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Master of Science Program in Psychology

**Ethnic identity, self-identified ethnicity and psychological
wellbeing among young adults with immigrant
background:
A cross-sectional study in a Swedish context**

Julia Persson

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Supervisor: Sean Perrin
Examiner: Erwin Apitzsch

Abstract

The current study aimed to investigate the relationship between ethnic identity, self-identified ethnicity and psychological wellbeing among young adults with an immigrant background. An additional purpose was to perform preliminary validation analyses of a Swedish language version of the Revised Multi-group Ethnic Identity Measure (MEIM-R). Data was collected using a cross-sectional web-survey involving the MEIM-R, the General Health Questionnaire (GHQ-12) and questions about participants' socio-demographic background. The sample consisted of 183 adults (aged between 18-36). Overall, respondents reported lower degrees of exploration and commitment to their ethnic identity compared to previous research. In contrast to prior international studies, no significant correlation was found between psychological wellbeing and ethnic identity or self-identified ethnicity. The discrepancies were mainly attributed to differences in sample characteristics, cultural/contextual factors and methodological aspects. As the Swedish language version of the MEIM-R showed adequate psychometric properties, the current study suggests that the MEIM-R is appropriate for use in a Swedish context, hopefully promoting further research of ethnic aspects of identity in Sweden.

Keywords: ethnic identity, MEIM-R, acculturation, psychological wellbeing, young adults, immigrant background

Sammanfattning

Följande studie syftade till att undersöka sambandet mellan psykologiskt välbefinnande, etnisk identitet och själv-identifierad etnicitet bland unga vuxna med utländsk bakgrund. Ett vidare syfte var att genomföra preliminära valideringsanalyser av en svensk version av Revised Multi-group Ethnic Identity Measure (MEIM-R). Data samlades in med hjälp av en webb-enkät som inkluderade MEIM-R, General Health Questionnaire (GHQ-12) samt frågor om deltagarnas socio-demografiska bakgrund. Urvalet bestod av 183 vuxna (18-36 år). Deltagarna skattade lägre grad av utforskande och tillhörighet till sin etniska identitet jämfört med tidigare forskning. I motsats till tidigare internationella studier, återfanns inget samband mellan psykologiskt välbefinnande och etnisk identitet eller själv-identifierad etnicitet. Diskrepanserna tillskrevs främst skillnader i urval, kulturella/kontextuella faktorer samt metodologiska aspekter. Då den svenska versionen av MEIM-R visade adekvata psykometriska egenskaper, resulterar studien i en version av MEIM-R lämplig att använda i en svensk kontext; förhoppningsvis kan detta främja fortsatt forskning kring etniska aspekter av identitet i Sverige.

Nyckelord: etnisk identitet, MEIM-R, ackulturation, psykologisk välbefinnande, unga vuxna, utländsk bakgrund

Introduction

Who am I? Where do I belong? Questions of identity and social affiliation are not only an existential matter but also of importance in psychological research. The concept of “identity” has been described as a sense of continuity through the past, the present and the future, as well as across social contexts (Erikson, 1950). One’s “self” consists of both individual and collective aspects (Brewer & Gardner, 1996). In other words, how a person defines him-/herself is based not only on the unique qualities that differentiate him/her from others but also aspects of social identity and group membership (Tajfel & Turner, 1986).

Identity status theory

For the last 50 years, research on identity has been dominated by the influences of *identity status theory* (Waterman, 1999). Identity status theory is partly attributed to Marcia (1966) and is an extension or refinement of Erikson’s stage theory of psychosocial development. According to Erikson, entering adolescence involves a prolonged period of *identity crisis*, which includes struggles with social belongingness as well as with changes in physical and sexual maturity (Erikson, 1968). Successful mastery of this developmental stage is contingent upon success in previous developmental stages and may result in either identity cohesion or role diffusion (Erikson, 1968).

Marcia (1966) further refined the developmental challenge suggesting four possible outcomes: *diffusion*, *moratorium*, *foreclosure* and *achievement*. Identity diffusion refers to a state of indifference and passivity where neither exploration nor commitment is present. While some remain in the state of identity diffusion (for example individuals with personality disorder), the majority continues their search for a coherent sense of self, entering the phase of moratorium. Moratorium involves exploration of roles and group affiliations. However, the actual feeling of commitment to one’s self- and group identity is still lacking. The third status is identity foreclosure, referring to the individual making a commitment to an identity without the element of exploration. Since this kind of identity often is based on parental beliefs and expectations rather than a result of a crisis, it can be considered a “false” identity achievement. In contrast, actual identity achievement involves commitment but only after a period of exploration. Identity status has been related to psychological wellbeing. For instance, previous research has found that identity diffusion is associated with poorer wellbeing among emerging adults (Gulfem, 2014), while identity achievement has been related to superior wellbeing (Meeus, 1996).

The order of the identity statuses has been debated. Theoretically, there is an assumption that the development progresses from diffusion via moratorium to identity achievement (Waterman, 1982). Waterman (1982) also presents another alternative; that one needs to pass both foreclosure and moratorium before attaining an achieved identity. The empirical findings of identity status development are inconsistent. Kroger, Martinussen, and Marcia (2010) found that progressive change in identity status during adolescence and young adulthood is more common than regressive change, supporting the theoretical assumption of a linear development. Meanwhile, Carlsson, Wängqvist, and Frisén (2015) found that only a fourth of their sample reported progressive identity status change, while one in three respondents either showed regressive identity status or were stable in the stage of diffusion or moratorium; results suggesting that the identity status development is a more dynamic process rather than a linear progression. Furthermore, Carlsson et al. (2015) suggested that the identity development continues beyond identity achievement, proceeding not only through adolescence but extending to adulthood as well.

New perspectives

Increasing globalization, migration and multiculturalism presents new challenges for identity researchers; challenges which may require new perspectives. Almost a third of the Swedish children grow up having two (or more) cultures to adapt to and/or identify with (SCB, 2013). Thus Swedish society is increasingly a community defined by ethnic diversity (SCB 2013; Virta, Sam, & Westin, 2004). In ethnically diverse societies ethnic identity can be assumed to be a salient part of the social identity (Umaña-Taylor, 2015), especially for members of the ethnic minority (Martinez & Dukes, 1997; Phinney & Alipuria, 1990; Phinney, 1992). However, ethnic aspects of identity are often overlooked in this line of research. For example, a meta-analysis by Sneed, Schwartz, and Cross Jr (2006) found that 74% of the samples included in American identity studies consisted mainly of Caucasian respondents. Iwamasa, Sorocco, and Koonce (2002) examined the contents of five American scientific journals publishing studies on identity over a 17-years period and found that only 5.4% of the articles focused specifically on ethnic minorities. Clearly, the ethnic diversity of society is not represented in identity research, affecting the generalization across cultural groups and contexts. Thus further research focusing on ethnicity and ethnic aspects of identity is needed to help promote a deeper understanding of identity.

Ethnic identity

Ethnic identity refers to the degree of an individual's identification and affiliation with his/her ethnic group (Phinney & Ong, 2007). It also includes exploration and commitment to one's ethnic background (Marcia, 1980; Ong, Fuller-Rowell, & Phinney, 2010; Umaña-Taylor, Yazedjian, & Bámaca-Gómez, 2004). The theory of ethnic identity development is based on Marcia's operationalization of identity formation, suggesting the same stages of ethnic identification: *ethnic identity diffusion*, *ethnic identity search (moratorium)*, *foreclosure*, and *ethnic identity achievement* (Phinney, 1990; Phinney, 1992). The scale is continuous ranging from high degree of ethnic identity (i.e. high interest, commitment, positive attitudes towards the group) to low degree of ethnic identification (negative evaluations of the group and one's group membership, limited involvement and interest towards the group) (Phinney, 1991; Umaña-Taylor, 2015). In other words, ethnic identity theory can be considered a modification of Marcia's identity status theory, adjusted to include ethnic aspects of identity (Phinney & Alipuria, 1990; Phinney & Ong, 2007; Yoon, 2011).

Previous research suggests that exploration and commitment to one's ethnic identity is associated with greater psychological wellbeing, self-esteem and life satisfaction, especially for individuals under 40 years of age (Chae & Larres, 2010; Phinney, Cantu, & Kurtz, 1997; Smith & Silva, 2011). Moreover, Abu-Rayya (2006) found that higher forms of ethnic identity status, such as achieved ethnic identity and moratorium, are related to superior wellbeing. A strong ethnic identity is also associated with a decreased risk of disordered eating, fewer depressive symptoms (Henrickson, Crowther, & Harrington, 2010; Rogers Wood & Petrie, 2010; Shuttlesworth & Zotter, 2011; Siegel, Yancey, & McCarthy, 2000), better academic achievements (Arellano & Padilla, 1996) and superior capacity to cope with discrimination (Mossakowski, 2003; Torres, Yznaga, & Moore, 2011).

The two most commonly used measures of ethnic identity are the Ethnic Identity Scale (EIS) and the Multigroup Ethnic Identity Measure (MEIM) (Yoon, 2011). They are both well established and have been validated across several contexts and ethnicities (Avery, Tonidandel, Thomas, Johnson, & Mack, 2007; Phinney, 1992; Worrell, 2000; Yoon, 2011). In 2007, the MEIM was revised resulting in the MEIM-R, a psychometrically strengthened version of the original (Brown et al., 2014; Phinney & Ong, 2007). To date, neither the EIS nor MEIM-R have been validated in a Swedish context.

Acculturation and self-identified ethnicity

A closely related concept to ethnic identity is acculturation. Whereas ethnic identity refers to the subjective sense of affiliation to one's group or culture (Phinney, 1990), acculturation is a broader construct that can be described as the cultural and psychological transformation of an individual that follows intercultural contact (for example the encounter between the mainstream culture and the culture of an immigrant) (Berry, Phinney, Sam, & Vedder, 2006). Hence, ethnic identity can be considered as one of the aspects included in the acculturation concept (Phinney, 1990).

Berry et al. (2006) described four acculturation attitudes: *assimilated/national identity* (little interest in maintaining one's cultural heritage, preferring involvement with the larger society), *separated/ethnic identity* (focus on cultural maintenance while the involvement with the host culture is limited), *integrated/bicultural* (both cultural maintenance and involvement with others is sought) and *diffused/marginalized* (neither cultural maintenance nor interaction with the larger society is present). Berry et al. (2006) suggested that integration, or biculturalism, is connected to better sociocultural and psychological adaptation, positive attitudes towards both cultures and lower degree of perceived discrimination. Additionally, being bicultural (i.e. identifying with two cultures) can be associated with positive experiences, like feelings of pride and uniqueness (Berhe, 2015). However, it can also have negative effects such as identity confusion, bicultural stress and internal conflicts regarding values (Benet-Martínez & Haritatos, 2003). Bicultural stress (i.e. perceived stress caused by pressure to adopt both the minority and the majority culture) has been associated with more depressive symptoms and lower optimism (Romero, Carvajal, Valle, & Orduña, 2007). It also predicts inferior self-esteem and lower levels of life satisfaction (Piña-Watson, Ojeda, Casetellon, & Dornhecker, 2013).

Due to practical limitations the current study will not present the acculturation profiles of the respondents. However, inspired by the Acculturation Attitude Scale (Berry et al., 2006), the respondents were asked to report their self-identified ethnicity. Self-identified ethnicity refers to what ethnicity/ethnicities one feel affiliated with; for example "I feel Swedish" (national identity), "I feel both Swedish and Croatian" (bicultural identity), "I feel Iranian" (ethnic identity) or "I don't know"/"I don't have any"/"I feel European" (marginalized identity). This assessment aimed to assess the participants' relationship to their ethnic heritage as well as to the majority culture. Hence, the participants' self-identified ethnicity gives us a hint of the individuals' acculturation profiles.

Scandinavian research

Research on ethnic identity and acculturation in a Scandinavian or Swedish context remains somewhat scarce (Ferrer-Wreder, Trost, Lorente, & Mansoor, 2012; Virta et al., 2004). Virta et al. (2004) found that ethnic identity, assessed using the MEIM, in Turkish youths in Sweden was associated with better school adjustment. It also predicted higher self-esteem, fewer mental health problems and greater satisfaction with life. Furthermore, integration/biculturalism was a significant predictor of satisfaction of life and high self-esteem.

Psychological wellbeing

The concept of psychological wellbeing is complex and the definitions of the construct are numerous. According to Ryff (1989) psychological wellbeing includes several facets: autonomy, environmental mastery, personal growth, positive relations with other, purpose in life and self-acceptance. The World Health Organization (WHO, 2014) offers another definition: psychological wellbeing is not only the absence of mental illness but also a state in which individuals realize their own capacities, can cope with everyday stressors and can contribute to their community. Other aspects that have been highlighted are life satisfaction as well as the ratio between positive and negative affect (Diener, Emmons, Larsen, & Griffin, 1985; Winefield, Gill, Taylor, & Pilkington, 2012). The scales assessing psychological wellbeing are numerous: PANAS Scale (Watson, Clark, & Tellegen, 1988), Satisfaction with Life Scale (Diener, Emmons, Larsen, & Griffin, 1985) and Ryff Scales of Psychological Well-Being (Ryff, 1995) to mention but a few. In this study the 12-item General Health Questionnaire (GHQ-12) was used, as it is a well-established questionnaire that has been translated and validated in a Swedish context (Sconfienza, 1998).

Summary

In summary, ethnic identity is an important aspect of the sense of self, particularly in societies that are increasing in cultural diversity like Sweden. Growing up as a bi- or multi-cultural individual presents additional challenges to identity formation. Furthermore, having a coherent sense of self, feeling affiliated to a group and having positive feelings about one's group membership may influence one's psychological wellbeing.

Purpose

The overall purpose of this study was to examine ethnic identity and self-identified ethnicity among young adults with immigrant backgrounds and how these variables relate to

psychological wellbeing. A further aim was to translate the original version of the MEIM-R and evaluate the psychometric properties of the Swedish translation.

Research questions. The research questions were as follows:

1. As measured by the revised version of the Multigroup Ethnic Identity Measure (MEIM-R), to what extent do immigrants to Sweden between the ages of 18 and 40 report commitment and exploration of their own ethnic group?
2. Are the scores on the Swedish translation of the MEIM-R significantly correlated with self-reported psychological wellbeing as measured by the GHQ-12?
3. Does the Swedish language version of the MEIM-R show similar psychometric properties to the original as indicated by internal consistency (i.e. Cronbach's Alpha, item-total correlations), a correlated two-factor structure and correspondence to the theoretical construct of ethnic identity?
4. Is self-identified ethnicity significantly correlated with self-reported psychological wellbeing as measured by the GHQ-12 and socio-demographic aspects including gender, country of birth, occupation and parental factors?

Method

Design and procedure

After a review of the research literature and supervisory discussions, the purpose of the thesis was set. The research articles were collected from LubSearch, PsychNet, Google Scholar and by reviewing the references of other articles. Due to lack of economic resources only articles that were free of charge were included in the study. Subsequently, evaluations of methodological aspects were conducted and decisions regarding data-collection were made. Due to the limited research on ethnic identity in a Swedish context, this study was designed to be cross-sectional, correlational and exploratory. This methodology is appropriate to describe a population, finding and comparing potential subgroups as well as investigating relationships between variables (Shadish et al., 2002). Furthermore, the cross-sectional web-survey is an inexpensive, quick and convenient way to obtain the satisfactory number of respondents; all which were desirable qualities considering the aim of performing a factor analysis.

Subsequently, the structure of the questionnaire was formed (see Appendix A). The questionnaires MEIM-R (Phinney & Ong, 2007) and GHQ-12 (Goldberg, 1972) were included based on their relevance as well as their promising psychometric properties, concise formation and accessibility. Since a Swedish version of the Multigroup Ethnic Identity Measure Revised (MEIM-R) did not yet exist, a translation process was initiated. The author produced a first

draft of the Swedish language version. This version was subsequently translated back to English by the author and the supervisor to determine the quality of the translation. Thereafter two independent bilingual consultants were conferred, resulting in minor modifications. The new version was reviewed a second time together with an individual who met the inclusion criteria for the study; no additional changes were made.

In addition to the MEIM-R and GHQ-12, supplementary questions regarding socio-demographics and self-identified ethnicity, partially inspired from the Acculturation Attitude Scale (Berry et al., 2006), were added. Finally, in order to assess the participants' experience of the questionnaire and to discover possible rooms of improvement (especially regarding the MEIM-R), the respondents were given the opportunity to give feedback or to comment on the questionnaire. In total 30 items were included in the survey.

To reach out to as many respondents as possible and to facilitate the distribution of the questionnaire, a web-based survey was used. The respondents were recruited through social media (Facebook) and the administration of several university programs across Sweden. The data was collected during two periods, one in the fall of 2015 and one in the beginning of 2016. In total 201 surveys were collected. Of these 18 were excluded, ten for being incomplete (surveys with extensive missing data) and eight for not meeting the inclusion criteria. The answers of the remaining 183 respondents were downloaded in Excel and then uploaded into SPSS (IBM SPSS version 23). Further description of the coding and the data-analyses will be presented below.

Participants

The sample consisted of 183 young adults (117 females, 65 males and 1 not specified), ranging from 18 to 36 years of age (mean age = 25.38, SD = 4.5). The inclusion criteria were: 1) having one or two parents born outside of Sweden; 2) being raised by one's biological parents; and 3) being 18-40 years of age.

The sample was highly diverse regarding ethnicity. Aside from Sweden (29%), Iraq (23.5%), Poland (13.2%), Kosovo (9.3%) and Bosnia Herzegovina (9.3%) were the most common countries of birth for the parents of the respondents. The majority of the respondents were Swedish-born (67.8%). Most of the participants had two parents with immigrant background (70.5%) and the majority (57.9%) were mono-ethnic (i.e. had parents born in the same country). The sample consisted mainly of students (74.9%) and to lesser extent employed (21.3%) and people who combined studies and work (2.7%) or who were on sick leave (1.1%). Most of the participants (49.7%) reported affiliation to both their national (Swedish identity)

and their ethnic identity, suggesting a bicultural identity. Furthermore, 22.4% stated commitment only to their ethnic identity, while 18% perceived themselves as Swedish (national profile). Lastly, 9.8% reported neither ethnic, national nor bicultural identity, suggesting a marginalized identity.

Instruments

The survey (see Appendix A) included demographic questions such as age, gender as well as country of birth of the participants and their caregivers. Furthermore, questions concerning self-identified ethnicity and ethnic composition among the respondents immediate environment were included. Additionally, the Swedish translation of MEIM-R and the GHQ-12 were included, as well as an open-ended commentary field for the respondents to give feedback about the survey.

Ethnic identity. To measure the degree of ethnic identity a Swedish version of MEIM-R (see questions 12-17 in Appendix A) was used. The English original, developed by Phinney and Ong (2007), includes six items, such as “I understand pretty well what my ethnic group membership means to me” and “I feel a strong attachment towards my own ethnic group”. The response options are on a 5-point scale, ranging from 1 (strongly agree) to 5 (strongly disagree). The scale is divided in two subscales: *Exploration* (including items 1, 4, 5) and *Commitment* (items 2, 3, 6). The MEIM-R index was analyzed as an overall scale by computing the mean of all six items. The mean of each of the two subscales were also calculated and reviewed. Finally, the distribution of the ethnic identity statuses was evaluated using a K-means cluster analysis.

The MEIM-R has been found to have high levels of internal consistency with Cronbach’s Alpha ranging from .76 to .91 for the two subscales and .81 to .89 for the whole scale (Phinney & Ong, 2007; Yoon, 2011). Its correlation with similar questionnaires like Ethnic Identity Status (EIS) suggests good convergent validity (Yoon, 2011). In addition to its brief structure and satisfactory psychometric properties, the MEIM-R is accessible, easy to use and is applicable across ethnic groups (Phinney & Ong, 2007; Brown et al., 2014), which makes it appropriate for this study.

Self-identified ethnicity. As mentioned earlier self-identified ethnicity refers to what ethnicity/ethnicities one feel affiliated with. This variable was categorized by comparing the participants’ reports of ethnic affiliation to the ethnic background of their parents. For example, if a respondent reported affiliation to his/her ethnic heritage “I feel Iranian” it was coded as an *ethnic identity*, while a statement such as “I feel Swedish” was categorized as a *national*

identity. If the participants stated that they felt both Swedish and Croatian/Spanish/French and so forth, it was considered to indicate a *bicultural identity*. Finally, the individuals who reported statements such “I don’t know”, ”I don’t have any”, ”I feel European” were categorized as having a *marginalized identity*. This assessment was inspired by the Acculturation Attitude Scale presented by Berry et al. (2006) and was included to assess one of the dimensions of acculturation. Hence, responses to this question were deemed connected with the individuals’ acculturation profiles.

Psychological wellbeing. Psychological wellbeing was assessed via the 12-item self-report GHQ-12 (see Appendix A, questions 18-29). The GHQ-12 is a brief and well-established questionnaire that measures both positive and negative dimensions of psychological wellbeing (Goldberg, 1972; Hardy, Shapiro, & Haynes, 1999). The questionnaire includes 12 items where each question presents four response options, ranging from “strongly agree” to “strongly disagree”. Examples of items are “Have you recently been feeling unhappy and depressed?” and “Have you recently felt constantly under strain?”. Each response option was transformed to a number ranging from 0 (“strongly agree”) to 3 (“strongly disagree”). The six items that were negatively formulated (items 2, 5, 6, 9, 10, 11) were converted and the total GHQ-12-value of each individual was calculated. A high score indicated poor psychological wellbeing.

The internal consistency of the GHQ-12 has ranged from acceptable to satisfactory ($\alpha = .73$; $\alpha = .76$; $\alpha = .81$) (del Pilar Sánchez-López & Dresch, 2008; Politi, Piccinelli, & Wilkinson, 1994; Sarkova et al., 2006). The Swedish translation of the measure has also showed adequate reliability ($\alpha = .80$ - $.84$) (Sconfienza, 1998). The factor structure of the GHQ-12 has been debated, showing results ranging from one (Romppel, Braehler, Roth, & Glaesmer, 2013) to three factors (Martin & Newell, 2005). According to a validation study of the GHQ-12 in a Swedish context, presented by the Swedish National Institute of Working Life (Sconfienza, 1998), a one-factor structure is preferable. Accordingly, the current study used the GHQ-12 as a one-dimensional measurement.

The GHQ-12-scores were used in two ways, as a continuous scale and as a dichotomous variable (above/below the cut-off). The continuous scale was used performing the Spearman’s correlation analyses while the cut-off version enabled the chi-square analyses. The cut-off of the GHQ-12 has been reviewed several times (Goldberg et al., 1997; Makowska, Merez, Moscicka, & Kolasa, 2002; Shelton & Herrick, 2009) and has been suggested to 1/2 alternatively 2/3 of the maximal score on the GHQ-12. Due to the non-clinical population the

cut-off was set to 1/2 of maximal score. This means that a result above 18 points was considered to indicate poor psychological wellbeing.

Statistical analyses

Initial data-analysis involved descriptive analysis (Mean, SD, Range, Kurtosis, Skewness), analyses of basic statistical assumptions (test of normality and homogeneity of variance), assessment of the reliability of the measures and detection of outliers. As the results indicated that several of the assumptions were violated, non-parametric tests such as Mann-Whitney U, Kruskal- Wallis and Spearman's correlation, were used. The outliers were identified using the Outlier labeling method recommended by Hoaglin, Iglewicz, and Tukey (1986) and were thereafter winsorized, i.e. transformed to the values closest to the outlier boundary (Aguinis, Gottfredson, & Joo, 2013).

Degree of ethnic identity. One of the purposes of this study was to examine to what extent the participants reported a sense of exploration and commitment to their ethnic identity. In order to do so, the means of the overall scale (MEIM-R) and the subscales (MEIM-R-C & MEIM-R-E) were calculated. Additionally, in accordance to the recommendations of Phinney and Ong (2007), a cluster analysis based on the two subscales was performed. Cluster analysis is a way of classifying data by separating data into groups, or clusters. The scores within the cluster are similar, whereas the differences between the clusters are more extensive, enabling subgroups to emerge. There are different kinds of cluster analyses. When the theoretical framework suggests a fixed set of clusters, as in this case, a K-means cluster method is recommended (Hair & Black, 2000). Consequently, a K-means cluster analysis, using four clusters (as the number of ethnic identity statuses) was performed, assigning the participants to different ethnic identity statuses depending on their scores on each subscale of the MEIM-R.

Correlation between degree of ethnic identity and psychological wellbeing. To examine the potential relationship between psychological wellbeing and ethnic identity, a Spearman's correlation analysis was performed. As this study is considered to be explorative, the correlation analyses were not only conducted on the overall sample; the correlations of different subgroups (based on several socio-demographic variables) were investigated as well.

To assure an adequate reliability of the measurements, Cronbach's Alpha was assessed. The results indicated high internal consistency for both the GHQ-12 ($\alpha = .87$) and the MEIM-R ($\alpha = .86$). Further information concerning the psychometric properties of the MEIM-R will be presented later in the result section.

Psychometric properties of the MEIM-R. The psychometric properties that were assessed were factor structure, internal consistency and compatibility with the theoretical construct. These analyses aimed to evaluate the construct validity of the measurement, i.e. to what extent the questionnaire captured the latent constructs (commitment and exploration of ethnic identity) and whether the results are compatible with the theoretical framework (Shadish, Cook, & Campbell, 2002). Construct validity is preferably evaluated using factor analysis (Williams, Brown, & Onsman, 2010). In previous research concerning construct validity of the MEIM-R two factors have been suggested: exploration and commitment (Phinney & Ong, 2007; Yoon, 2011). To verify existing theory a confirmative factor analysis (CFA) is preferable (Atkinson et al., 2011). However, owing to the large sample sizes required to carry out CFA reliably, an exploratory factor analysis using Principal Component Analysis (PCA) was performed instead. In order to investigate whether the data was appropriate for factor analysis the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy analysis (KMO) and the Bartlett's Test of Sphericity were executed. Subsequently, the principle component analysis (PCA) was performed, resulting in an extraction of the underlying factors. To assess whether the results were consistent with the ethnic identity statuses, i.e. the theoretical construct, a K-means analysis using four clusters was used. Finally, to examine another important psychometric property, the internal consistency, a Pearson's reliability analysis was performed.

Self-identified ethnicity, psychological wellbeing and socio-demographic variables. To investigate the relationship between self-identified ethnicity and psychological wellbeing chi-square (X^2) analyses were performed. Unlike Pearson's or Spearman's correlation analyses that assess relationships between ordinal or interval-based measurements, chi-square is adjusted to examine correlations between two categorical or binary variables (Kremelberg, 2011). In this case self-identified ethnicity was a categorical variable (national, ethnic, bicultural or marginalized), which means that chi-square was preferable. Since the GHQ-12 is an ordinal scale the sample was categorized based on a cut-off value (1/2 of total score); a score lower than 18 points was defined as good psychological wellbeing ($n = 159$), whereas a value over the cut-off was considered an indication of poor psychological wellbeing ($n = 24$).

Before performing the chi-squares all the variables were dummy coded. Dummy coding is a method used to organize the individuals into two categories: those who are included in the subgroup that is being assessed and the individuals who are not. For example, to investigate the correlation of the variable "work" (a subcategory of the main category "occupation") and self-identified ethnicity, the individuals who work were categorized as a 1, while those who do not work are coded as 0. The subcategories that were assessed included

gender (female: yes / no), country of birth (Sweden: yes / no), age (18-24, 25-30, 31-36), student/work (yes/no), psychological wellbeing (above/below cut-off), multi-ethnic (yes/no) and parental birth-country (one parent born in Sweden: yes / no).

The chi-square analyses were evaluated by looking at the effect size (ϕ) and the level of significance. A significant Phi-value ($p < .05$) between .10 and .30 was considered as small, .30 to .50 indicates a moderate effect and a value of above .50 was categorized as large.

Ethical considerations

The Swedish Research Council (Vetenskapsrådet, 2002) presents four main requirements of research: principles of information and utility, informed consent and confidentiality. To ensure that these requirements were fulfilled an information sheet was included in the survey (see front-page in Appendix A). The information sheet contains information regarding purpose of the study, how the results are going to be used and on what terms the person is participating. It also acknowledges the respondents' option to terminate their participation at any given time. Moreover, information regarding individuals ought to be inaccessible for unauthorized and should not to be used for other utilities than the research in hand. Since the data of this study was anonymous and was only to be used as part of a master thesis, these demands were fulfilled as well.

The subject of ethnicity is delicate. According to Swedish law, ethnic background is considered sensitive personal data (SFS, 1998:204; SFS, 2003:460); such information should therefore not be traceable to individual respondents. Consequently, research on ethnicity also requires approval from the Ethics committee. Even though these rules don't apply to research on Master level (SFS, 2003:460), it is essential to take these ethic aspects into consideration. It was therefore decided to base this study on anonymous and untraceable data. Another reason for an ethical review is if the study involves a substantial risk of significantly affecting or even harming the participants (SFS, 2003:460). However, the risk of the current study being physically or psychologically harmful for the participants or to affect them in a significant way was considered as low.

Another important aspect is whether or not the study is scientifically and practically pertinent: does the study contribute with new important knowledge and if so how can the information be used? As mentioned earlier ethnic aspects are of particular importance for social identity in ethnically diverse societies, such as Sweden (Umaña-Taylor, 2015). Yet, research on these aspects is limited (Virta et al., 2004) and the vast majority of the samples in identity research primary consist of Caucasian individuals (Sneed, Schwartz, & Cross, 2006).

This suggests that ethnic aspects ought to be more acknowledged in this line of research, a statement that has been supported by several multicultural researchers (Ahmadi & Carpelan, 2003; Bernal, Trimble, Burlew, & Leong, 2004; Sue & Sue, 2008). As a psychologist or psychotherapist in Sweden you meet an ethnically diverse population; to have multicultural competence and to have knowledge about different cultural backgrounds are therefore of essence. It is also important to acknowledge the way an individual relates to her or his ethnic background, what degree of affiliation he/she has have to his/her ethnic group and how he/she feel about their ethnic group membership. Having these ethnic aspects of identity in mind is of great importance to understand an individual's social identity. It is also essential to be able to approach potential struggles related to ethnic aspects such as bicultural stress. Learning more about different types of ethnic identity statuses, about self-identified ethnicity and how it relates to psychological wellbeing is therefore of importance not only for scientists in this line of research, but also for clinical psychologist.

Results

Degree of ethnic identity

The descriptive analyses presented in Table 1 suggested a mean-value of the overall MEIM-R scale at 3.20 ($SD = 0.85$), 3.37 ($SD = 0.92$) for the Commitment-scale and 3.04 ($SD = 0.97$) for the Exploration-scale. These results indicated that the sample report scores close to the mean value of the scale (3). However, since there is no cut-off determining high/low degree of ethnic identity, these values were not particularly informative. Hence, to further investigate the extent to which the respondents report commitment and exploration of their ethnic identity, a cluster analysis based on the two subscales was performed. Due to the incompatible variances of the subscales (0.94; 0.84) the data was transformed to Z-scores.

The results of the K-means cluster analysis presented in Figure 1, indicated a structure compatible to the theoretical framework. The first cluster ($n = 47$) suggested high values of exploration and commitment ($z = 1.26; 0.86$), a result compatible with the construct *achieved ethnic identity*. The individuals of the second group ($n = 32$) reported relatively high values on exploration compared to commitment ($z = 0.32; -0.63$), which matched the criteria for *moratorium*. Meanwhile the third cluster ($n = 53$) stated the opposite relationship ($z = -0.22; 0.62$), indicating *foreclosure*.

Table 1

Descriptive statistics (Mean, SD and Range) of the measurements MEIM-R (including subscales Commitment and Exploration) and GHQ-12

Measurement	Mean	SD	Range	Skewness	Kurtosis
MEIM-R					
Overall scale	3.20	0.85	3.83	-.01	-.53
Female	3.15	0.77	3.5		
Male	3.32	0.96	3.83		
MEIM-R-C	3.37	0.92	4	-.06	-.55
Female	3.34	0.87	4		
Male	3.43	1.00	4		
MEIM-R-E	3.04	0.97	4	.16	-.69
Female	2.96*	0.89	4		
Male	3.21*	1.08	4		
GHQ-12	10.34	6.15	28	.79	.19
Female	11.26**	6.29	28		
Male	8.85**	5.53	27		

Note. * Tendencies of differences between male and female participants, $U = -1.57, p = .12$.

** Significant differences between the sexes, $U = -2.56, p < .01$.

Additionally, possible differences regarding degree of ethnic identity depending on demographic variables such as gender, age, country of birth, occupation and parental factors were assessed. No differences were found concerning age ($X^2(2) = 1.21, p > .05$), occupation ($X^2(3) = 4.33, p > .05$) nor country of birth of the participants ($X^2(1) = .07, p > .05$). The results indicated no significant differences between having one or two parents with immigrant background ($X^2(2) = 4.11, p > .05$) on the overall scale. However, there were tendencies of differences on the exploration scale ($p = .09$); indicating that individuals with one Swedish parent reported lower values on this subscale. The results on the Mann-Whitney U test indicated tendencies ($p = .12$) that the female participants reported lower on the exploration subscale of the MEIM-R ($M = 2.96, SD = 0.89$) than the male respondents ($M = 3.21, SD = 1.08$). In addition, the results showed tendencies ($p = .11$) of mono-ethnic individuals (having parents born in the same country) reported higher total score of the MEIM-R ($M = 3.30, SD = 0.84$) than those with mixed ethnic backgrounds ($M = 3.08, SD = 0.84$). Being mono-ethnic was also positively correlated with having an achieved identity status ($X^2(1,183) = 3.92, p < .05, \phi = .15$). Lastly, individuals reporting ethnic identity (only feeling affiliated with one's ethnic background) showed significantly higher values ($p < .05$) on the overall scale ($M = 3.44,$

$SD = 0.84$) than the participants stating marginalized identity (i.e. stating affiliation to neither ethnic, national nor bicultural identity) ($M = 2.88$, $SD = 0.82$).

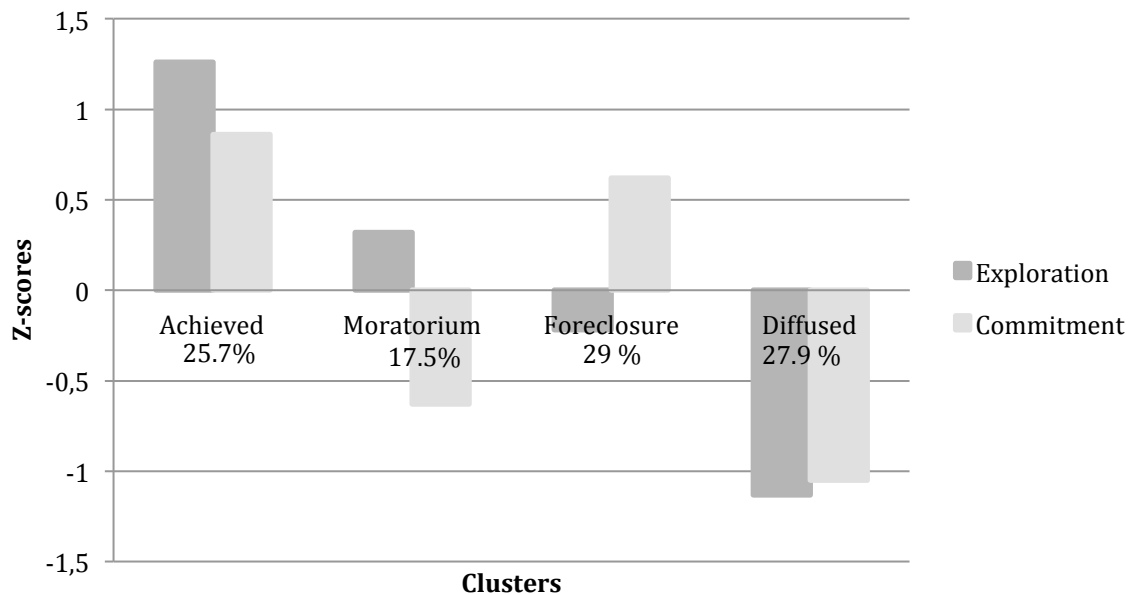


Figure 1. Ethnic identity statuses calculated from scores of the MEIM-R subscales Exploration and Commitment.

Correlation between degree of ethnic identity and wellbeing

As the assumptions of parametric test were violated, a Spearman's correlation for non-parametric test was used to investigate correlations between degree of ethnic identity and psychological wellbeing. The results presented in Table 2 indicated no significant correlation between these variables on the overall sample. However, further analyses showed several subgroups where the relationship between psychological wellbeing and degree of ethnic identity was valid. The most prominent correlations were found in the group reporting marginalized ethnicity. The correlations were significant both for the overall scale and for the exploration-scale. Although non-significant, the correlation on the commitment subscale showed the same tendencies ($p = .07$). These results suggested a moderate correlation between degree of ethnic identity and high scores on the GHQ-12 (a high score indicating poor wellbeing) in this particular subgroup. In other words, having a strong ethnic identity was in this group related to poor wellbeing.

Other significant relationships between ethnic identity and psychological wellbeing appeared in the female cluster as well as among the youngest individuals of the group (18-24 years). However, the negative correlation between the commitment scale and the GHQ-12 scale for participants between 18 and 24 and the female respondents only suggested a weak

association between high degree of commitment and superior psychological wellbeing. There were also indications of a relationship between exploration and inferior wellbeing among the individuals between 25 and 30.

Three of the strongest associations were found assessing the ethnicity among the participants' friends. In the group that described their friends' ethnicity as completely similar to their own, a strong relationship between score on GHQ-12 and the commitment variable was found. The same tendencies were found on the overall scale. Thus for this particular group high degree of ethnic identity was associated with high psychological wellbeing. The group reporting the ethnicity of their friends as completely distinct from their own appeared to show similar tendencies. Furthermore, the Kruskal-Wallis test showed significant differences on the overall scale as well as for the exploration-scale ($X^2(3) = 7.68, p = .05$; $X^2(3) = 8.34, p < .05$). The Mann-Whitney U Post Hoc test showed that the group describing their friends as completely distinct regarding ethnic origin reported lower values on the overall scale than those who described their friends as quite distinct concerning ethnic background ($U = 318.50, p < .01$).

To investigate the relationship between ethnic identity status and psychological wellbeing comparative analyses were performed. The initial results indicated no significant differences between the groups ($X^2(3) = 4.63, p > .05$). However, the Mann-Whitney U Post hoc test showed significant differences between individuals of the moratorium and the diffused group ($U = 600.50, p < .05$), indicating that the diffused group reported higher wellbeing ($M = 26.88, SD = 5.53$) than the moratorium cluster ($M = 23.44, SD = 7.00$). The same tendencies were found between the achieved identity cluster and the moratorium group ($p = .10$). This was further supported in the chi-square analysis, showing that moratorium was related to poor wellbeing ($X^2(1,183) = 4.81, p < .05, \phi = .16$).

Psychometric properties of the MEIM-R

Internal consistency. One of the criteria of a valid and reliable measurement is internal consistency, i.e. that the items of the measurement assess the same construct. The results of the reliability analysis suggested good internal consistency of the overall scale ($\alpha = .86$). The assessment of the subscales indicated encouraging results as well, with Cronbach's Alpha values ranging from .81 for the Commitment-scale to .82 for the Exploration-scale. Furthermore, item-total correlations were conducted, presenting values exceeding acceptable levels ($> .30$). In conclusion, the Swedish version of the MEIM-R, and its subscales, appeared to have reliability properties similar to the original.

Table 2

Socio-demographic description of the sample and correlations between the MEIM-R (including subscales) and the GHQ-12 for the overall sample and subgroups defined by socio-demographic characteristics

Demographic Variable	<i>n</i> (%)	<i>r</i> (MEIM-R & GHQ-12)	<i>r</i> (MEIM-R-C & GHQ-12)	<i>r</i> (MEIM-R-E & GHQ-12)
Overall sample	183	-.02	-.09	.08
Ethnic identity status				
Diffused	51 (27.9%)	.03	-.11	.23
Foreclosure	53 (29%)	-.17	-.26*	.01
Moratorium	32 (17.5%)	.01	-.13	-.13
Achieved	47 (25.7%)	-.14	-.23	.03
Age (M=24,38 years)				
18-24	119 (65%)	-.14	-.22**	-.02
25-30	41 (22.4%)	.21	.12	.29*
31-36	23 (12.6%)	.15	.10	.21
Gender				
Female	117 (63.9%)	-.06	-.19**	.09
Male	65 (35.5%)	.09	.05	.12
Other ^a	1 (0.5%)	-	-	-
Born in Sweden				
Yes	124 (67.8%)	-.01	-.04	.09
No	59 (32.2)	-.04	-.18	.07
Multi-ethnic ^b	76 (41.5%)	-.04	-.18	.12
Mono-ethnic	106 (57.9%)	-.03	-.05	.02
Occupation				
Student	137 (74.9%)	-.05	-.11	.03
Working	39 (21.3%)	.08	.07	.16
Student/working ^a	5 (2.7%)	-	-	-
Other ^a	2 (1.1%)	-	-	-
Parents born in Sweden ^b				
One	53 (29%)	-.14	.25*	.003
None	129 (70.5%)	.06	-.03	.14
Self-identified ethnicity				
National	33 (18%)	-.17	-.22	-.09
Bicultural	41 (22.4%)	-.02	-.10	.06
Ethnic	91 (49.7%)	-.12	-.20	.02
Marginalized	18 (9.8%)	.47**	.43	.49**
Neighborhood				
Mostly immigrants	31 (16.9%)	-.15	-.20	-.06
Equal distribution	68 (37.2%)	.02	.17	-.12
Few immigrants	84 (45.9%)	.04	.13	-.06
Friends ethnicity				
Completely separated	21 (11.5%)	-.36	-.37*	-.29
Quite separated	50 (27.3%)	-.04	-.12	.05
Quite similar	98 (53.6%)	.12	.02	.19*
Completely similar	14 (7.7%)	-.50*	-.62**	-.32

$p < .10$. ** $p < .05$. *** $p < .01$.

^aSample too small to perform analyses, ^bOne answer missing.

Construct validity. To assess construct validity of the MEIM-R an exploratory factor analysis (PCA) was executed. However, before doing so, the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy analysis (KMO) and the Bartlett's Test of Sphericity were investigated. The results (KMO = .80; Bartlett's Test of Sphericity = $p < .001$) suggested that the data was appropriate for factor analysis. The results of the extraction showed that only one factor exceeded eigenvalue 1 (the cut-off according to Kaiser's criteria), suggesting a one-dimensional scale.

Another aspect of construct validity is the accordance with the theoretical framework. As presented in Figure 1, the K-means cluster analysis resulted in a four-cluster model. These clusters were organized in accordance to the four ethnic identity statuses (diffusion, achievement, foreclosure and moratorium); demonstrating a structure compatible with Phinney and Ongs' (2007) theoretical framework of ethnic identity. This indicated that the theoretical validity of the Swedish language version of the MEIM-R is adequate.

Self-identified ethnicity, psychological wellbeing and socio-demographic factors

The results of the chi-square analyses, presented in Table 3, indicated no correlation between any of the self-identified ethnicity categories and psychological wellbeing ($p > .05$). Examining the correlations between self-identified ethnicity and socio-demographic variables several significant results were found. The strongest correlations regarding age were found in the two extremes (age 18-24 and 31-36). Being between 18-24 years was significantly negatively correlated with marginalized ethnicity and significantly positively correlated with bicultural ethnicity ($p < .05$). The opposite relationship was found in the older group (age 31-36). However, all the correlations showed small effect sizes ($\phi > .30$).

No correlation between gender and self-identified ethnicity was found ($p > .05$). However, country of birth appeared to be an important factor, presenting significant correlations with all categories except marginalization. Being born in Sweden was positively correlated with national ($p < .05$) and bicultural identity ($p < .001$); presenting small effect sizes ($\phi = -.17; -.27$). The results of the correlation between ethnic identity and country of birth indicated the opposite relationship; being Swedish-born was negatively related to reporting ethnic identity ($p < .001$). The effect size of this correlation can be considered as moderate ($\phi = -.41$).

Having one Swedish-born parent was significantly negatively associated with reporting ethnic identity ($p < .001$), suggesting moderate effect size ($\phi = -.33$). There were also

tendencies of positive relationships between having one Swedish-born parent and reporting a national ($p = .06$) or bicultural identity ($p = .07$), indicating small effect ($\phi = .14$).

Moreover, the results showed a moderate ($\phi = .35$) positive relationship between having two foreign-born parents and having an ethnic identity profile ($p < .001$). The opposite relationship was found reporting bicultural identity ($p < .05$, $\phi = -.15$). Furthermore, there were tendencies of a negative correlation between having two foreign-born parents and reporting a national identity ($p = .07$), also suggesting a small effect size ($\phi = -.13$).

Finally, the results indicated a moderate ($\phi = -.37$) negative correlation between being multi-ethnic and reporting an ethnic identity ($p < .001$). Additionally, having a multi-ethnic background was positively related with stating a national identity ($p < .05$, $\phi = .21$).

Table 3

Correlations between self-identified ethnicity, psychological wellbeing and socio-demographic variables using Pearson's χ^2

Variables	National	Bicultural	Ethnic	Marginalized
Age				
18-24	0.98	5.89**	0.38	3.72**
25-30	0.08	1.44	0.60	0.33
31-36	1.16	3.92**	0.007	4.20**
Gender ^a	0.71	0.003	0.44	0.07
Born in Sweden	5.38**	12.87***	31.43***	1.36
Student	2.77*	0.41	1.83	0.71
Working	3.47*	0.25	2.62	0.50
One Swedish parent	3.55*	3.39*	21.54***	0.96
Two foreign-born parents	3.23*	3.97**	22.12***	0.85
Multi-ethnic background	8.10**	1.59	25.47***	1.62
GHQ-12 above cut-off ^b	0.15	0.001	0.039	0.07

Note. All the variables were dummy-coded, 1=the group being assessed (for example females), 0= the others (male, not specified)

* $p < .10$. ** $p < .05$. *** $p < .001$.

^a Analyses based on female and male respondents due to restricted number of participants in the third category, ^b Cut-off is set to 1/2 of the maximum score (i.e. 18 points)

Discussion

The following section consists of four parts. The first paragraph concerns the results of the present study and to what extent these results are consistent with prior research. The second one intends to discuss the strengths and limitations of the study, focusing on methodological aspects. Subsequently, the conclusions of the results are presented. Finally, the last section includes a summary of practical implications as well as suggestions for future research.

Results

Degree of ethnic identity. The results indicate that the current sample reports lower degree of ethnic identity compared to previous research. For instance, Yoon (2011) found mean-values of 3.76 and 3.97 on the Exploration-scale and the Commitment-scale respectively. Chakawa, Butler, and Shapiro (2015) suggest similar values (Exploration = 3.57; Commitment = 3.79). The female participants of the present study report the lowest scores on the MEIM-R; presenting values more similar to the scores reported by European Americans than to those of the ethnic minority groups (Chakawa et al., 2015; Yoon, 2011). These findings suggest that ethnic identity might be less salient among Swedish young adults with immigrant background, compared to similar groups in an American context (Brown et al., 2014; Chakawa et al., 2015; Yoon, 2011).

One explanation to these inconsistencies is the difference regarding sample characteristics. Firstly, the samples differ regarding ethnic composition. American research often includes African-Americans, Latino/a Americans, Native Americans and/or individuals with Asian background (Brown et al., 2014; Phinney and Ong, 2007; Yoon, 2011), whereas the sample of the current study mainly consist of participants with European background, individuals with parents from the Middle East and respondents who are multi-ethnic. These discrepancies, which reflect actual differences regarding the composition of ethnic minorities in Sweden and the US (U.S Census Bureau, 2010; SCB, 2013), are of importance, as ethnic identity differs across ethnic minority groups (Brown et al., 2014; Cokley, 2007). Even though ethnic minorities have some common factors such as the increased risk of ethnic discrimination, each group has its own cultural and historical experiences that may influence the ethnic identity development (Cokley, 2007). For example, some groups have been more exposed to oppression and discrimination than others, which may reflect the salience of their group membership (Cokley, 2007). Indeed, Phinney (1996) found that ethnic identity is a more important component of identity among individuals of color than among people from a white ethnic background. Additionally, both Brown et al. (2014) and Spencer, Icard, Harachi,

Catalano, and Oxford (2000) also presented inconsistencies across ethnic groups; suggesting that African American and Asian samples report the highest values, whereas white and multi-ethnic groups report the lowest levels of ethnic identity. These findings are supported by the results of the current study, as the multi-ethnic individuals tend to report lower levels of overall ethnic identity compared to the mono-ethnic group.

There are also several other cultural and contextual differences that might have contributed to the differences between the findings of this and previous studies. Firstly, there are differences regarding immigration policies between countries where the ethnicity studies have been carried out. For example Sweden is ranked second in the MIPEX (Migrant Integration Policy Index) when it comes to offering immigrants permanent residence in the country, which can be interpreted as a willingness to include individuals with other cultural and ethnic backgrounds. The US on the other hand is ranked 24 in the same index (MIPEX, 2015), perhaps suggesting a reluctance to include immigrants in society. However such an interpretation stands in contrast to the general (and founding) view of the US as nation of immigrants and the great melting pot (Jacoby, 2004).

Other contextual aspects that may be of importance are economic and social structure. For instance, Sweden is a welfare society where education and healthcare are to a greater extent tax-funded and where poverty rates are low compared to the US (DeNavas-Walt & Proctor, 2015; Statistics Sweden [SCB], 2012). These aspects might impact the prevalence of social inequalities and segregation, as well as degree of social dependence and connectedness among the citizens; aspects that could influence the salience of ethnic group membership. Furthermore there are cultural and historical events that are specific for each country. For instance, the US has a history of slavery, which may impact the importance of ethnic identity and cultural heritage. There are also subtle aspects such as norms, social codes, attitudes and values that can explain the discrepancies of the results. For example, the Jante law (an unwritten social code based on an idea of equality and social conformity), which is essential to the Swedish culture (Daun, 1996), might constrain the room for diverseness, perhaps inhibiting the development of ethnic identity of individuals with immigrant background. All these factors could also have contributed to the lower scores on the MEIM-R compared to the American samples.

Ethnic identity status. In addition to examining the mean-values of the MEIM-R, degree of ethnic identity was assessed by observing the distribution of ethnic identity statuses. The outcomes of the cluster analysis support the theoretical construct, which is consistent with previous results (Burrow-Sanchez, 2014; Yoon, 2011). However, the distribution of the

statuses deviates from prior research. As presented in Table 2, the sample is quite evenly distributed among the four clusters. These results differ substantially from the distribution found by Yoon (2011), who suggested that around 75% of the respondents reported the higher stages of identity formation (moratorium and achievement). Interestingly, the findings of the current study are yet again more compatible to the results of the control group (European Americans) than the ethnic minority samples (Yoon, 2011). In addition to the possible explanations described in the previous paragraph, these differences might also partly be attributed to the discrepancies regarding age. The mean age of the current sample is lower than in prior studies (Chakawa et al., 2015; Yoon, 2011). Even though the importance of age is unclear and unexplored in ethnic identity research, the theoretical framework on general identity development, supported by some previous research (Kroger et al., 2010), suggest that older individuals report mature identity statuses more extensively than younger respondents. Thus, the age differences of the samples might explain the discrepancies regarding distribution of ethnic identity statuses. Additionally, the Swedish population experiences particular life events such as getting married or having their first child later in life than the Americans (Center for Disease Control and Prevention [CDC], 2014; Statistics Sweden [SCB], 2014). Indeed, it has been suggested that the traditional markers of adulthood have been postponed in the Swedish population (Carlsson et al., 2014). The prolonged and postponed transformation into adulthood might delay the identity development of the Swedish population; perhaps explaining the scarce prevalence of individuals with an achieved ethnic identity status in the current sample.

The results also indicate that multi-ethnic individuals are less likely to have an achieved ethnic identity status. Subsequently, the high number of multi-ethnic participants might be one of the reasons why the distribution of identity statuses in this sample differs from previous studies in ethnic minorities.

Socio-demographic variables. The examination of socio-demographic variables indicates no significant differences regarding neither country of birth, occupation nor number of parents with immigrant background. However, the results indicate that a marginalized identity (reporting neither national, ethnic or bicultural identity) is related to a lower degree of ethnic identity. The same indications were found for the mono-ethnic participants. Thus having parents born in the same country appears to be connected to a higher degree of ethnic identity. Both these results are consistent with prior research (Brown et al., 2014; Chae & Larres, 2010; Yoon, 2011).

The demographic variable that is of particular importance from a theoretical point of view is age. The theoretical model of ethnic identity assumes a progressive development starting with identity diffusion, passing through moratorium and potentially foreclosure, finally resulting in identity achievement (Waterman, 1982). However, as mentioned earlier, there is inconsistent support for this assumption (Chae & Larres, 2010; Kroger et al., 2010). The results of the current study indicate no association between age and degree of ethnic identity, thus rejecting the hypothesis of a linear development of identity formation. In order to determine the relationship between age and identity formation, further investigation is needed.

The importance of exploring gender differences has been emphasized in previous research (Brown et al., 2014; Chakawa et al., 2015; Yoon, 2011). Indeed, past research suggests that there are gender differences in the cultural socialization process as well as in ethnic identity formation (Dion & Dion, 2001; Suarez-Orozco & Qin, 2006; Yap, Settles, & Pratt-Hyatt, 2011). Research using the original version of the MEIM has found inconsistent results for gender, e.g. Phinney (1992) found that high school girls report higher scores on one of the components of the original MEIM, while Lee and Yoo (2004) found no such differences. The results of the current study using the MEIM-R indicate that females tend to report lower values on the exploration-scale of the MEIM-R. Given these results potential gender differences are worthy of further investigation. Additionally, a more balanced distribution between the genders ought to be sought in future studies. As in many other research areas, women are over-represented in this line of research, which may bias the outcomes and limit the generalizability of the results.

Ethnic identity and psychological wellbeing. The results of the current study suggest no significant relationship between degree of ethnic identity and psychological wellbeing. These results are inconsistent with previous research, which have found a small to moderate relationship between these variables (Chae & Larres, 2010; Phinney, Cantu, & Kurtz, 1997; Smith & Silva, 2011). Even though the research on Scandinavian samples is limited, there are indications that such relationship may exist (Virta et al., 2004). However, the samples included in Virta et al. (2004) and the current study differ regarding several crucial aspects such as age and ethnicity, which might explain the discrepancies.

The connection between ethnic identity status and psychological wellbeing also differ from prior research. According to previous studies higher forms of ethnic identity status such as achieved ethnic identity and moratorium are related to superior wellbeing (Abu-Rayya, 2006). In the current sample moratorium is not associated with greater wellbeing. On the contrary, individuals in the moratorium group report the lowest levels of psychological

wellbeing. However previous research investigating the association between ethnic identity status and wellbeing is limited and should therefore be interpreted with caution. Furthermore, there are several studies focusing on general identity development, presenting results similar to the current study. For instance, Meeus (1996) found that the moratorium group reported the lowest scores on psychological wellbeing. Hence, additional research on the connection between ethnic identity status and psychological wellbeing is required.

The reasons for the inconsistency between the current and prior studies of ethnic identity and wellbeing can be numerous. Differences regarding sample characteristics, contextual/cultural factors but also linguistic aspects of the translation are some aspects that might have influenced the results. The differences concerning factor structure of the MEIM-R can also have affected the outcomes. Another factor that could have contributed is the measures, particularly the GHQ-12. In prior studies wellbeing has been assessed by several different questionnaires, such as QEWB (the Questionnaire for Eudaimonic Well-Being) and Ryff's 27-item Psychological well-being scale. These measures might capture other aspects of psychological wellbeing than those included in the GHQ-12. Furthermore, the results on the GHQ-12 show a floor-effect, i.e. that a majority of the sample report low scores on the measure. Such a skewed distribution of scores can make it harder to detect a significant correlation between wellbeing and the other studied variables. However, as non-parametric tests are less affected by abnormal distribution, it is plausible that wellbeing simply is unrelated to ethnic identity in this sample.

The examination of subgroups shows several interesting results, indicating that there are some socio-demographic variables that are important for the correlation between psychological wellbeing and degree of ethnic identity. The most significant variable appears to be the ethnic composition of one's closest friends. Indeed, prior research suggests that personal relationships, such as family and friends, are more important for ethnic identity than national policies (Gold, 1992; Keaton, 1999). The current results also indicate that gender may be an important aspect, as there is only a significant correlation in the female group. As mentioned earlier, research on gender has been inconclusive (Lee & Yoo, 2004; Mahalik et al., 2003; Phinney, 1992). Whether gender is an important aspect for the correlation of ethnic identity and wellbeing ought therefore to be investigated in future research.

Another significant aspect is self-identified ethnicity, especially for the group reporting marginalized ethnicity (i.e. stating affiliation to neither ethnic, national nor bicultural identity). In this particular subgroup, a strong ethnic identity is significantly related to poor psychological wellbeing. However, this group only consists of 18 respondents, reducing the

reliability and the generalizability of the results. Moreover, age appears to be important for the association between wellbeing and ethnic identity. For the participants between 18 and 24 the results indicate a positive but weak association between high commitment and wellbeing. These results are consistent with findings of prior research, suggesting that the effect size of the correlation between ethnic identity and psychological wellbeing is larger in studies including younger participants (Smith & Silva, 2011).

Psychometric properties. Internal consistency. The Cronbach's Alpha suggests that this Swedish translation of the MEIM-R has adequate levels of internal consistency of both the total scale and subscales; levels consistent with prior research on the psychometric properties of the measure (Phinney & Ong, 2007; Yoon, 2011). The item-total correlation analysis reveal values exceeding acceptable levels as well ($>.30$). In sum, the present study suggests that the Swedish version of the MEIM-R, produced by the author, has similar levels of internal consistency and reliability as the English-language original.

Construct validity. In this study, two types of construct validity are considered. Firstly, the theoretical consistency is evaluated using cluster analysis. The analysis reveal four clusters compatible with the four types of ethnic identity statuses presented in prior research (Phinney & Ong, 2007; Yoon, 2011). Accordingly, the results indicate high consistency with the theoretical framework that underpin the measure and implies that this Swedish-language translation has similar levels of construct validity to the original.

The construct validity is further evaluated via factor analysis. In the present study, factor analyses yield a one-factor solution as compared to the two-factor solution found in previous studies with the MEIM-R (Phinney & Ong, 2007; Yoon, 2011). However, the study only included 183 participants, which means that the interpretation of the factor analyses should be done with caution and that no firm conclusions can be drawn. Hence the inconsistency between the current and prior studies does not necessarily mean that this Swedish-language version of the MEIM-R lacked sufficient construct validity; on the contrary, the cluster analysis suggests that the measure has adequate levels of construct validity. Instead it is possible that the one-factor structure obtained in the current study reflected the true state of affairs, i.e. that only one factor existed within the current sample.

Self-identified ethnicity, psychological wellbeing and socio-demographic variables. The results indicate no significant correlation between self-identified ethnicity and psychological wellbeing. These results are inconsistent with the majority of previous findings (Berry et al., 2006; Chae & Larres, 2010; Moran, Fleming, Somervell, & Manson, 1999; Virta et al., 2004), which found that a bicultural identity was related to superior psychological

wellbeing. However, there are studies that have found other results. For example, Vedder and Virta (2005) who compared acculturation strategies between youths in Sweden and the Netherlands, found that integration, or biculturalism, was correlated with psychological wellbeing among youths in the Netherlands, while no such association was found for the Swedish sample. However, that study focused strictly on linguistic aspects of biculturalism, which is just one of several aspects of acculturation. The same can be said about the present study as the categorization of the respondents only is based on how the participants chose to label themselves (“I feel Swedish”, “I feel both Swedish and Croatian” etc.). In contrast, Berry et al. (2006) include five domains: cultural traditions, marriage, social activities, friends and language, thus capturing a wider concept than Vedder and Virta (2005) and the current study. These differences regarding the assessment may contribute to the inconsistency of the results.

Another possible explanation is the floor-effect of the GHQ-12 scores, indicating a lack of variance, which affects the possibility of finding a correlation. Furthermore, the categorization of self-identified ethnicity sometimes required interpretation. However, as the guidelines for the labeling were established a priori and were consistent throughout the analysis, it should not have substantially influenced the results. Another important aspect is differences regarding sample characteristics. For example, the samples of prior research only consist of adolescences while this study includes a wider age group. Even though the research of age-differences is limited, it has been suggested that the age when one immigrates and what generation one belongs to are related to acculturation strategies and adaptation (Phinney, Horenczyk, Liebkind, & Vedder, 2001); indicating that age might be an important factor for acculturation. Indeed, this assumption is supported by the results of the present study. Being in the younger group is positively connected to bicultural ethnicity and negatively associated with marginalized ethnicity, whereas the opposite relationships are present in the older group.

Another important factor is the participants’ country of birth. The results indicate that the individuals born in Sweden are more likely to feel affiliated to the Swedish or being bicultural, and less likely to report a sense of belonging exclusively to their ethnic background. The same pattern was found for the participants who had one Swedish-born parent; suggesting that country of birth of the respondents as well as of the parents are important factors for self-identified ethnicity. These results are consistent with prior research, emphasizing that generation is of importance for one’s acculturation attitude (Phinney et al., 2001). Moreover, there are difference between the multi and the mono-ethnic individuals. The results indicate that the multi-ethnic group is more likely to report a national identity, while mono-ethnicity is associated with an ethnic identity profile. Prior research on acculturation has not yet examined

differences between mono- and multi-ethnic individuals. However, the current findings suggest that this may also be an important aspect to acknowledge in forthcoming research.

Strengths and limitations

Design and procedure. The study is a cross-sectional, online survey using standardized measures. While being an appropriate method for investigating correlational relationships, there are several potential downsides using this method. Firstly, the respondents did not have the chance to ask questions about the content/items in the survey, which may mean that they did not fully understand all the items to which they responded. Additionally, obtaining data on only one occasion increases the risk of circumstantial events or other confounding variables affecting the results. Another potential limitation of using an online survey is knowing the extent to which the sample represents the population of interest. If the participation rate is quite low it may mean that the observed findings reflect some form of selection bias rather than the view of the intended population. In the present study, participants were identified using social media and by contacting the administration of university programs; thus naturally, the sample mainly consists of students. Using a sample of students exclude other groups within the population, for example people outside the academic world. Additionally, one cannot be certain that the 183 participants in this study adequately represent the population of students. All of these aspects of sample selection, sample characteristics and method of assessment can affect the internal and external validity of the study.

Participants. For the purpose of investigating correlations between two variables, the sample size can be considered as adequate. Having an adequate sample improves the statistical power of the study (the probability to reject a false null hypothesis), which in turn increases the statistical validity (i.e. the possibility to determine a potential correlation between two variables) (Shadish et al., 2002). Having a large sample reduces the risk to commit a type II error, as it enhances the precision and sensitivity of the test, making it possible to find small effects as well. On the other hand, it also a risk including too many respondents, as it increases the risk of type I error. However, the risk of type I error can in this case be considered as low, as 183 respondents is an adequate but not too large sample size. Having a large sample also enabled subgroup analyses. Even though some of the group analyses included a poor sample size, the majority of the analyses can be considered as reliable.

In contrast to several previous studies the age-range of the current study is relatively large, including participants from 18 to 40 years of age. This range is partly based on Erikson's theory of psychosocial stages but also on the findings of prior research indicating stronger

correlations between ethnic identity and wellbeing among individuals younger than 40 years of age (Smith & Silva, 2011). The benefit of including a wider age-range is the increased sample size, contributing to higher power and greater confidence about interpreting the findings. It also enables comparative analysis between different age groups. On the other hand it decreases the internal validity, risking other variables to influence the results.

Another important aspect is external validity: to what extent are the results generalizable to other samples in this population? As the aim of this study is to investigate ethnic identity among young adults with immigrant background in a Swedish context, the study claims to be generalizable to this particular group, in this cultural context. Looking at the ethnic distribution of the sample, it is quite compatible with the actual distribution among youths with immigrant background in Sweden (SCB, 2013), indicating a strong ecological validity of study. Including a highly diverse sample also increases the generalizability of the results. However, using an ethnically heterogenic sample has been discouraged in prior research and the importance of assessing each group separately has been emphasized (Cokley, 2007; Yoon, 2011). As has been supported in the present and prior studies (Brown et al., 2014; Yoon, 2011), different ethnic groups show different results regarding ethnic identity; the heterogeneity regarding ethnic origin can therefore be considered a threat to the internal validity.

Even though the sample can be considered as representative regarding ethnical composition, it is not representative regarding the demographic aspects, such as gender and occupational status. For instance, 75% of the participants are students and the two thirds of the respondents are female. Even though the indications of differences regarding gender and occupational status are rather scarce, the homogeneity regarding these factors limits the generalizability of the results. Another demographic aspect is socio-economic status. As educational performance has been related to parental socio-economic status (Ahmar & Anwar, 2013; Azhar, Nadeem, Naz, Perveen, & Sameen, 2013; OECD, 2011) individuals studying at the university can be expected to have higher socio-economic status than those without an academic degree. Accordingly, the findings may not be generalized to individuals who are not included in this category. Having a somewhat biased sample also reduces the internal validity of the study, as other variables such as socio-economic status might possibly have interfered with the results.

Instruments. To acquire reliable results the measures need to have adequate construct validity. To ensure satisfactory construct validity of the Swedish version of the MEIM-R, several precautions were made. For instance, the translation was conferred using several

bilingual consultants, assuring satisfactory translation quality. To further assess the relevance of the questionnaire in a Swedish context the questions were reviewed with an individual who met the inclusion criteria of the study. Nonetheless, the assessment of the construct validity of the MEIM-R is inconsistent; indicating adequate theoretical construct validity while the factor structure deviates from prior research. Furthermore, the reliability measures, including Cronbach's Alpha and item-total correlation, suggest good internal consistency, which also supports adequate construct validity. Thus, apart from the factor structure, the results are consistent with prior research (Brown et al., 2014; Phinney & Ong, 2007; Yoon, 2011), which strengthens the reliability and the statistical validity of the study.

Even though both the MEIM-R and the GHQ-12 show adequate reliability, the abnormal distribution and to a certain degree heterogeneity of variance entail certain difficulties. Firstly, non-parametric tests had to be used, reducing the accurateness and stringency of the results. Moreover, the floor effect of the GHQ-12 might have reduced the possibilities to find covariations between the GHQ-12 and other variables. To strengthen the statistical and internal validity of the study a more discriminant instrument presenting a normal distribution of data would have been preferable.

Statistical analyses. In the present study confounding variables are not controlled for. The possibility that confounders, such as demographic variables or circumstantial factors, may have affected the results can therefore not be dismissed. However, as the study is exploratory, demographic factors were examined rather than controlled for. Not controlling these variables rendered in several important results, providing valuable clues of which variables may be relevant to ethnic identity formation, self-identified ethnicity and their association to psychological wellbeing.

As the distribution of scores violated the assumptions for using parametric tests, the corresponding non-parametric tests were used. Even though the non-parametric tests are less sensitive than the parametric equivalents, increasing the risk for a type II error (Pallant, 2010), they are more suitable for this data; using the correct statistical methods also improves the statistical validity.

Even though construct validity has been assessed, there are several other ways to further evaluate the theoretical consistency, for example by using convergent or divergent measurements. Due to lack of access to other ethnic identity measurements no such comparison were possible in the present study and is therefore suggested to be evaluated in future research. Psychological wellbeing was also assessed using one measurement. Using additional measurements would also enhance the reliability of the results.

Conclusions

The current findings indicate that young Swedish adults with immigrant background report a lower degree of ethnic identity compared to international studies. The results also suggest no correlations between psychological wellbeing and ethnic identity or self-identified ethnicity. However, several socio-demographic aspects appear to be of importance such as gender, age, number of parents born in Sweden and the ethnic composition among friends. Even though the factor structure of the Swedish version of the MEIM-R deviates from prior findings, the measurement generally shows adequate validity.

Based on the results one can conclude that ethnic identity and self-identified ethnicity are complex concepts, contingent on aspects such as age, gender, country of birth as well as social and parental factors. The results also highlight the importance of contextual and cultural factors, stressing the significance of further acknowledging ethnic aspects of identity in a Swedish context.

Practical implications and future directions

Even though the results indicate that ethnic identity might be less salient for individuals with immigrant background in Sweden, compared to American ethnic minorities, it does not mean that ethnic identity is irrelevant for this group. First of all, according to the reports of self-identified ethnicity, a majority of the sample states an ethnic or bicultural profile; indicating that the respondents feel affiliated with their ethnic background. Furthermore, the feedback from the participants shows that ethnic aspects of identity often is highly relevant for their sense of self and that they had reflected on their identity and social affiliation in terms of acculturation and ethnicity.

The current study highlights ethnic aspects of identity, aspects that often are overlooked in this line of research. In societies that are increasing in cultural diversity like Sweden, ethnic aspects of identity is of particular importance, not only for identity research, but also for clinicians. Being aware of, and to have knowledge about, ethnic aspects of identity is essential in order to incorporate such aspects in one's clinical practice.

The present study suggests no significant relationship between psychological wellbeing and ethnic identity or self-identified ethnicity. However, as there are several limitations of this study, replication studies are required, preferably using a larger and more diverse sample regarding age, gender and occupational status. In the light of the current findings it would also be valuable to further explore how socio-demographic variables such as age, gender, social and parental factors are related to ethnic identity and self-identified ethnicity. It is also

recommended to assess different ethnic groups separately alternatively performing subgroup analyses.

Prior to this study no version of ethnic identity measures had been translated and validated in a Swedish context. The preliminary validation analyses of the Swedish language version of the MEIM-R indicated that the measurement has adequate psychometric properties. Hence, the version used in this study should therefore be considered as valid to use in replications studies. However, the inconsistencies regarding factor structure imply that further assessment, using a large sample, is needed. Having a larger sample would also enable performing confirmatory factor analyses, which is preferable when assessing construct validity. Additionally, future research would benefit from a more diverse sample concerning gender, age and occupational status, as it increases the utility of the measurement. It would also be valuable to examine the convergent validity of the Swedish language version of the MEIM-R, perhaps using other established measurement such as Ethnic Identity Scale (EIS).

This study is strictly descriptive and no claims of causality are being made. To gain further understanding of the relationship between ethnic identity, self-identified ethnicity, psychological wellbeing and perhaps other important outcome variables, such as self-esteem and perceived discrimination, future research also should include longitudinal studies. A longitudinal approach would also help to clarify the inconsistencies regarding the progression of identity formation, determining whether the development is linear or rather a dynamic process.

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Appendix A



LUNDS UNIVERSITET
Institutionen för psykologi
Psykologprogrammet

Hej!

Den här enkäten är en del av en examensuppsats på Psykologprogrammet vid Lunds universitet som handlar om etnisk identitet. Studien syftar till att undersöka i vilken utsträckning unga vuxna med utländsk bakgrund upplever känsla av tillhörighet och gemenskap till sitt etniska ursprung.

Din medverkan är frivillig och helt anonym. Resultaten kommer att presenteras på gruppnivå och enkäterna innehåller varken namn eller andra identifierande uppgifter. Du kan när som helst, utan att berätta varför, avbryta din medverkan. Du har också valet att låta bli att svara på frågor som ingår i undersökningen. Har du frågor eller synpunkter om enkäten är du välkommen att höra av till mig på mailadressen nedan. Är du intresserad av att få läsa mer om resultaten kommer uppsatsen att finnas tillgänglig på Lunds universitets hemsida.

Tusen tack för din medverkan!

Julia Persson
Julia.persson.422@student.lu.se

Allmänna frågor om dig och din bakgrund

1. Ålder : _____ år

2. Könstillhörighet: _____

3. Sysselsättning:

Studerar

Arbetar

Arbetslös

Föräldraledig

Sjukskriven

Annat (specificera): _____

4. Är du född i Sverige?

Nej

Ja (fortsätt till fråga 7)

5. I vilket land är du född?

6. Hur länge har du bott i Sverige? _____ år

7. I vilket/vilka land/länder är din/dina vårdnadshavare född?

8. Min vårdnadshavare har varit

Mina föräldrar

Mina adoptivföräldrar

Andra (t.ex. nära släkting)

Alla människor har en etnisk tillhörighet. Exempel på etnisk tillhörighet är spansk, somalisk eller svensk. Vilken etnisk tillhörighet man uppfattar sig ha bestämmer man själv. En person kan ha flera etniska tillhörigheter.

9. Vilken etnisk tillhörighet uppfattar du själv att du har (vilka är viktiga för dig som person)?

10. Hur skulle du beskriva den etniska tillhörigheten bland dina nuvarande vänner?

- Helt skild från din
- Ganska skild från din
- Ganska lik din
- Helt och hållet samma som din

11. Där jag bor finns..

- Nästan bara människor med utländsk bakgrund
- Mest människor med utländsk bakgrund
- Ungefär lika många människor med utländsk bakgrund som människor som inte har utländsk bakgrund
- Få människor med utländsk bakgrund
- Nästan ingen med utländsk bakgrund

Följande frågor handlar om ditt etniska ursprung och dina tankar och känslor gällande din etnicitet.

12. Jag har lagt tid på att försöka ta reda på mer om min etnicitet, dess historia, traditioner och seder

- Instämmer helt
- Instämmer delvis
- Instämmer inte
- Instämmer inte alls

13. Jag har en stark känsla av tillhörighet till mitt etniska ursprung

- Instämmer helt
- Instämmer delvis
- Instämmer inte
- Instämmer inte alls

14. Jag förstår ganska väl vad min etniska tillhörighet betyder för mig.

- Instämmer helt
- Instämmer delvis
- Instämmer inte
- Instämmer inte alls

15. Jag har ofta gjort saker som hjälper mig att bättre förstå min etniska bakgrund.

- Instämmer helt
- Instämmer delvis
- Instämmer inte
- Instämmer inte alls

16. Jag har ofta talat med andra människor för att lära sig mer om mitt etniska ursprung

- Instämmer helt
- Instämmer delvis
- Instämmer inte
- Instämmer inte alls

17. Jag känner en stark anknytning till min etnicitet

- Instämmer helt
- Instämmer delvis
- Instämmer inte
- Instämmer inte alls

Vi vill veta hur Du känt Dig under de senaste veckorna:

18. Jag har kunnat koncentrera mig på det jag gör

- Stämmer helt
- Stämmer bra
- Stämmer delvis
- Stämmer inte alls

19. Jag har haft svårt att sova på grund av problem och svårigheter

- Stämmer helt
- Stämmer bra
- Stämmer delvis
- Stämmer inte alls

20. Jag har känt att jag spelar en betydelsefull roll för andra

- Stämmer helt
- Stämmer bra
- Stämmer delvis
- Stämmer inte alls

21. Jag har känt mig kapabel att fatta beslut

- Stämmer helt
- Stämmer bra
- Stämmer delvis
- Stämmer inte alls

22. Jag har känt mig väldigt pressad

- Stämmer helt
- Stämmer bra
- Stämmer delvis
- Stämmer inte alls

23. Jag har haft svårt att klara av de dagliga problemen

- Stämmer helt
- Stämmer bra
- Stämmer delvis
- Stämmer inte alls

24. Jag har kunnat uppskatta det positiva i tillvaron

- Stämmer helt
- Stämmer bra
- Stämmer delvis
- Stämmer inte alls

25. Jag har kunnat ta itu med svårigheter

- Stämmer helt
- Stämmer bra
- Stämmer delvis
- Stämmer inte alls

26. Jag har känt mig olycklig och nedstämd

- Stämmer helt
- Stämmer bra
- Stämmer delvis
- Stämmer inte alls

27. Jag har känt att mitt självförtroende har minskat

- Stämmer helt
- Stämmer bra
- Stämmer delvis
- Stämmer inte alls

28. Jag har tänkt på mig själv som en betydelselös person

- Stämmer helt
- Stämmer bra
- Stämmer delvis
- Stämmer inte alls

29. Jag har känt mig ganska lycklig, på det hela taget

- Stämmer helt
- Stämmer bra
- Stämmer delvis
- Stämmer inte alls

30. Eventuella kommentarer gällande frågeformuläret:
