

Ethnicity and Ethnic-racialized Identity in Swedish Educational Contexts

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Avhandlingen för avläggande av filosofie doktorsexamen i psykologi, som med vederbörligt tillstånd av samhällsvetenskapliga fakultetsstyrelsen vid Göteborgs universitet kommer att offentligens försvaras torsdagen den 12 juni 2025, klockan 10:00 i sal F1, Psykologiska institutionen, Haraldsgatan 1, Göteborg.

Fakultetsopponent: Professor Lisa Kiang, Wake Forest University, USA

Föreliggande uppsats grundar sig på följande artiklar:

- I. Abdullahi, A. K., Berne, S., Juang, L. P., & Friséen, A. (2024). Framing Ethnicity in Initial Teacher Education: A Focus Group Study with Student Teachers. *Identity*, 24(4), 269–287.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/15283488.2024.2366905>
- II. Abdullahi, A. K., Syed, M., Juang, L. P., Berne, S., Hwang, C. P., & Friséen, A. (2024). Evaluating a School-Based Intervention on Adolescents' Ethnic-racial Identity in Sweden. *Journal of Youth and Adolescence*, 53, 2423–2442. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10964-024-02046-y>
- III. Abdullahi, A. K., Juang, L. P., Syed, M., & Friséen, A. (2025). *Psychosocial and Academic Outcomes of an Ethnic-racial Identity Intervention in Sweden*. Manuscript submitted for publication.



Abstract

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The aim of this thesis was to address ethnicity and ethnic-racialized identity in Swedish educational contexts. First, to gain a contextualized understanding of how ethnicity is addressed in a relevant educational context, **Study I** ($N = 42$) explored student teachers' experiences of how ethnicity is framed in initial teacher education, an important educational context that prepares future teachers of adolescents. The findings showed that student teachers experienced that ethnicity was framed as something that concerns minoritized "others". Furthermore, they experienced that "others" were framed through a focus on problems and lack of skills, and as resources in initial teacher education. Ethnicity was also framed as something sensitive, which related to student teachers' fears of engaging in ethnicity-related discussions and related to expressions of racism in initial teacher education. Second, to contribute to the limited psychological research on ethnic-racialized identity in Sweden, and to the limited intervention research on how to support youth ethnic-racialized identity development, **Study II** ($N = 509$) examined whether a school-based intervention, the Identity Project, could impact ethnic-racialized identity process components (exploration participation, exploration search, and resolution) and content components (private regard and centrality). Study II indicated that the intervention had an initial positive and simultaneous effect on exploration participation and resolution, and only affected the long-term trajectory of change for exploration participation. The intervention did not have an impact on the process component exploration search or on the content components private regard and centrality. Furthermore, the intervention effects did not differ for youth with minoritized and majoritized backgrounds. Third, expanding on Study II, **Study III** ($N = 509$) examined if the intervention could impact adolescents' psychosocial and academic adjustment through the processes of exploration participation and resolution, and examined whether the intervention moderated the relationship between resolution and later psychosocial and academic adjustment. Study III indicated that the intervention had a positive indirect effect on adolescents' psychosocial and academic adjustment through ethnic-racialized identity resolution, but not through exploration participation. Consequently, only resolution was a mechanism toward better youth adjustment. The positive associations between resolution and youth adjustment did not differ between the intervention and control group or between youth with minoritized and majoritized backgrounds. Thus, Study III suggests that the positive links between resolution and youth adjustment may be a normative part of adolescence. Taken together, this thesis contributes with empirical knowledge concerning adolescents' ethnic-racialized identity development, presents mixed evidence of a school-based intervention on adolescents' ethnic-racialized identity, and highlights potential challenges regarding how ethnicity is framed in the educational contexts that prepare their future teachers.

Keywords: ethnicity, identity, ethnic-racial identity, adolescence, school context, teacher education, intervention, psychosocial outcomes, academic outcomes

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