>97.6 (1,795)</td>
<td>2.4 (45)</td>
<td>100 (1,840)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Russian</td>
<td>8.9 (89)</td>
<td>91.1 (914)</td>
<td>100 (1,003)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Estonian and Russian</td>
<td>18.9 (30)</td>
<td>81.1 (129)</td>
<td>100 (159)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total (ethnicity)</td>
<td>63.8 (1914)</td>
<td>36.2 (1088)</td>
<td>100 (3002)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Survey of study intentions of high school students in Estonia (2011/12), authors’ calculations

Note: Sample selection—all respondents who indicated that they plan to continue studies after graduating from high school.
APPENDIX A2

Impact of individual- and school-level characteristics on post-high school study intentions\(^1\) across ethnicity; logistic regression coefficients (standard errors)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Model 1</th>
<th></th>
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<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Estonian</td>
<td>Minority</td>
<td>Estonian</td>
<td>Minority</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>INDIVIDUAL LEVEL (LEVEL 1)</strong></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Personality traits</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neuroticism</td>
<td>-0.01 (0.01)</td>
<td>-0.01 (0.01)</td>
<td>-0.01 (0.01)</td>
<td>-0.01 (0.01)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extraversion</td>
<td><strong>0.03 (0.01)</strong></td>
<td>-0.00 (0.01)</td>
<td><strong>0.03 (0.01)</strong></td>
<td>-0.01 (0.01)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Openness</td>
<td>0.04 (0.01)</td>
<td><strong>0.05 (0.01)</strong></td>
<td><strong>0.03 (0.01)</strong></td>
<td><strong>0.04 (0.01)</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agreeableness</td>
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<td>-0.02 (0.01)</td>
<td>-0.01 (0.01)</td>
<td>-0.01 (0.01)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conscientiousness</td>
<td><strong>-0.03 (0.01)</strong></td>
<td>-0.01 (0.01)</td>
<td>-0.02 (0.01)</td>
<td>-0.00 (0.01)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>At least one parent with higher education</td>
<td>0.20 (0.16)</td>
<td>0.23 (0.15)</td>
<td>0.13 (0.17)</td>
<td><strong>0.19 (0.15)</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family’s financial situation</td>
<td>-0.01 (0.04)</td>
<td>-0.00 (0.04)</td>
<td>-0.03 (0.04)</td>
<td>0.00 (0.04)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participating in student competitions</td>
<td>0.10 (0.16)</td>
<td>0.13 (0.15)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Extra-curricular activities</td>
<td>0.02 (0.25)</td>
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<td>0.24 (0.23)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Has studied abroad before</td>
<td><strong>1.13 (0.23)</strong></td>
<td><strong>0.71 (0.22)</strong></td>
<td><strong>1.10 (0.24)</strong></td>
<td><strong>0.68 (0.23)</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do have friends/family abroad</td>
<td><strong>0.49 (0.21)</strong></td>
<td><strong>0.76 (0.28)</strong></td>
<td>0.37 (0.22)</td>
<td><strong>0.69 (0.28)</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attached to Estonia</td>
<td><strong>0.68 (0.10)</strong></td>
<td>-0.04 (0.10)</td>
<td><strong>0.72 (0.10)</strong></td>
<td>-0.03 (0.10)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Model 1</td>
<td>Model 2</td>
<td>Model 1</td>
<td>Model 2</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Estonian</td>
<td>Minority</td>
<td>Estonian</td>
<td>Minority</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Values education abroad</td>
<td>0.50</td>
<td>0.84</td>
<td>0.51</td>
<td>0.82</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.13)</td>
<td>(0.14)</td>
<td>(0.13)</td>
<td>(0.13)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>SCHOOL LEVEL (LEVEL 2)</strong></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Language of school (Ref = Estonian)</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
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<td>Russian</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1.20</td>
<td>0.24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(0.32)</td>
<td>(0.48)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Estonian and Russian</td>
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<td>-0.17</td>
<td>0.78</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td>(0.78)</td>
<td>(0.53)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>U0</td>
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<td>0.40</td>
<td>0.03</td>
<td>0.17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.11)</td>
<td>(0.14)</td>
<td>(0.06)</td>
<td>(0.09)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$X^2$ (df = 1)</td>
<td>5.15</td>
<td>8.58</td>
<td>0.19</td>
<td>3.75</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Data: Survey of study intentions of high school students in Estonia (2011/12), authors’ calculations

Note: 1—After graduating from high school, do you plan to study in Estonia or abroad? 0—Estonia; 1—abroad. Statistically significant coefficients are highlighted in **bold**. The model controls on the individual level for gender and on the school level for the mean score of state exam results and school location.