

THAT'S HOW PEOPLE GROW UP

Identity Formation in Emerging Adulthood

Maria Wängqvist



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Department of Psychology
University of Gothenburg, 2013

Printed in Sweden by Ale Tryckteam
Cover image created at www.tagxedo.com

ISBN 978-91-628-8666-0
ISSN 1101-718X
ISRN GU/PSYK/AVH--273—SE

Electronic version available at: <http://hdl.handle.net/2077/32508>

Abstract

Wängqvist, M (2013). *That's How People Grow Up: Identity Formation in Emerging Adulthood*. Department of Psychology, University of Gothenburg, Sweden.

The overall aim of this thesis was to study emerging adults' identity formation and its relationship to other aspects of their psychosocial development and living situations. The three studies of this thesis examined how young people dealt with identity issues and how this was related to other aspects of their development, living situation, and larger socio-cultural context. The focus of **study I** was on how identity issues concerning love, work, and family were handled, and how identity formation was related to occupational contexts and to involvement in a romantic relationship. The study is based on interviews with 136 people aged 25 years (68 women and 68 men). Fewer than half of the emerging adults had made identity-defining commitments after first having explored various alternatives (i.e., identity achievement). However, it was less common for people to explore issues of parenthood and romantic relationships than it was to explore occupational choices and work/family priorities. The results indicated that people with achieved identities were more likely to be in a long-term romantic relationship than those who had neither explored identity issues nor made any identity-defining commitments (i.e., identity diffusion). Additionally, the participants in the identity diffusion group were less likely to be enrolled in university education, whereas this was common in the identity achievement group. More women than men were coded as identity achieved, whereas more men than women were coded as identity diffused. The results indicated that people's positions in the identity formation process may vary depending on identity issues, social context, and gender. In **Study II**, the aim was to explore the relationship between identity formation, psychological symptoms, and identity distress. The study group was the same as in Study I. Individuals involved in a process of active exploration (i.e., moratorium) experienced more distress from psychological symptoms and identity issues than did those who were not exploring their identities. A mediational model indicated that the identity exploration that signify emerging adulthood can be accompanied by psychological symptoms, but that this association may be mediated by the experience of distress over identity issues. The results indicated that vulnerability and distress may accompany normative development in emerging adulthood. The study demonstrated that it may not always be distressing not to deal with identity issues, as the participants in the identity diffusion group had levels of distress as low as those of participants with established commitments. In **Study III**, identity formation and its associations with body-esteem and body ideal internalization were investigated. A total of 714 people aged 18 years (394 women and 320 men) participated in the study. For women more exploration of interpersonal identity issues and stronger interpersonal identity commitments were related to more positive views of what others thought about their appearance. However, more interpersonal identity exploration was also related to more internalization of body ideals. For men, stronger interpersonal identity commitments were related to a more positive view about their appearance in general. Moreover, women explored identity issues more, had lower body-esteem, and internalized body ideals more than did men. Study III demonstrated that identity formation with regard to interpersonal identity issues was related to the 18-year-olds' feelings about appearance and internalization of body ideals. In sum, this thesis demonstrated that identity formation was related to the social contexts of love and work, that the uncertainty about identity issues might be associated with psychological distress, and that identity formation and certain aspects of body image appear to be related.

Key Words: Identity formation, Occupation, Romantic relationships, Psychological distress; Body image, Gender issues, Emerging adulthood

LIST OF PUBLICATIONS

The thesis is based on a summary of the following papers, referred to in the text by their roman numerals.

- I. Frisé, A., & Wängqvist, M. (2011). Emerging adults in Sweden: Identity formation in the light of love, work and family. *Journal of Adolescent Research*, 26, 200–221. doi: 10.1177/0743558410376829
- II. Wängqvist, M., & Frisé, A. (2011). Identity and psychological distress in emerging adulthood in Sweden: Is it always distressing not to know who to be and what to do? *Identity: An International Journal of Theory and Research*, 11, 93–113. doi: 10.1080/15283488.2011.560803
- III. Wängqvist, M., & Frisé, A. (in press). Swedish 18-year-olds' identity formation: Associations with feelings about appearance and internalization of body ideals. *Journal of Adolescence*. doi: 10.1016/j.adolescence.2013.02.002

SVENSK SAMMANFATTNING

Identitetsutveckling har beskrivits som det som sker när människor går från en barndomsposition där de tas om hand av andra till en vuxenposition där de kan ta hand om sig själva och andra. På så vis hänger identitetsutvecklingen nära samman med vuxenblivandet. En del av de sociala förändringar som skett i många västerländska länder under senare år har lett till att inträdet i traditionella vuxna roller som till exempel att påbörja ett yrkesliv eller att få barn och familj nu sker allt senare. Därför kan man tala om att vuxenblivandet har blivit uppskjutet, vilket i sin tur har lett till att en period av identitetsutforskande och instabilitet ofta pågår under en stor del av tjugooårsåldern. Detta är några av orsakerna till att det blivit allt vanligare att beskriva de unga vuxenåren som en särskild utvecklingsfas med särskilda utmaningar och kännetecken. Många unga vuxna känner att de befinner sig mittemellan tonåren och vuxenlivet – som om de är vuxna på vissa sätt, men inte på andra. De unga vuxenåren är också en period i livet som ofta kännetecknas av instabilitet till exempel när det kommer till relationer och yrke. Under den här perioden försöker många komma fram till vad de vill göra med sina liv och hur de vill att deras framtid skall se ut. När de tänker på vad som passar dem och hur de önskar att deras liv skall bli tänker de också på vilka de är – sin identitet. I dagens samhälle finns det en avsaknad av traditioner som styr vilka vägar unga har att följa. Detta leder till en ökad valfrihet men också till att ett allt större ansvar läggs på individen. Att komma på vem man är och vad man vill är stora och svåra frågor för många unga idag, samtidigt som en ökad individualisering gör att många upplever det som att de själva är ensamt ansvariga om de skulle misslyckas. Detta har stora konsekvenser för identitetsutvecklingen som i takt med att valen blir fler och mer komplexa blir allt mindre självklara och tar längre tid.

Identitetsskapandet handlar om hur människor får ihop de bilder de har av sig själva med hur andra upplever dem och den syn de har på sig själva i samhället. På så vis kan identitetsutvecklingen beskrivas som en interaktion mellan det personliga och det sociala. En etablerad identitetskänsla ger en känsla av sammanhang som kan beskrivas som en upplevelse av kontinuitet med det förflutna, riktning för framtiden och

mening i nuet. Trots de olika roller människor kan ha i olika sammanhang och i olika stadier i livet så ger identiteten en inre känsla av att vara sig lik och av att känna igen sig själv. En viktig del av identitetsskapandet är att hitta sociala sammanhang som passar de personliga egenskaperna, önskningarna och behoven och där man blir sedd och uppskattad av andra. Att integrera sin kroppsuppfattning i identitetskänslan är en annan viktig del av identitetsutvecklingen då den egna kroppen har betydelse för bilden man har av sig själv och sin plats bland andra. Den framväxande identiteten leder således till en känsla av att veta vem man är och vart man är på väg, av att känna sig hemma i sin kropp, och av att känna att man har en plats i samhället och bland de människor som är viktiga för en.

Det övergripande syftet med den här avhandlingen var att studera unga vuxnas identitetsutveckling och hur denna är relaterad till andra aspekter av deras utveckling och livssituation. Ett sätt att studera identitetsutveckling är med hjälp av Marcias identitetsstatusmodell. Utifrån denna modell undersöks om personen har utforskat olika alternativ och fattat beslut beträffande olika identitetsfrågor. Man tänker sig att en persons position när det kommer till dessa processer av utforskande och beslutsfattande reflekterar personens underliggande identitetskänsla, det vill säga hur långt personen har kommit i arbetet med att försöka " hitta sig själv" eller svara på frågan "vem är jag?" I Marcias modell beskrivs fyra olika identitetspositioner: Begreppet uppnådd identitet används för att beskriva personer som har fattat identitetsdefinierande beslut efter att först ha utforskat olika alternativ, medan moratorium beskriver identitetsutvecklingen hos personer som är mitt i ett aktivt utforskande av olika möjliga riktningar. Begreppet för tidig identitet används för att beskriva en identitetsutvecklingsposition där personen har bestämt sig för en riktning, men besluten har inte föregåtts av något utforskande av olika alternativ. Slutligen används begreppet diffus identitet för att beskriva identitetsutvecklingen hos personer som inte har fattat några personligt grundade beslut, men som inte heller är inbegripna i något aktivt utforskande för att nå fram till sådana beslut. Marcias identitetsstatusmodell är utgångspunkten för mycket av den forskning som rör ungdomar och unga vuxnas identitetsutveckling och det perspektiv på identitetsutvecklingen som delstudierna i den här avhandlingen utgår ifrån. Sammantaget visade de tre studierna hur unga vuxna hanterade identitetsfrågor på olika sätt och hur deras identitetsutveckling var relaterad till deras sociala sammanhang när det kom till kärlek och arbete, hur de mådde och hur de kände inför sina kroppar och samhällets kroppsideal.

Fokus för den första studien, **Studie I**, var hur identitetsfrågor rörande kärlek, arbete och arbete/familj prioriteringar hanterades och hur identitetsutvecklingen var relaterad till de unga vuxnas sociala sammanhang vad gäller kärlek och arbete. Studien bygger på intervjuer med 136 25-åringar (68 kvinnor och 68 män). Resultaten visade att knappt hälften av de unga vuxna hade nått identitetsdefinierande ställningstagande efter att först ha utforskat olika alternativ (dvs. uppnådd identitet). Dessutom var det ovanligare att deltagarna utforskade frågor rörande föräldraskap och kärleksrelationer än det var att de utforskade frågor om yrkesval och arbete/familj prioriteringar. De som hade en uppnådd identitet var oftare involverade i en långsiktig kärleksrelation än de som varken hade utforskat sin identitet eller fattat några identitetsdefinierande beslut (dvs. diffus identitet). Att vara eller ha varit student tidigare var också ovanligare i gruppen med diffus identitet, medan att vara student var vanligt i gruppen med uppnådd identitet. Det framkom också skillnader mellan män och kvinnor vad gäller deras position i identitetsutvecklingen. En uppnådd identitet var det vanligaste bland kvinnorna för de flesta av identitetsfrågorna, medan vilken identitetsposition som var vanligast bland männen varierade mellan de olika identitetsfrågorna. Resultaten visade att det var vanligare bland kvinnorna än bland männen att de hade nått ställningstagande efter en period av aktivt utforskande (uppnådd identitet), medan det var fler män än kvinnor i positionen där de varken utforskat olika alternativ eller nått fram till några identitetsdefinierande beslut (diffus identitet). Sammantaget visade resultaten att positionen i identitetsutvecklingen kan variera beroende på olika identitetsfrågor, sociala sammanhang och kön.

I **Studie II** undersöktes hur de olika identitetspositionerna var relaterad till psykologiska besvär i form av psykologiska symptom och hur mycket man besvärades av identitetsfrågor. Deltagarna var desamma som i Studie I. Resultaten visade att personer som var inbegripna i ett aktivt utforskande (dvs. moratorium) upplevde mer psykologiska besvär både vad gällde psykologiska symptom och identitetsbesvär än personerna i de övriga identitetspositionerna. Resultaten visade också på sambandsmönster som tydde på att identitetsbesvär kan erbjuda en förklaring till varför identitetsutforskande är förknippat med psykologiska symptom. Det vill säga: identitetsutforskande kan leda till att identitetsbesvär vilket i sin tur kan leda till förhöjda besvär av psykologiska symptom. Studien visade på den sårbarhet som kan hänga samman med identitetsutvecklingen i de unga vuxenåren. Däremot tydde resultaten på att det inte behöver vara

besvärande att inte alls fundera över identitetsfrågor i de unga vuxenåren, då de med diffus identitet varken hade högre grad av psykologiska symtom eller identitetsbesvär än de som hade etablerade ställningstaganden (dvs. uppnådd och för tidig identitet).

Studie III handlade om identitetsutveckling och dess relation till kroppsuppfattning och förhållningssätt till kroppsideal. Sammantaget deltog 714 personer i studien (394 kvinnor och 320 män) varav de flesta gick sista terminen på gymnasiet. De 18-åriga deltagarna i den här studien befann sig sålunda på tröskeln till de unga vuxenåren. Studien visade på att det fanns samband mellan identitetsutveckling och kroppsuppfattning och förhållningssätt till ideal. Sambanden gällde för utforskande och ställningstaganden rörande de interpersonella identitetsfrågorna, som i den här studien handlade om vänskapsrelationer, kärleksrelationer, roll i familjen och könsroller. Det framkom inga samband mellan kroppsuppfattning och förhållningssätt till ideal och de ideologiska identitetsfrågorna, som handlade om yrkesval, politik, religion och värderingar. För kvinnor var både mer utforskande av, och starkare ställningstaganden till de interpersonella identitetsfrågorna relaterat till en mer positiv uppfattning om hur andra tycker att de ser ut, medan mer utforskande av samma frågor även hängde samman med att i större utsträckning ha gjort samhälleliga ideal till sina egna (dvs. internalisering av kroppsideal). För män var starkare ställningstaganden inom de interpersonella identitetsfrågorna associerat med en mer positiv egen uppfattning av sitt utseende. Dessutom framkom det att kvinnor utforskade samtliga identitetsfrågor mer än vad männen gjorde, men i synnerhet de interpersonella frågorna. Samt att kvinnor hade sämre kroppsuppfattning och i större utsträckning internaliserade samhälleliga kroppsideal än vad männen gjorde. Sålunda visade Studie III på ett samband mellan interpersonell identitetsutveckling och kroppsuppfattning och internalisering av ideal och på att det fanns skillnader mellan män och kvinnor vad gällde identitetsutveckling, kroppsuppfattning och internalisering av ideal.

Avslutningsvis kan både utforskande och ställningstaganden vad gäller identiteten ses som sätt på vilka människor tar sig an frågan ”Vem är jag?”. Identiteten skulle kunna beskrivas som svaret på den frågan vid en given tidpunkt, medan identitetsutvecklingen är själva processen av att fråga och söka efter ett integrerat svar på frågan ”Vem är jag?”. Frågan kan låta enkel men den är både komplex och på ett djupt plan existentiell, då den handlar om vår syn på oss själva och vår plats i världen. Resultaten i

den här avhandlingen visade på hur identitetsutvecklingen är en pågående process i de unga vuxenåren och att det är en process där den individuella utvecklingen oundvikligen står i interaktion med den sociala och kulturella kontexten. Avhandlingen visade också på hur identitetsutvecklingen hängde samman med andra aspekter av de unga vuxnas utveckling, såsom deras sociala sammanhang vad gäller kärlek och arbete, psykologiska besvär, kroppsuppfattning och hur de förhöll sig till samhälleliga skönhetsideal. Dessutom visade resultaten från alla tre studierna på att utvecklingen i de unga vuxenåren till viss del påverkas av kön. Dessa könsskillnader utgör ytterligare ett exempel på hur de socio-kulturella sammanhangen interagerar med den personliga utvecklingen. Identitetsutvecklingen är högst relevant för unga vuxna idag och den är relaterad till andra aspekter av deras utveckling, levnadssituation och sociala och kulturella sammanhang. Svaren på frågan ”Vem är jag?” må vara mer eller mindre temporära, men både svaren och själva frågandet är centrala aspekter av utvecklingen i de unga vuxenåren.

PREFACE AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

First and foremost my thanks go to my supervisor, Professor Ann Frisén. You are a great role model in so many ways. To work with you has been one of the greatest benefits of being a PhD-student. The sense of clarity and enthusiasm with which I always leave our meetings is such a luxury and maybe the best evidence of what a great supervisor you are. Thank you for believing in me and for giving me the opportunity to start an academic career under your supervision. I look forward to our continued collaborations!

To Professor Philip Hwang: Formally your role has changed throughout my time as a PhD-student, but your invaluable support has remained the same. Your knowledge of the work process and your sense of timing when offering advice are impressive. Thank you!

My sincere gratitude goes to Dr Carolina Lunde, my co-supervisor, for good advice and nice company and to Kristina Holmqvist who guided me through my first time as a PhD-student and who has been a support ever since. To Johanna Carlsson: work has been so much more fun since you became my fellow PhD-student in the GoLD-project. I am excited to follow your continued work in the project and very happy to be part of some of it. To Sofia Berne: Some twelve years ago we started the psychologist program together. Since then you have been a friend. In the past few years you have also been a valued colleague. Your wisdom, humor, and enthusiasm make my day. Thank you! I would also like to thank the other members of GRéY: Sofia Bengtsdotter, Fanny Gyberg, and Linda Olsson-Olavarria. I am very happy to be part of our research group.

Thanks to all the PhD-students with whom I have shared this experience and to my other colleagues at the Department of Psychology who have shared their experience and offered stimulating conversations and a friendly atmosphere. Especially my thanks go to Ann Backlund for calmly answering all my questions about life as a PhD-student and Professor Annika Dahlgren Sandberg for her support as the examiner of my thesis work.

Many people have also contributed to this work by reading and commenting on parts of the thesis and by offering advice on various topics

related to the studies in the thesis. In particular my thanks go to Professor Jeffrey Jensen Arnett, Professor Linda Haas, Professor Jane Kroger, Professor James Marcia, Professor Joseph Schaller, Professor Ann-Charlotte Smedler, and Professor Alan Waterman. Your advice has been very valuable.

My deepest gratitude goes to the participants in both the GoLD- and the MOS-project who enabled this research. I would also like to thank Peter Breife, Helena Renström, and Emma Salander for assistance with the data collection and the start-up of the eight wave of the GoLD-project. Grants from the Swedish Council for Working Life and Social Research financially supported this research.

I also want to thank my mother, father, brother, sister, grandmother and the rest of my close family and relatives for support and encouragement. You mean the world to me. Especially, I want to thank my mother who is always close and also a great support in helping us deal with the work/family balance.

My thanks also go to my extended family, Linda, Erik, Nathalie, and Sixten. These years would have been so much less fun without you and your cheers and encouragements! To the rest of my friends, who are always supportive and proud—thank you. Kroko-joggers and Monday-dancers thank you for all the fun, hard work, nice conversations, and for listening patiently to my ups and downs throughout this process.

Finally, I want to thank my family by telling a story. Here goes... In order to finish this thesis I went to France for a week, all alone. On the plane over there I thought about how I in my early emerging adult years went there for a year, all alone. Then I was driven by the wish that something or anything would happen. Now, I passed over the same Alps hoping to find a place where nothing would happen. I was thinking that maybe that's what emerging adulthood does to you. It makes you search and struggle and go to many different places, and if you're lucky it leaves you with a life so rich and full of happenings that in order to get some work done you need to go back to where it started. Only this time people call you Madame. At least, that's what emerging adulthood did to me. So, to Ivar, Vilgot, and Filip, with all the love in my heart, thank you for keeping me busy, and thank you for granting me the luxury of getting some writing done once in a while. Work is done. I love you!

Maria Wängqvist
Gothenburg, 2013

CONTENTS

| | |
|---|----|
| INTRODUCTION | 1 |
| THE LATE TEENS AND THE TWENTIES | 3 |
| The theory of emerging adulthood | 3 |
| Prolonged transitions to adulthood | 5 |
| Views of adulthood | 7 |
| Growing up in late modern society | 8 |
| IDENTITY FORMATION | 11 |
| Erikson's theory of identity formation | 11 |
| The identity status model | 14 |
| Identity research in Sweden | 20 |
| Identity formation and gender | 22 |
| Identity formation and aspects of love and work | 23 |
| Identity formation and psychological distress | 27 |
| Identity formation and body image | 31 |
| GENERAL AIM | 34 |
| SUMMARY OF THE STUDIES | 35 |
| Study I | 35 |
| Study II | 38 |
| Study III | 40 |
| GENERAL DISCUSSION | 42 |
| Global identity status distributions | 42 |
| Identity formation in different life areas | 44 |
| Identity formation and romantic relationships | 46 |
| Identity formation and occupational contexts | 47 |
| Identity formation and psychological distress | 50 |
| Identity formation and body image | 52 |
| Identity formation and gender | 54 |
| Methodological discussion | 57 |
| Conclusions | 62 |
| REFERENCES | 64 |
| APPENDIX | 77 |

INTRODUCTION

Social changes in recent decades have delayed the transition to adulthood in many Western countries. For example, it takes longer for young people to establish themselves on the housing and labor markets and people become parents increasingly later. These changes mean that today a period of identity exploration and instability may last well into the twenties. The period from the late teens through the twenties has been labeled emerging adulthood (Arnett, 2000). In emerging adulthood it is common to feel in-between adolescence and adulthood. Many emerging adults feel like adults in some ways but not others. It is also a period of life that may be characterized by instability in terms of love, work, and living conditions. During this time many people are trying to figure out what they want to do with their lives and what they want from the future. When thinking about what might suite them and how they want their lives to turn out they are also thinking about who they are—their identities.

The formation of a sense of identity is an ongoing process as it involves peoples' integration of their ideas about who they are and how they are mirrored in the eyes of others, as well as their views of themselves within society. Identity formation can be described as the processes by which people make sense of the interaction between their individual dispositions and their social contexts. A sense of identity leads to feelings of continuity between the past, present, and future (Erikson, 1968). Though a person may have different roles in different contexts and different ages the identity offers an inner sense of continuity and self-recognition. Moreover, an important aspect of establishing a sense of identity is to find social contexts in which personal traits, wishes, and needs may be expressed and recognized by others. The integration of one's body image into one's sense of identity is another important aspect of identity formation. Therefore, the evolving sense of identity leads people to feel that they know who they are and where they are heading in life, that they are at home in their body, and that there is a place for them in society and among the people who are important to them.

Identity formation has been described as what happens when people move from a childhood position in which they are taken care of to an adult position in which they can take care of themselves and others (Marcia, 1994a). Today, identity formation is both central and complicated for many emerging adults. This thesis, accordingly, attempts to advance the understanding of the many ways in which people grow up and try to construct a sense of identity that offers direction and fit their views of themselves and their social contexts. The general aim is to shed light on the identity formation that takes place in emerging adulthood. A specific focus in this thesis is on how young people's identity formation is related to their social contexts with regard to love and work, the psychological distress they may experience, and how they feel about their bodies and societal body ideals.

To set the stage for the results of the three studies of this thesis, major features of the period from the late teens through the twenties will be described, followed by an overview of theory and research on identity formation. The relationships between identity formation and young peoples' romantic relationships, occupational contexts, psychological distress, and body image concerns are also described in this part. After the section with theory and previous research there is a summary of the three studies, followed by a general discussion of the results.

THE LATE TEENS AND THE TWENTIES

Today, it is common to talk about people in their twenties as a specific group and several labels have been given to this age group. However, ideas about what psychological challenges are characteristic of this period and what ages it encompasses vary. For example, some developmental psychologists talk about early adulthood and describe this as the ages between 20 and 40 (e.g., Berk, 2010) or 23 and 40 years (e.g., Kroger, 2007a). Various definitions are also used in the Swedish context; for example, the Swedish National Board of Youth Affairs often uses the term “youth” when describing people aged 16–29 years (e.g., The Swedish National Board of Youth Affairs, 2007), whereas the National Board of Health and Welfare describes people aged 16–24 years as “young adults” (e.g., The National Board of Health and Welfare, 2008). These examples indicate that there is no consensus on how to describe and define the years from the late teens through the twenties. Moreover, different age-spans and labels also have different connotations. In an attempt to develop a theoretical base for research into the challenges and characteristics of young people today, Arnett (2000) formulated the theory of emerging adulthood. Emerging adulthood is often defined as the ages from 18 to 25 years (Arnett, 2000), but the emerging adult age-span is likely to vary between both individuals and cultures (Arnett, 2012). Emerging adulthood differs from both adolescence and adulthood, and it is argued that it should not be described as a mere prolongation of adolescence or transition to adulthood (Arnett, 2000, 2006). Because it encompasses a theory of development emerging adulthood is the term used in this thesis to refer to young people in their late teens and twenties.

The theory of emerging adulthood

Some of the words used when characterizing people in their twenties are: unsettled, exciting, high hopes, struggle, big dreams, uncertainty, confusion, possibilities, and anxiety (Arnett, 2006). These words capture

many of the things that signify the personal development occurring in emerging adulthood, as it is described as a time of instability, identity exploration, feeling in-between, self-focus, and possibilities (Arnett, 2006).

Emerging adulthood is described as a time of instability because of the demographic variability in this period. What emerging adults do for a living as well as how they live and who they live with vary greatly between individuals (Arnett, 2000). In emerging adulthood, several types of accommodations are common, as well a variety of daily activities. People may live with their parents, with romantic partners, with friends, alone, or in a dorm. Similarly, people may work, study, be unemployed, or travel. The instability in emerging adulthood is related to it being a time of identity exploration (Arnett, 2006). Emerging adulthood is, thus, also described as a time of identity exploration, exploration to find a future direction in love and work and to gain personal experience. Moreover, it is common for emerging adults to feel in-between. When given the opportunity, most emerging adults chose to answer “in some ways yes and in some ways no” to describe whether or not they feel that they have reached adulthood (e.g., Arnett, 1997; Nelson, 2009; Nelson & Barry, 2005; Sirch, Dreher, Mayr, & Willinger, 2009). This illustrates the subjective experience of emerging adults that, although no longer adolescents, they do not feel entirely like adults. Without the daily support of either a future family or their family of origin, emerging adults are largely on their own in terms of making decisions about their lives (Arnett, 2006). Emerging adulthood is therefore described as a time of self-focus. In developing the theory of emerging adulthood, Arnett (2000, 2007) wanted to balance what he felt were overly negative views of emerging adulthood as merely a time of suffering, crisis, and agony (cf. Robbins & Wilner, 2001; Twenge, 2006). Therefore, in formulating the theory of emerging adulthood, he emphasized that it is also a time of possibilities. Because emerging adults are relatively unaffected by role expectations, emerging adulthood is described as a time when young people have the opportunity to change the course of their lives in significant ways (Arnett, 2006). That young people today have more choices than ever before may lead to greater opportunities and hopefulness towards the future (Arnett, 2006), but greater choice also entails new responsibilities, new concerns, and greater risks. Nevertheless, according to the theory of emerging adulthood, as emerging adults have yet to choose their future direction emerging adulthood is a time accompanied by the feeling that many opportunities are still available.

In short, socio-cultural change has altered the conditions facing young people in the years from the late teens through the twenties as well as their subjective experience of what it means to become adults. All this makes emerging adulthood a time of identity formation.

Prolonged transitions to adulthood

The main reason why emerging adulthood stands out as a specific phase in people's life course is the prolonged transition to adulthood seen in most industrial and post-industrial countries (e.g., Arnett, 1998; Shanahan, 2000). This delayed entry into adult roles, which is assumed to affect the identity formation of young people (Arnett, 2000, 2006) is evident in Swedish society as well.

First of all, in Sweden, the median age at which people have their first child has increased by five years over a 40-year period. The average age of first-time parents in Sweden is now 29 years for women and 31 years for men (Statistics Sweden, 2012b). The proportion of parents among 25-year-olds was 21% for women and 10% for men in 2011, which means that it is no longer normative for people to enter into parenthood in their mid-twenties. In a Swedish study that asked men and women why they had not yet become parents, some of the major themes evident in their answers were that they did not feel sufficiently mature and that they had other things they wanted to do first (Statistics Sweden, 2009b). Hence, in Sweden, as in many other countries, the entry into parenthood has been delayed, and this appears to be related to young peoples' ideas about what they want to do and achieve before they become parents.

Besides the later entry into parenthood, there have been other changes in the conditions facing young people in Sweden today. These changes also affect what it means to be in the twenties in this particular context. For example, emerging adults' financial dependence on both parents and society has been prolonged. This delayed financial independence is due both to young people's later establishment on the labor market and to their difficulties affording independent accommodation on the housing market. An indication of the difficulties young people face in establishing themselves on the labor market is that the proportion of unemployed individuals is substantially larger among 15–24-year-olds than in the Swedish population as a whole (Statistics Sweden, 2012a). Also related to this delayed entry into the labor market is the fact that university

studies are common. In 2008 39% of 25-year-olds had a post-secondary education (Statistics Sweden, 2009a). The prolonged transition to adulthood is also related to emerging adults' difficulties on the housing market. These difficulties are particularly evident for those living in Sweden's three largest cities (Statistics Sweden, 2008), but appear in other regions as well (The Swedish National Board of Housing, Building and Planning, 2012). Three out of ten 20–25-year-olds now live in their parents' home (The Swedish National Board of Youth Affairs, 2012), and in 2008, the median age for moving out was 20.7 years for women and 21.6 years for men (Statistics Sweden, 2008). Thus, more time spent in education and insecure labor and housing markets for young people contribute to forming a context of postponed transition to adulthood in Sweden and in many other industrial or postindustrial societies.

Moreover, in cultures where youth is idealized, adult life may seem less appealing. Therefore, the idealization of youth in today's society has also been emphasized as a reason why the transition to adulthood has been delayed (Jacobsson, 2005). The idealization of youth is particularly evident in terms of body image, as aging is often seen as something that increases the discrepancy between the real body and societal, as well as personal, body ideals (e.g., Bulik, 2012; Persson, 2010). Other norms that govern the ideals and behaviors of young people may also be related to this idealization of youth. For example, emerging adults engage in exploration in order to expand their range of personal experience and explore who they are (Arnett, 2000); they also do so because they feel that they will not have opportunities to engage in certain types of activities later on (Ravert, 2009). The idea that there are things one needs to do now because later it will be too late is associated with the idealization of youth. How the norms of exploration and the idealization of youth can be combined is exemplified by the travel agency that sells a travel package designed for young people called "YOLO"—you only live once. As more young people are delaying their entry into adult roles, practices of personal exploration may establish and reinforce new norms, so that whether or not young people engage in exploration, they are still affected by the norms surrounding these practices.

Thoughts of having to become more mature before assuming adult roles and that there are things one must do now because when one is an adult it will be too late interact with demographic factors, such as delayed entry into the labor and housing markets and the postponement of parenthood, in delaying young people's assumption of traditional adult

roles. These changes also mean that what people think it means to be an adult or “grown up” is no longer obvious.

Views of adulthood

The idea of a developmental period between adolescence and adulthood raises the question of what the adulthood that young people are emerging into entails. What do emerging adults who do not feel like adolescents, but who also do not feel entirely like adults either, think it is to be an adult? First of all, young people’s conceptions of adulthood seem to involve more than just traditional and objective markers of adulthood (e.g., Arnett, 2001; Nelson & Barry, 2005), such as leaving upper-secondary education, entering into a long-term relationship, starting work, and becoming a parent (Shanahan, 2000). In Sweden, and many other countries, there are no clear rites of passage that mark the entry into adulthood; instead becoming an adult is largely constructed as a gradual, individual, and highly subjective transition. Studies of conceptions of adulthood support this individualistic, gradual, and subjective view of adulthood (e.g., Arnett, 1997; Nelson, 2009; Nelson & Barry, 2005; Sirch et al., 2009). The markers of adulthood rated as most important usually include accepting responsibility for your actions, making independent decisions, and becoming financially independent. Another indication of the conceptions of the adult transition as gradual and subjective is that emerging adults usually say that they feel adult in some ways but not in others (e.g., Arnett, 1997; Nelson, 2009; Nelson & Barry, 2005; Sirch et al., 2009). In line with international studies of conceptions of adulthood, a study of Swedish young people concluded that individual markers similar to the ones mentioned above were rated as most important to determine whether or not a person had reached adulthood (Westberg, 2004). Moreover, Westberg (2004) found that role transitions (e.g., finishing education and becoming a parent) and formal markers (e.g., reaching the legal age) were valued more highly by those who had not yet attained them. For example, people younger than 18 years (the legal age in Sweden) saw legal age as more important to becoming an adult than did people older than 18. This was true of all such markers except parenthood, which was valued more highly in the age groups with larger proportions of parents. Moreover, in legislation referring to formal markers of adulthood, the shift toward full adult responsibility is also gradual in Sweden: For example, at age 15, one has criminal responsibility, can legally consent to

sex, and can legally see adult-rated films. At age 18, one reaches the age of majority and has the right to vote. At age 20 one can purchase alcohol at the Swedish alcohol retail monopoly and enroll in the police academy (Trost, 2006). Thus, young peoples' views of adulthood, their views of themselves as partly adult, as well as the formal markers of adulthood reflect the gradual and subjective nature of becoming an adult in Sweden and in other Western cultures today.

Growing up in late modern society

Besides being conceived as something defined by individualistic criteria and achieved gradually, the adulthood that young people are emerging into is not necessarily seen as a target with positive connotations. Many emerging adults look towards adulthood with mixed and ambivalent feelings (Arnett, 2007). This ambivalence toward adulthood is signified by talk about “grown up points” (e.g., Söderström, 2009) and by the word “vuxenångest” (“growing up anxiety” or “adulthood anxiety”) which refers to the fear of growing up and becoming really, really boring. This ambivalence toward adulthood is also related to the view that there are things that need to be done during emerging adulthood because once adulthood sets in it will be too late. The drastic notion that you are “dead at 30 buried at 70” (Coupland, 1991, p. 34) is related to the negative view of adulthood as the time when people's personal development stops and nothing new happens to them. The idea that adulthood entails loss is illustrated in the following conversation between the romantic couple Morris and Betty in the novel *I need you more than I love you and I love you to bits*:

It frightens me that I can't do anything sensible about it.
Are you scared that you'll wind up with a boring job where you have to see the same people every day and drink instant coffee?
I'm more scared that I'll forget all the feelings I have now.
Kind of how you forgot how it feels to be three years old.
That surely I'll wind up thinking: I was so young, I didn't really understand everything. It bothers me that I know I will be wrong.
(Ardelius, 2008, p. 66)

The ambivalence toward adulthood may be related to the reflexive nature of identity formation in late modern society. The awareness that a

certain choice is only one of many may make commitment-making distressful and lead to ambivalence (Ziehe, 1989). Making decisions and committing to a certain direction may be seen as limiting individual freedom to expand one's personal experiences and evolve one's identity. For some people, the lack of social structures governing life-decisions and uncertainty concerning the choices faced may lead to a lack of direction and feelings of loneliness and insecurity.

Today, the identities available to the individual are not uniquely defined by traditions and norms related to, for example, family, class, or gender (Johansson, 2006). This relative openness in terms of identity formation involves both increased uncertainty and increased possibilities (Ziehe, 1989). Social aspects certainly still influence identity formation, but today's relative openness in terms of identity formation means that, in a late modern society, very few answers are given and great responsibility for constructing one's identity and path in life is conferred upon the individual (Giddens, 1991). Moreover, today people participate in many different social arenas and this means that their sense of identity needs to encompass many different roles and identifications (Johansson, 2006). The individual's sense of identity becomes multi-faceted in that it involves many identifications and reflections from others. The many social arenas in which people participate also mean that bodily appearance and life-style choices have become central to people's interactions with others and to their identity formation (Giddens, 1991). In other words, as people are involved in various social contexts in which they may experience varying identifications and come to see themselves in various ways through the eyes of others, appearance as well as life-style choices become important aspects of how other people see them and in turn how they view themselves.

Furthermore, an emphasis on self-actualization may also lead to the idea that people are solely responsible for the paths their lives will take. Ideals of self-actualization and the view of identity as a do-it-yourself project influence young people's perceptions of how they ought to live their lives, and how they evaluate how they actually live them. This further complicates the circumstances of young people today. Their identity formation is influenced by many factors, such as socio-economic status, social capital, and gender (e.g., Bynner, 2005; Hendry & Kloep, 2007); at the same time, however, many have embraced the belief that what they achieve in life is entirely a result of their own decision-making. Growing up in a late modern society in which individual choice is highly valued,

identities are seen as ever-evolving do-it-yourself projects, and the influences of social factors are often neglected, may affect the identity formation of young people in profound ways.

IDENTITY FORMATION

Identity exploration characterizes the emerging adult years, and the changes in society that have led to the appearance of this period in life likewise affect the identity formation of young people. Accordingly, the objective of this thesis was to add to the knowledge of identity formation in emerging adulthood. In this section central aspects of Erikson's theory of identity formation (Erikson, 1950, 1968, 1980) and Marcia's identity status model (Marcia, 1966; Marcia, Waterman, Mattesson, Archer, & Orlofsky, 1993) will be presented, along with an overview of relevant research and theory development that has followed since Marcia formulated his model.

Erikson's theory of identity formation

Erikson's ideas of identity formation are the starting point for much research into identity formation in the field of developmental psychology. Erikson is described as the first psychologically oriented theorist who paid attention to the meaning of the concept of identity (Kroger, 2007a). Erikson was a psychoanalyst and his theory evolved from a psychoanalytic tradition (Kroger & Marcia, 2011). From what is called a psychosocial perspective, Erikson (1968) described how people's psychological constitution develops in interaction with both their social context and biological development. Hence, the psychosocial perspective on identity takes account of societal influences as well as the individual's intra-psychic and biological development in building the theory of how a sense of identity develops (Kroger, 2007a). Identity is seen as an individual's subjective experience of remaining the same person across time and various contexts. As such, one's identity provides a sense of continuity between the past, present and future as well as across contexts. In Erikson's words, it gives the individual "an assured sense of inner continuity and social sameness which will bridge what he *was* as a child and what he is *about to become*, and will reconcile his *conception of himself* and his community's recognition of him." (Erikson, 1980, p. 120). The emphasis is on individual development, but social influences are also taken into account in this theoretical framework

as the focus is on how individuals develop and adjust within their social context.

Erikson's ideas of identity formation are positioned within his model of human development over the lifespan. The model identifies eight psychosocial tasks that need to be resolved at different life stages (Erikson, 1968). These eight stages are described in the following terms: trust versus mistrust; autonomy versus shame or doubt; initiative versus guilt; industry versus inferiority; identity versus identity confusion (or diffusion); intimacy versus isolation; generativity versus stagnation; and ego integrity versus despair (Erikson, 1950, 1968). The resolution of a psychosocial task is described as finding an optimal balance between the two poles, where the positive outweighs the negative. Resolving a stage, entails a radical shift in perspective, so each stage constitutes a critical period that, along with increased possibilities, also involves increased vulnerability (Erikson, 1968). This critical period is described as a crisis that is necessary for development to take place, but that also involves a risk of maladjustment. This thesis focuses on identity formation and therefore on the fifth stage, identity versus identity confusion, which will be described in further detail below.

According to Erikson, identity formation is the central psychosocial task in adolescence. Reasons for why identity formation is seen as central in adolescence are found in descriptions of the tripartite nature of identity (Kroger, 2007a): biological, psychological, and social development are seen as three broad and interacting areas involved in a person's formation of sense of identity (Erikson, 1968). These three areas influence a person's sense of identity, and changes in any one of them affect the overall identity. In adolescence, there are changes in all three areas: bodily changes related to puberty and sexuality, social changes in terms of increasing independence and responsibility, and psychological changes in the form of, for example, new cognitive capacities (see eg., McAdams, 2001). In adolescence, puberty and cognitive development coincide with new social demands and possibilities. For example, in adolescence, a young person is expected to explore developmental, sexual, and ideological values (Erikson, 1968), and throughout adolescence and emerging adulthood, young people are expected to take on increasingly more responsibility for themselves, other people, and society at large. These changes make identity formation particularly central during this period (Erikson, 1968).

Erikson (1968) described how identity formation is based on childhood identifications with, for example, the roles and values of one's

parents. In adolescence, the identifications from childhood no longer suffice and an adult identity starts to form as the individual chooses some of these identifications and rejects others (Erikson, 1968). Through the process of identity formation, childhood identifications merge into a new form as they are integrated with the person's current needs, abilities, and ideas of the future self (Marcia, 1999). In the process of forming a coherent sense of identity that includes significant identifications, these identifications are also transformed (Erikson, 1980). Moreover, identity formation is not a conscious activity, but rather the combined effect of all the big and small decisions people make as they define themselves as individuals (Marcia, 2002). The ongoing process of identity formation is described in the following description of identity as: “an *evolving configuration* ... gradually integrating *constitutional givens, idiosyncratic libidinal needs, favored capacities, significant identifications, effective defenses, successful sublimations, and consistent roles.*” (Erikson, 1980, p. 125). Besides illustrating the complexity of identity formation, this quotation also captures the evolving and gradual nature of identity formation.

Some central concepts in Erikson's theory of identity formation are psychosocial moratorium, identity crisis, and identity confusion. These concepts are related to both social and intra-individual aspects of identity formation, as well as the negative implications of a lack of a sense of identity. The concept of psychosocial moratorium is used to describe the prolonged period between adolescence and adulthood when the individual engages in role experimentation with the purpose of finding a place in society that is personally meaningful (Erikson, 1980). A necessary prerequisite for this moratorium to take place is that the surrounding society can enable young people to postpone adult commitments in order to engage in exploration (Erikson, 1968). As society plays a key role in determining the range of roles open to the young person (Erikson, 1980), the duration and availability of a psychosocial moratorium varies between both individuals and societies. Additionally, it is assumed that the more alternatives there are, and the more life areas are open to a decisions concerning the direction to pursue, or role to take on, the more difficult it is to establish a coherent sense of identity. Today, many young people are almost overwhelmed by choices, so the likelihood of undergoing a prolonged and difficult identity crisis is probably greater than ever before. According to the concepts of crisis and development, the role experimentation and exploration associated with the psychosocial

moratorium can be described as constituting an identity crisis. In Erikson's framework, an identity crisis is not just negative; it is also an opportunity for development, but the instability and vulnerability associated with the crisis make its outcome uncertain (Erikson, 1968). Failure to resolve the identity crisis leads to an experience of identity confusion: a sense of not knowing who one is and an inability to make identity-defining commitments regarding, for example, occupational and social roles (Erikson, 1968). Contrary to identity confusion, an established sense of identity reveals itself in commitments to the roles and values that best fit the individual's unique combination of needs and abilities (Kroger, 2004). The identity formation process may be described as a crisis that has the potential to lead to both a sense of identity or to experiences of identity confusion. The more choices young people face, the more time might be needed to deal with the associated identity crisis.

The identity status model

The identity status model was formulated as a way to find observable indicators of the inner processes described by Erikson's theory of identity formation. Marcia (1966) tried to find observable indicators of the processes through which a person's sense of identity is formed. Through interviews, he concluded that a person's underlying sense of identity is expressed and formed through the processes of exploring alternatives and making identity-defining commitments (Marcia, 2002). Based on these processes, four identity formation positions were formulated (Marcia, 1966). The four positions were labeled identity achievement, moratorium, foreclosure, and identity diffusion, and are referred to as identity statuses. These identity statuses have been validated based on a large number of studies in which the identity statuses are related to other characteristics (Marcia, 1994a). In the following section, the four identity statuses will be given a fuller presentation after an initial description of the processes of identity exploration and commitment-making upon which they are based. Moreover, in addition to the four identity statuses, subcategories of the statuses have been suggested and empirically investigated; these subcategories will also be described as they further explain the nature of the statuses and processes that they summarize.

Exploration and commitments

In the identity status framework, the concept of identity exploration is used to describe the extent to which an individual has actively questioned and experimented with alternative directions and ideals in order to reach a decision with regard to personal goals, values, and convictions (Marcia, 1994b). Identity exploration has been defined as problem solving behavior in which people seek for information about themselves and their context while trying to make decisions concerning various important choices (Grotevant, 1987). Identity exploration involves rethinking and sorting through previous commitments, values, and ideas as well as experimentation with various roles and plans for the future (Kroger & Marcia, 2011). Being in a process of exploration implies an awareness of the possible consequences of various alternatives (Marcia et al., 1993). It also involves a wish to reach a decision that motivates such exploratory activities, meaning that an emotional tone of anticipation is associated with active explorations. The identity status model has recently been expanded to investigate several dimensions of exploration (e.g., Crocetti, Rubini, & Meeus, 2008; Luyckx, Goossens, Soenens, Beyers, & Vansteenkiste, 2005). In these new models *exploration in breadth* is seen as the exploration that Marcia's original model encompasses, that is, the exploration of various alternatives, whereas *explorations in depth* describes an individual's identity-related exploration of a chosen direction; the exploration conducted after a commitment has been made.

In the identity status model, identity commitments are the identity-defining decisions that individuals make concerning various identity issues. Individuals' commitments represent their personal investment in certain directions, roles or sets of beliefs (Kroger & Marcia, 2011). Identity commitments entail that the person be motivated and actively trying to pursue the chosen direction (Marcia, 1966; Marcia et al., 1993). Having made commitments is often associated with a sense of confidence and stability with regard to who one is and the direction in which one is heading in life (Marcia, 1966; Marcia et al., 1993). The process of identity commitment has also been differentiated in recent research (e.g., Luyckx, Goossens, Soenens, & Beyers, 2006; Luyckx et al., 2005). These models use the term *commitment-making* to describe the actual decision-making, and *identification with commitment* to describe the process of identifying with a decision made, often after a period of exploration in depth. These new models build on the theory of identity formation, as they more

explicitly describe the processes by which a sense of identity is formed and reformulated.

The four identity statuses can be formulated from the processes of exploration and commitments. These four statuses summarize whether or not a person has explored, or is currently exploring, alternatives, and whether or not the person has made identity-defining commitments with regard to various identity issues. The statuses describe the individual's position in the identity formation process.

Identity achievement

Individuals categorized in the identity achievement position have made commitments following a period of exploration (Marcia, 1966; Marcia et al., 1993). By actively trying out or considering various roles, values, or beliefs and by evaluating the personal meaning of these alternatives before making a commitment, these persons have established a coherent sense of identity. They have been described as having constructed their sense of identity (Kroger & Marcia, 2011). They are usually satisfied with the decisions they have made, but may to varying extents realize that their decisions may change at some point. Thus, a certain flexibility remains in their sense of identity, but their commitments are not easily swayed (Kroger & Marcia, 2011). Characteristics that have been associated with identity achievement are, for example, a stable self-esteem and an internal locus of control (Marcia et al., 1993). Identity achievement corresponds to the positive pole in Erikson (1968) fifth stage, so the descriptions of the sameness and continuity that come with an established sense of identity apply to individuals in this position.

Moratorium

Being in moratorium indicates that a person is currently in a process of experimentation and exploration and that they have not yet made any identity-defining commitments (Marcia, 1966; Marcia et al., 1993). These individuals are struggling to reach a decision and are actively investigating what various options would mean to them. They may be described as being in an identity crisis (Marcia, 1994b). However, undergoing a moratorium is not negative in terms of development, as it is a necessary stage in reaching identity achievement. Individuals in the moratorium position are described as intense and they often have high levels of anxiety (Marcia et al., 1993). In identity status theory moratorium describes an inner process of explorations and identity formation (Marcia, 1966; Marcia et al., 1993). In

that way, it differs from the psychosocial moratorium that Erikson (1968) described as a period that society assigns to young people's exploratory activities. The moratorium in identity status theory involves inner developmental processes, whereas the psychosocial moratorium in Erikson's theory also refers to societal processes. Moreover, recent research has suggested that the moratorium status may be divided into two subcategories. Luyckx, Schwartz, Berzonsky, et al. (2008) found, for example, that exploratory processes could be more adaptive or more maladaptive and ruminative in character. They found that ruminative exploration distinguished a subcategory of the moratorium status that they term the ruminative moratorium. It is necessary to go through a moratorium to reach the position of identity achievement. Moratorium is associated with increased anxiety, however, so for people who cannot resolve their exploration and who continue to ruminate over the same identity issues for a long time, worry may become increasingly troublesome.

Foreclosure

Foreclosure describes a position in which individuals have firm commitments not reached through explorations (Marcia, 1994b). These individuals have often taken over values and beliefs from their parents or other authority figures without critical examination. Compared with the constructed identities of people in the identity achievement status the identities of individuals in the foreclosure status are described as conferred (Kroger & Marcia, 2011). People in the foreclosure position hold firmly to their commitments and, if it is suggested to them, the idea of their commitments ever changing is dismissed (Marcia et al., 1993). The emotional tone of individuals in the foreclosure position may be quite self-centered, their locus of control is described as external, and their anxiety level is lower than that of the three other identity status groups (Marcia et al., 1993). Research has identified differences between developmental foreclosure and firm foreclosure (Kroger, 1995). While developmental foreclosure is described as a starting point for identity development, firm foreclosure is described as a more rigid structure, less open to opportunities for further identity development. Thus, individuals in the foreclosure position could either be at the beginning of their identity formation, or have settled into a set of firm commitments or identifications.

Identity diffusion

Individuals described as experiencing identity diffusion are recognized by a lack of both commitments and exploratory activities (Marcia et al., 1993). As opposed to individuals categorized as experiencing moratorium, who also have not settled into identity-defining commitments, people in the identity diffusion status are not dealing with identity issues at all. They appear to lack a sense of direction, but this does not seem to bother them (Kroger & Marcia, 2011). Their locus of control is external and they are usually guided by spur-of-the-moment stimuli rather than by a sense of personal identity (Marcia, 1999). Several subcategories of this identity status were suggested early on (e.g., Archer & Waterman, 1990; Marcia, 1989). Recent studies building on models incorporating differentiated dimensions of exploration and commitments have identified both a diffused diffusion and a carefree diffusion (e.g., Schwartz et al., 2011). Identity diffusion appears to be the most heterogeneous of the identity status groups, as some individuals in this category may be quite untroubled by their lack of exploration and commitments, whereas other individuals may be troubled by their inability to engage in identity formation. A quotation from Miller's play *the Death of a Salesman* that was used by Erikson (1968) as an example of identity confusion, illustrates the inability, associated with identity diffusion, to find identity-defining commitments and to act according to them: "I just can't take hold, Mom. I can't take hold of some kind of life." (Miller, 1949, p. 42).

Identity status development

The identity statuses of identity achievement and identity diffusion can be seen as corresponding to the two poles, identity versus identity confusion, of Erikson's theory. The assumption that one's sense of identity strengthens from adolescence to adulthood (Waterman, 1982) implies that an individual's sense of identity develops from a position of identity confusion or identity diffusion towards one of identity achievement. This implies that the proportion of individuals categorized in identity achievement will increase with age and that the number of individuals categorized in identity diffusion will decrease (Marcia et al., 1993); this proposition has been confirmed by longitudinal analyses (Kroger, Martinussen, & Marcia, 2010; Meeus, 2011). Nevertheless, in addition to these progressive developmental patterns, regressive movements from identity achievement to moratorium, identity diffusion, or foreclosure; from moratorium to identity diffusion or foreclosure; or from foreclosure to

identity diffusion have been found to occur in some cases (Kroger et al., 2010). Additionally, even if the task of forming an identity is most marked in adolescence and emerging adulthood, identity formation is described as a lifelong process (Grotevant, 1987). Once a sense of identity has been achieved, this identity can be assumed to be subject to reformulations throughout one's lifespan as physiological, psychological, and social circumstances change (Marcia, 2002). This ongoing process of identity development was studied by Stephen, Fraser, and Marcia (1992) and labeled as comprising moratorium-achievement (MAMA) cycles. Moreover, research also demonstrates that many individuals are not categorized as identity achieved in emerging adulthood (Kroger et al., 2010; Meeus, 2011), which indicates that identity continues to develop through the emerging adult years.

Identity status in different life areas

The idea underlying identity status theory is that the processes of exploration and commitment in any life area that is important to the person reflect the underlying sense of identity (Marcia, 1966, 2007). The various domains examined in identity status research are not seen as separate identities, but rather as indications of the individual's identity structure (Kroger & Marcia, 2011). An overall identity status, based on the impression gained from an identity status interview, is assumed to capture this underlying sense of identity, whereas the identity status in a particular life area also indicates the person's standing with regard to exploration and commitment-making in that specific domain. Individuals make decisions and explore alternatives based on growing knowledge of who they are, and this evolving sense of identity guides their attempts to find a way of life and a place in society.

Identity formation involves exploration and commitments concerning choices in various life areas. Different life areas are examined in different identity status studies, depending on when the study was performed, the social context, and the purpose of the study. Initially, the life areas of occupation, politics, and religion constituted areas examined in the identity status interview (Marcia, 1966). Later, new domains were added and explored, such as, ethnicity, leisure activities, sexuality, role of spouse, and work/family priorities (Marcia et al., 1993). Moreover, various life areas have sometimes been sorted into two broader categories—ideological and interpersonal life areas (e.g., Goossens, 2001; Grotevant & Adams, 1984). Ideological life areas often involve occupation, religion,

politics, and values, whereas interpersonal life areas may involve relationships with friends, family, and romantic partners, as well as gender roles (e.g., Balistreri, Busch-Rossnagel, & Geisinger, 1995). At least two factors determine what domains to include in a specific study. The first of these is that the life areas considered need to address issues assumed to be relevant to the study group given, for example, their ages and social contexts. The second criterion is that there needs to be sufficient variations in identity formation within the study group in the included domain (Marcia et al., 1993). Hence, the domains used in a particular study are chosen based on the population being investigated and the cultural and historical context of the study. Individuals' exploration and commitments in important life areas can be seen as indications of their overall identity formation as well as their identity formation in specific ideological and interpersonal life areas.

Identity research in Sweden

Few studies of identity formation have been conducted in Sweden. A recent review of identity research in Sweden (Ferrer-Wreder, Trost, Lorente, & Mansoor, 2012) concluded that, apart from two of the constituent studies of this thesis, only two other studies used Marcia's identity status model (i.e., Bergh & Erling, 2005; Schwartz, Adamson, Ferrer-Wreder, Dillon, & Berman, 2006). Other Swedish studies addressed identity using a theoretical model based on self-concept and introjects (Adamson, Hartman, & Lyxell, 1999; Adamson & Lyxell, 1996). Because of the dearth of identity studies in Sweden, the following overview will also include studies conducted in two other Nordic countries, that is Norway and Finland. Although there are differences between these Nordic countries, there are also similarities that distinguish them from other parts of Europe and from the United States, where much of the identity research has been performed.

One problem that has emerged when identity measures, developed in the United States, have been used to study identity in other countries stems from the differences in the meaning and importance of identity domains across cultures. Therefore, before trying out a questionnaire designed to measure identity status (i.e., the EOM-EIS-II) in Sweden, Frisén and Bergh (2006) performed focus groups to investigate whether the life areas covered in the questionnaire were viewed as important contexts for identity formation by young people in Sweden. In the focus group, study four

groups of psychology students were asked to make a mind map covering various aspects of identity. The results revealed that the areas of occupation, politics, life style, recreational choices, friendship, and gender roles were considered important by the students (though not deemed equally important). Similarly, a Norwegian study (Danielsen, Lore, & Kroger, 2000) found that occupation was rated as an important identity life-area by all participants, a finding that corresponds well with the results of other Scandinavian studies (Bergh & Erling, 2005; Fadjukoff, Pulkkinen, & Kokko, 2005; Frisé & Bergh, 2006).

In contrast, dating and religion have been described as having different meanings in the European and American contexts (Goossens, 2001). In line with this notion and with descriptions of Sweden as a secularized society (Inglehart & Baker, 2000) the focus-group study demonstrated that the life areas of neither religion nor dating were considered important identity-defining areas by emerging adults in Sweden (Frisé & Bergh, 2006). With regard to dating, Trost (2006) has pointed out that, in its North American sense, dating is not customary in Sweden, and Bergh and Erling (2005) have described how, in Sweden, dating is usually very informal without any particular traditions or “rules” relating to its procedures. Nevertheless, Bergh and Erling (2005) still suggest that romantic relationships are an important identity formation area for young people in Sweden, although not in the form of dating. With regard to religion, they made the point that, in Sweden, it is unlikely to be of as much significance as an identity-defining area as it is in the United States. This issue was further explored in the focus groups (Frisé & Bergh, 2006). When the groups said that they were satisfied with their mind maps, they were asked: “The really big questions, such as ‘the meaning of life’ do they fit in your model?” The emerging adults in the four focus groups then added categories such as existential identity, conception of life and life purpose, beliefs, and values. It is noteworthy that none of these aspects was raised by either group before they were explicitly asked for. A study from another Nordic country, Finland, also found low salience for the domain of religion (as well as for politics) (Fadjukoff et al., 2005). This lack of a common terminology for these issues and the low salience found for religious issues when the wording is copied from other countries contribute to making these issues somewhat difficult to study in Sweden, even when more culturally sensitive measures such as the identity status interview are used.

Identity formation and gender

The role of gender in identity formation is not straightforward and no consistent gender differences are found by international studies. The conclusions drawn from a narrative overview is that there are more gender similarities than differences in identity formation as few studies reported gender differences in global identity status ratings (Kroger, 1997). However, a few consistencies were found in the more frequent gender differences in specific life areas. There were consistently higher frequencies of women than men in the moratorium and identity achievement groups for work/family priorities and sexual values. Other findings also indicate that there may be gender differences in identity status distributions and that these differences may not be the same for all life areas (Fadjukoff et al., 2005; Lewis, 2003; Pastorino, Dunham, Kidwell, Bacho, & Lamborn, 1997). Additionally, differences in global identity status were found in a study of Swedish adolescents' identity formation, where young women were more likely than young men to experience moratorium and men were more likely than women to experience identity diffusion (Bergh & Erling, 2005). Whether gender differences are found in a study may depend on study group characteristics, the life areas included in the study, and the social context.

Emerging adults in Sweden form their identities in a context in which gender equality is highly valued. Sweden is often classified as one of the more gender-equal countries in the world (Guiso, Monte, Sapienza, & Zingales, 2008; Hausmann, Tyson, & Zahidi, 2012) and there has long been a political agenda to promote gender equality in the labor market, the home (Björnberg, 2000), and schools (The Swedish Delegation for Gender Equality in School, 2010). The dual-breadwinner norm in which both parents work for pay and together care for the family is well established in Sweden (Somme stad, 1997). Furthermore, a radical notion of the family in which men and women share equal responsibility for childcare and for providing family income (Björnberg, 2000) has been extremely influential in the gender-equality debate in Sweden. In line with this radical family ideal, the Swedish government provides active support for working parents. In terms of the effects of the gender equality ideal, men, it has been demonstrated, are increasingly active in the family sphere (e.g., Statistics Sweden, 2012b). Changes in what gender roles entail may affect the identity formation of young women and men in Sweden.

However, despite a clear political agenda and, in many areas, observable increases in gender equality, the conditions of women and men in Sweden are not equal. First, reports from the school system indicate that, despite the political goals and laws aiming to promote gender equality in schools, gender differences continue to emerge early on (The Swedish Delegation for Gender Equality in School, 2010). Second, women spend more time on domestic work and childcare than do men, and, men's salaries are, in most occupations, higher than those of women (Statistics Sweden, 2012b). Thus, in Sweden young people form their identities in a context in which gender equality is highly valued, but where there are still large differences in the conditions of women and men. The contrasts between political goals and everyday practices mean that young Swedish women and men construct their identities "within the context of a gender-equality discourse, but in an everyday reality that is not gender equal" (Elvin-Nowak & Thomsson, 2001, p. 410). Societal norms govern the behaviours associated with being a woman or a man, but these norms are, at the same time, reinforced by what people actually do. When a person acts in accordance with societal norms, the individual's gender identity is confirmed and, at the same time, these behaviours serve to confirm the accuracy of the norms (Butler, 1999; Smedler & Drake, 2006). The changes in the responsibilities of women and men in Swedish society, as described above, may then, by extension, lead to changes in the norms and behaviours associated with developing one's identity as a woman or a man and in life areas seen as constituting important aspects of an individual's personal sense of identity. Moreover, the contrast between the norms governing macro versus micro-level practices establishes interesting intersections of influences for young people about to form their identities in Sweden today.

Identity formation and aspects of love and work

Love and work are influential in the lives of emerging adults both as identity issues and as contexts for identity formation. Love and work are also important aspects of the developmental tasks of affiliation and achievement that are associated with the period (Schulenberg, Bryant, & O'Malley, 2004). They are thus vital areas for identity exploration in emerging adulthood (Arnett, 2000, 2006), as well as contexts in which people explore and get to know themselves. This section focuses on

romantic relationships and occupational contexts in emerging adulthood and their relationships with identity formation.

Romantic relationships

Romantic relationships are common in emerging adulthood. Young people's experiences of romantic relationships often begin in adolescence and continue throughout the emerging adult years (Collins, Welsh, & Furman, 2009; Montgomery, 2005). Arnett (2000) has argued that the exploration of romantic relationships tends to be more intimate and more serious in emerging adulthood than in adolescence. He describes romantic exploration in adolescence as tentative and short-term in perspective, whereas in emerging adulthood they involve longer-term considerations. In Sweden, many young people are involved in more or less stable romantic relationships (The Swedish National Board of Youth Affairs, 2007). Cohabitation is common and, since Sweden is a highly secularized country, sex before marriage can be described as normative. However, this does not seem to affect the idea that love is the primary motivation for having sex and for committing to a relationship. For example, in the latest large study of sexual habits in Sweden a large majority of all participants (18–74 years old) who had had sex during the last year said that they were in love with the person with whom they last had sex (Helmius, 1998). In addition, in a recent study of sexuality in adolescence, most participants stated that they had had an emotional relationship with the person with whom they first had sex (Tikkanen, Abellsson, & Forsberg, 2011). Through these reports of the connections between sexuality, relationships, and love it appears that a romantic ideal of love and sexuality (see e.g., Giddens, 1995) in which love is seen as the primary motivation for having sex, and both sex and love are things that belong in a relationship, is still influential.

Moreover, establishing close relationships is described as an important developmental task during the transition to adulthood (Arnett, 2000; Kroger, 2007a). Consequently, love is an important area for many emerging adults' identity exploration (Arnett, 2000, 2006). The ability to maintain close relationships has been described as an important aspect of well-being in adulthood (Montgomery, 2005; Reis, Collins, & Berschied, 2000). Romantic relationships offer a context for the further development of an emerging sense of identity, as serious involvement in a relationship requires that the individual take a position that supports both the relationship and the self (Montgomery, 2005). Close relationships therefore contribute to identity formation. When considering or engaging in close

relationships, young people explore what they like and dislike in a romantic partner, as well as whether and, if so, what type of relational commitments would suit them given who they are (Arnett, 2006). Moreover, when people are involved in close relationships, they also get to see themselves through the eyes of someone who knows them intimately. Romantic relationships thus involve the exploration of these identity issues, while also serving as contexts for identity formation.

In Erikson's (1950, 1968, 1980) theory of human development, resolving the intimacy versus isolation crisis is the task that follows that of identity versus identity confusion. According to this theory, a coherent sense of identity must be achieved before one can commit to intimate relationships. Intimacy has been defined as the ability to commit to long-term relationships characterized by high levels of communication and closeness, and applies to both friendships and romantic relationships (Orlofsky, 1993). Additionally, the concept of psychosocial intimacy refers both to the quality of interpersonal relationships and the individual's capacity to commit to such relationships (Erikson, 1968). Young people's actual involvement in relationships has been examined in studies of intimacy status (e.g., Kacerguis & Adams, 1980; Orlofsky, Marcia, & Lesser, 1973; Tesch & Whitbourne, 1982). Involvement in a romantic relationship has been one of the criteria defining the categories intimate (defined by involvement in a relationship that is intimate) and pseudo-intimate (defined by involvement in a relationship that lacks intimacy) (Orlofsky et al., 1973). Previous research into intimacy and identity formation has revealed that identity formation is related to intimacy, though the association appears to be more pronounced for men than for women (Årseth, Kroger, & Martinussen, 2009). However, Montgomery (2005), who also found associations between identity and intimacy, found no gender differences in these associations. In a longitudinal study, Beyers and Sieffge-Krenke (2010) found support for Erikson's original idea that an established sense of identity is necessary in order to achieve intimacy. However, Årseth et al. (2009), who conducted a meta-analysis of the relationship between identity and intimacy, argued that their findings support the idea that identity and intimacy interact and amplify one another, rather than the idea that identity must be achieved before intimacy. As described above, the relationships in which young people are involved are related to their identity formation in many ways.

Occupational contexts

In Sweden upper secondary education, called the gymnasium, is usually finished at around age 19 and most young people finish the gymnasium (Statistics Sweden, 2009a). At that point young people are seen as independent of their parents but not yet fully committed to adult roles, such as marriage or cohabitation, parenthood, home ownership, or employment. Leaving upper secondary school may be described as a marker of the entry into emerging adulthood. Given the demographic variability of the period of emerging adulthood and its exploratory nature, emerging adults can be found in many occupational contexts, including universities and workplaces (Arnett, 2000, 2006). The heterogeneity of emerging adults as a group is also manifested in their choices with regards to school and work (Hamilton & Hamilton, 2006). As mentioned above, higher education is a common activity among emerging adults in Sweden. Moreover, in Nordic countries, such as Sweden and Norway, taking time off between finishing secondary school and starting a higher education is also common (Douglass, 2007). This idea of a “gap year” is related to norms about what people should do in emerging adulthood. For example, during this gap year young people may engage in explorative activities in order to expand their range of experience. However, the instability in emerging adulthood is not always voluntary. For example, for those young people in Sweden who are working, forms of employment that are by nature insecure and temporary are commonplace (Salonen, 2003) and rates of unemployment are higher among emerging adults than in other age groups. Moreover, some young people enrol in higher education when they are actually in search of employment. Thus, there is great variability in the occupational contexts and situations of emerging adults, which may be assumed to be related to their identity formation.

Identity issues concerning occupational choices are often seen as an important aspect of the individuals overall sense of identity (e.g., Erikson, 1968; Kroger, 2007a; Schwartz, 2001) and occupational identity formation is included in both interview and questionnaire measures of identity formation (e.g., Balistreri et al., 1995; Marcia et al., 1993). This too, indicates that people’s occupational contexts may be associated with their identity formation. Some previous studies have found differences in identity status distributions between occupational contexts, but these results have been somewhat inconsistent. For example, Munro and Adams (1977) found that it was more common for young people who were working to have an achieved identity than it was for those who were students. Morash

(1980) found that both identity achievement and diffusion were more common among young people who were working than among college students, whereas foreclosure and moratorium were less common among working youth than among those who were students. However, Danielsen et al. (2000) found that students were more often categorized as in moratorium or identity achievement than were employed late adolescents, for whom foreclosure was a more common category. Additionally, a study of identity dimensions found more explorations and less commitment-making among emerging adults who were students than among those who were working (Luyckx, Schwartz, goossens, & Pollock, 2008). In all of the studies described above, the young people who were working did not have a college or university degree. Most of this research with students and working youth appears to indicate that explorations are more common among students. However, much research into identity formation includes only college or university students, which means that there is limited knowledge of the identity formation of young people who are working. The lack of research into working emerging adults highlights the importance of studying emerging adults' identity formation in other contexts than just the university environment.

Identity formation and psychological distress

Emerging adulthood is described as the time of life when most future possibilities remain open, and many emerging adults look toward the future with feelings of hopefulness and expectations (Arnett, 2006). American studies have found that psychological well-being increases from adolescence to adulthood (Schulenberg & Zarrett, 2006) and most emerging adults are satisfied with both themselves and their lives (Arnett, 2007). However, during this period, many choices with potentially significant consequences have to be made, which may give rise to considerable distress. Furthermore, emerging adults face the challenging task of identity formation largely on their own, without daily support from either their family of origin or their future family. A Swedish survey found that young people reported more frequent and stronger feelings of loneliness than did older people (Tornstam, Rydell, Vik, & Öberg, 2010). The special challenges and lack of structure that signify emerging adulthood may also contribute to making some young people particularly vulnerable. Indeed, statistics from Sweden have revealed that while mental

health increased over time in most groups in Swedish society, this tendency was inverted for adolescents and emerging adults (The Swedish National Board of Health and Welfare, 2008). Furthermore, although Schulenberg and Zarrett (2006) describe that well-being increases and depressive affect decreases for most emerging adults, they also point out that the incidence of severe psychopathology increases during this period.

In the following excerpt from Erland Loe's novel *Naïve. Super*, a young man describes how he has just found himself in an identity crisis:

The next morning I woke up and knew that things could not continue as before. I stayed in bed thinking about it.

It wasn't about croquet. I was sure of that.

Croquet is a little thing and this was a big thing.

Pretty soon I began to suspect that this was directly related to me turning 25 and that I hadn't tackled it well.

For me, getting older had long been associated with a certain worry.

I don't give a damn about space, but I have problems with time.

(Loe, 2007, p. 12, own translation)

That time is passing and he is getting older makes the narrator realize that his life cannot go on the way it has. The novel captures how identity issues may emerge as one starts to think about growing up or settling down. Sometime during emerging adulthood, most people feel that it is time to find a direction for the future. Doing so may mean closing the door on other alternatives and leaving behind the age when everything feels possible. Also, to decide where one wants to go in life, one needs some idea of who the person going there really is. If this sense of identity is lacking, the notion of growing up and finding a direction in life may be associated with an identity crisis.

A certain amount of distress may be part of the identity formation process, as identity formation can be seen as a normative crisis (Erikson, 1968). For some young people, however, the distress and worry over identity issues can be so overwhelming that they need help in dealing with this developmental stage (Hernandez, Montgomery, & Kurtines, 2006). Moreover, a cohesive identity is described as an important basis for an individual's mental health and well-being (Erikson, 1968). Failure to establish a coherent sense of identity is considered a risk factor for the development of psychological and behavioral problems (Montgomery, Hernandez, & Ferrer-Wreder, 2008). When describing the associations between identity formation and well-being or psychological distress,

Marcia (1994a) argued that an achieved identity is more adaptive than a foreclosed identity in that it is associated with both increased flexibility and ego strength. Furthermore, he suggested that both identity achievement and foreclosure are more functional than the alternative of having no identity at all, as in the case of identity diffusion. Even though a foreclosed identity offers only one possible future for the individual, this is preferred over the state of identity diffusion where so many possible futures are conceivable that none of them is likely to be achieved (Marcia, 1999). In short, from a theoretical perspective, identity achievement is considered the most adaptive identity status and identity diffusion the least adaptive (Berzonsky & Adams, 1999; Waterman, 1999).

Studies on the relationship between identity and psychological well-being (e.g., Hofer, Joscha, Chasiotis, Busch, & Kiessling, 2007; Meeus, Iledema, Helsen, & Vollebergh, 1999; Nurmi, Berzonsky, Tammi, & Kinney, 1997) have found that individuals involved in active identity exploration (moratorium) have the lowest levels of well-being (see Meeus et al., 1999, for a review). Identity exploration has also been found to be associated with high levels of existential anxiety (Berman, Weems, & Stickle, 2006). Additionally, a recent large-scale study demonstrated that the participants experiencing moratorium had the highest levels of anxiety and depression symptoms (Schwartz et al., 2011). Moreover, the same study also found that individuals with achieved and foreclosed identities had equal levels of well-being. Compared with those possessing achieved identities, individuals in the foreclosure groups reported lower levels of symptoms of general anxiety and depression, but also scored lower on measures of meaning in life. As opposed to the theoretical assumption few studies have demonstrated that individuals with foreclosure have lower levels of well-being or experience more psychological distress than do those with identity achievement, and the levels of well-being for those with identity diffusion are only slightly lower than for those of identity achievement and foreclosure. However, it has been found that adolescent substance abuse is related to the lack of identity-defining commitments and identity exploration that signify identity diffusion (Jones & Hartman, 1988) and one study found antisocial tendencies among those whose identity diffusion appeared to be relatively carefree (Schwartz et al., 2011). Moreover, the research validating identity status subcategories has also shed light on some of the discrepancies between theoretical expectations and the research into identity statuses (Luyckx et al., 2005; Luyckx, Schwartz, Berzonsky, et al., 2008; Schwartz et al., 2011). For example,

among those of the moratorium and identity diffusion statuses, there may be one sub-group that is more troubled and maladapted and another whose well-being and adjustment are comparable to that of individuals in the identity achievement and foreclosure groups.

In recent years distress over identity issues has been addressed directly in research for the purpose of adding the identity distress dimension to the study of identity formation. Specifically, Berman, Montgomery, and Kurtines (2004) studied identity distress based on the diagnostic criteria for identity disorder included in a previous version of the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* (3rd ed., rev., *DSM-III-R*; American Psychiatric Association, 1987). The identity disorder diagnosis included in the third edition of the DSM described a condition in which distress over identity issues affected the individual's functioning in profound ways. In the current edition of the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* (4th ed., text rev., *DSM-IV-TR*; American Psychiatric Association, 2000) the identity disorder diagnosis is removed. Instead, identity problems are described under the heading "other conditions that may be a focus of clinical attention." These changes in the diagnostic manual are illustrative of different views of identity crisis as a potentially pathological or a more or less normative, albeit distressing, condition.

Studies of identity distress in adolescents and college students have reported prevalence rates of 8–16% for identity disorder and 14–34% for identity problems (Berman et al., 2004; Berman, Weems, & Petkus, 2009; Gfeller & Córdoba, 2011; Hernandez et al., 2006), the largest proportions being found in a study of at-risk adolescents (Hernandez et al., 2006). Both categorical and continuous measures of identity distress were found to be related to psychological symptoms (Berman et al., 2009; Hernandez et al., 2006). Moreover, some studies of identity distress have found gender differences, indicating that girls were more likely to meet the criteria for identity problems (Berman et al., 2009; Hernandez et al., 2006) and identity disorder (Hernandez et al., 2006) than were boys. Moreover, Berman et al. (2004) found that individuals involved in active identity exploration (moratorium) were more likely to meet the criteria for identity disorder than were individuals in the other identity status groups. Continuous measures of identity distress were significantly lower in individuals with foreclosure than in individuals in the moratorium or identity diffusion groups (Berman et al., 2004). Another study also found higher levels of distress to be associated with moratorium (Berman et al., 2009). Identity

distress is clearly related to both identity formation and psychological symptoms, and research considering identity distress might yield valuable knowledge of the associations between identity formation and psychological distress.

Identity formation and body image

Psychological, social, and biological development interact in forming a sense of identity, and changes in these areas affect the individual's identity (Erikson, 1968; Kroger, 2007a). These changes also affect people's body image (e.g., Wertheim & Paxton, 2011). An important aspect of identity formation is to establish a sense of being at home in one's body (Erikson, 1968), but the body is also a way for people to convey their identities to others. Appearance is thus an important aspect of people's identity work (Giddens, 1991). Essentially, body image as 'appearance viewed from the inside' (Cash, 1990), represents the psychological aspects of the body. Body image has several dimensions (Pruzinsky & Cash, 2002) as it involves people's perceptions, thoughts, feelings, attitudes, and behaviors toward their bodies (Smolak, 2004).

One dimension of body image is body-esteem. Body-esteem can be seen as part of people's self-esteem, and represents their evaluations of their appearance (Mendelson, White, & Mendelson, 1996). Hence, people's body-esteem indicates whether they are satisfied with their bodies and appearance. (Mendelson, Mendelson, & White, 2001) have described three aspects of body-esteem: (1) people's overall evaluations of their appearance, (2) their evaluations of their weight, and (3) their views about what other people think about their own looks. Body-esteem is a part of self-esteem that involves several aspects of people's evaluations of their bodies, including thoughts attributed to others about one's appearance.

Another aspect of body image concerns how people relate to societal body ideals. Body ideal internalization represents the extent to which people have incorporated societal body ideals into their own beliefs about what is physically attractive (Cusumano & Thompson, 1997). From a sociocultural perspective, it is claimed that there is generally a large degree of agreement as to body ideals within cultures (Jackson, 2002). In Western cultures appearance is highly valued (Jones, Vigfusdottir, & Lee, 2004), and the ideal of thinness is particularly prominent in these cultures (Thompson, Heinberg, Altabe, & Tantleff-Dunn, 1999). Societal body

ideals are gendered: whereas for women the ideal is to be thin, for men both leanness and muscularity are highly valued (Ricciardelli & Williams, 2012; Smolak & Stein, 2006). Body ideal internalization is a way of describing the extent to which people have made these societal body ideals their own.

Gender issues are inevitable as far as body image is concerned. The constructs related to people's body image may not refer to the same processes in women and in men (Cafri et al., 2005; Jones, 2004). Even though there certainly are boys who suffer from body image concerns (Smolak & Stein, 2006), many studies have found that men have fewer body image concerns than do women (e.g., Calogero & Thompson, 2010; Davison & McCabe, 2006; Frisén & Holmqvist, 2010; Jones et al., 2004; Mendelson et al., 2001). Specifically, men have been demonstrated to have more positive body-esteem than do women (Calogero & Thompson, 2010; Frisén & Holmqvist, 2010; Mendelson et al., 2001) as well as less internalization of societal body ideals (Frisén & Holmqvist, 2010; Jones et al., 2004).

Three theoretical frameworks may explain why gender differences in body image are common (Calogero & Thompson, 2010). First, the tripartite model of social influence describes how messages about the body received from parents, peers, and the media interact in shaping people's body image (Keery, van den Berg, & Thompson, 2004). The focus on appearance is more emphasized in messages to girls, so boys and girls receive different messages about the importance of the body and its appearance from these three sources. Second, (Calogero & Thompson, 2010) describe how gender socialization theory explains how the different social constructs of what it means to be a woman or a man contribute to the gender differences in body image concerns. As practices that aim to control and modify the body and appearance (e.g., make up and dieting) are more closely linked to femininity than to masculinity, the body becomes linked to the reproduction of femininity (Bordo, 2004). Body concerns may be incorporated into the view of what it means to be a woman. Moreover, Murnen and Don (2012) emphasize that strong adherence to traditional gender roles makes both women and men more susceptible to societal body ideals, but that gender inequalities make women even more vulnerable. The same authors also emphasize that gendered body ideals reinforce traditional patriarchal and heterosexist social structures. The third perspective that contributes to the understanding of gender differences in body image is objectification theory (Fredrickson & Roberts, 1997; Lindberg &

McKinley, 2006). This framework describes how the female body is objectified to a greater extent than the male body is. The internalization of this objectification of the body is sometimes referred to as an objectified body consciousness (Lindberg & McKinley, 2006). This type of awareness of the body as an object may, in turn, contribute to making women more prone to treating their bodies as the object of evaluation. With regard to body-esteem and body ideal internalization, gender differences are expected and theoretical frameworks highlight how social influences, gender role socialization, and objectifications processes interact in shaping these gender differences.

GENERAL AIM

The general aim of this thesis and the specific aims of the three studies on which the thesis is based have been guided by the theory and research reviewed in the previous section. In short, in Western contemporary cultures such as Sweden, emerging adulthood stands out as a distinct phase of the life-course. An important aspect of personal development in emerging adulthood is identity formation (Arnett, 2000, 2006), which is the focus of the three studies. The theoretical framework of the thesis comprises the theory of emerging adulthood (Arnett, 2000, 2006), the theory of identity formation formulated by Erikson (1950, 1968, 1980), and the identity status model developed by (Marcia, 1966) based on Erikson's theory. The overall aim of this thesis is to examine emerging adults' identity formation and its relationship to other aspects of their psychosocial development and living situations. Specifically, the thesis focuses on how identity formation in emerging adulthood is related to the social contexts of love and work, psychological distress, and aspects of body image.

SUMMARY OF THE STUDIES

The three studies of this thesis all deal with identity formation and its relationship to various aspects of emerging adults' social contexts and psychosocial development. The first two studies are based on questionnaires administered to, and interviews with 25-year-olds, whereas the third study is a questionnaire study of 18-year-olds. The thesis examines participants who are just about to enter emerging adulthood (the 18-year-olds in Study III) as well as participants who are closer to the end of the period (the 25-year-olds in Study I and II). This section summarizes the aims, methods, and main findings of the three studies.

Study I

The first study of the thesis deals with identity formation and aspects of love and work in emerging adulthood. It is a cross-sectional investigation of these aspects in a group of Swedish 25-year-olds. The study focuses on how the sociocultural context of emerging adults in Sweden may explain the findings.

Aims

The purpose of Study I was to examine the identity formation of emerging adults in Sweden to discover how identity issues concerning love, work and family are handled, and how this is related to certain aspects of love and work. Three specific research questions guided the investigations: (1) Are there any gender differences in the distributions of global and domain-specific identity statuses? (2) Is involvement in a long-term romantic relationship related to global identity status and to identity status in the domains of romantic relationships and work/family priorities? (3) Is the occupational context (i.e., working having no university education, being a student, or working having completed university studies) related to the global and occupational identity status?

Participants

The 136 participants (68 women and 68 men) were aged 24–26 years ($M = 24.9$ $SD = 0.7$) and were participants in the Gothenburg Longitudinal study of Development (GoLD) at the Department of Psychology, University of Gothenburg. The main focus of this phase of the project was on identity. At the outset of the study in 1982, the participants were 1–2 years old and were recruited from waiting lists for public childcare facilities in all areas of Gothenburg, the second largest city in Sweden. The participants came from a variety of socio-economic backgrounds and all were firstborn children whose parents lived together (Broberg, 1989). In the current wave most (64.7%) of the participants were in romantic relationships, 54.4% were in relationships that had endured for more than a year, and 49.3% were living with their partner. With regards to their occupational situation, 32.4% ($n = 44$) were working and had no postsecondary education, 38.2% ($n = 52$) were students, and 22.1% ($n = 30$) were working after having completed post-secondary education; 2.9% ($n = 4$) were unemployed, and 2.2% ($n = 3$) were on long-term sick leave. Three participants had an occupational status that did not fit into any of these groups.

Measures

A structured background interview was used to study aspects of love and work. It included questions about the participants' romantic relationships, current occupations, and education.

Marcia's Ego Identity Status Interview (Marcia et al., 1993) was translated into Swedish and used to study identity formation in accordance with the identity status model (Marcia, 1966; Marcia et al., 1993). The content areas explored in this study were occupation, romantic relationships, parenthood, and family/work priorities. Based on the extent of exploration of alternatives and commitment to a chosen direction, the participants were assigned to a specific identity status: identity achievement (high exploration, high commitment), moratorium (high exploration, low commitment), foreclosure (low exploration, high commitment) and identity diffusion (low exploration, low commitment), in each of the four life areas. Each participant was also assigned a global identity status that summarized all the information from the interview.

Main findings

Global identity, occupational identity, and work/family priorities all followed the same pattern of identity status distributions (with some differences in the frequencies). That is, identity achievement was the most common identity status, followed by foreclosure, moratorium, and identity diffusion. The life areas of romantic relationships and parenthood diverged from this pattern in that here there were larger proportions of foreclosure and much smaller proportions of moratorium. The patterns of identity status distributions differed between women and men. Identity achievement was the most common identity status for all domains except parenthood (for romantic relationships, identity achievement and foreclosure were equally common) and for global identity status in women, the most common identity status in men differed across the domains. For men, the most common global identity status was foreclosure; for occupational identity, it was foreclosure and identity achievement; for work/family priorities it was identity diffusion; and for romantic relationships and parenthood it was foreclosure. Women were more likely than men to be in the identity achievement group and men were more likely than women to be in the identity diffusion group in global identity and in all domains except occupational identity.

Being in a romantic relationship that had lasted for a year or more was most likely for individuals in the group with identity achievement and least likely for those in the group with identity diffusion in global identity. For work/family priorities, it was most likely for participants in both the moratorium and identity achievement groups to be in a longer-term relationship, and least likely for participants in the identity diffusion group.

With regard to occupational contexts, for global identity, most participants in the identity diffusion and moratorium groups were in the category with no university education. In contrast, most participants in the identity achievement group were university students, with only a smaller proportion being in the no-university-education group. The pattern was the same for both occupational identity and global identity.

In sum, Study I demonstrated that the position in the identity formation process was related to romantic relationships and occupational contexts and that there were some gender differences with regards to identity formation.

Study II

In the second study, the focus was on the psychological distress that may be associated with identity formation. This too is a cross-sectional investigation of the same group of 25-year-olds as in Study I. Issues addressed in this study were whether it is always experienced as distressing to be uncertain about one's identity and if associations between identity formation and psychological symptoms may be mediated by experiences of identity distress.

Aims

The purpose of this study was to investigate the relationship between identity and psychological distress in emerging adulthood. This research question was addressed by means of a two-step process. First, in an initial step, the relationships between identity status, identity distress, and psychological symptoms were explored. Based on previous research, the expectation was that participants experiencing identity diffusion and moratorium would experience more distress. It was also expected that higher levels of identity distress would be related to higher levels of psychological symptoms. Based on the results of the first step, the second stage of the research involved testing a model of mediation. It was expected that identity status would affect the experience of distress over identity issues, which in turn would affect the degree to which the individual was troubled by psychological symptoms.

Participants

The participant group was the same as in Study I.

Measures

The ego-identity status interview was used as a measure of identity status (see the description above). In Study II, only the global identity status assignment was used.

The Identity Distress Survey (IDS; Berman et al., 2004) was used to study to what extent the participants experienced distress over identity issues. This is a self-report questionnaire consisting of ten questions based on the diagnostic criteria for Identity Disorder in the DSM-III-R (1987).

The Symptom Checklist-90 (SCL-90) is a self-report measure consisting of 90 items with symptoms related to psychiatric conditions

(e.g., “feeling no interest in things” and, “nervousness or shakiness”). This study used the checklist to calculate an overall measure of experienced distress during the preceding week (Global Severity Index, GSI).

Main findings

The moratorium group stood out with significantly higher scores of identity distress than those of any of the other three identity status groups. No significant differences between any of the other three identity status groups were found.

With regard to psychological symptoms, the SCL-90 scores were significantly higher in the moratorium group than in the identity achievement and foreclosure groups. The SCL-90 scores of the identity diffusion group did not differ significantly from those of any of the other three identity statuses. Subsequent analyses of the SCL-90 subscales demonstrated that it was for the subscales measuring obsessive-compulsive, depressive, and anxiety symptoms that the moratorium group had a significantly higher level of symptoms. For the last two subscales, the identity diffusion group also had significantly lower scores than did the moratorium group.

Furthermore, psychological symptoms and identity distress were related: participants who met identity problems criteria scored higher on the SCL-90 than did those who did not meet the identity problems criteria. Additionally, there were positive associations between the SCL-90 scale and the continuous scores for identity distress.

Moreover, the mediational model proposing that identity status affects identity distress, which in turn, affects psychological symptoms, was tested; and the results revealed that being in moratorium was associated with higher levels of identity distress and, in turn, higher levels of psychological symptoms.

In sum, the results of Study II indicated that, for some young people, the identity exploration conducted in emerging adulthood can be accompanied by increased psychological symptoms, mediated by the experience of identity distress. However for these emerging adults in Sweden, identity diffusion was not associated with identity distress or psychological symptoms.

Study III

The third study of the thesis deals with identity formation and body image in late adolescence. The study is a cross-sectional investigation of 18-year-olds' identity formation, body-esteem, and body ideal internalization. The study focused on how the relations between identity formation and body image can be understood from the viewpoint of identity theory.

Aims

The aim of Study III was to investigate how identity formation is related to body-esteem and body ideal internalization. Three hypotheses guided the investigations: (1) Women were expected to be more concerned with identity issues and (2) to experience poorer body-esteem and more body ideal internalization than were men. (3) Finally, a stronger sense of identity was expected to be related to higher body-esteem and less internalization of societal body ideals in women and men.

Measures

The Ego Identity Process Questionnaire (EIPQ; Balistreri et al., 1995) was used to study identity formation. This questionnaire measures the identity processes of exploration (e.g., "I have considered different political views thoughtfully" and "I have undergone several experiences that made me change my views on men's and women's roles") and commitment (e.g. "I am unlikely to alter my vocational goals" and "I am very confident about what kinds of friends are best for me") in ideological and interpersonal life-areas.

The Body-Esteem Scale for Adolescents and Adults (BESAA; Mendelson et al., 2001) measures degree of body satisfaction. The BESAA has three subscales: general feelings about one's appearance (e.g., "I like what I see when I look in the mirror"), satisfaction with one's weight (e.g., "I really like what I weigh"), and evaluations attributed to others about one's appearance (e.g., "People my own age like my looks").

The internalization subscale of the Socio-cultural Attitudes Towards Appearance Scale (SATAQ-R; Cusumano & Thompson, 1997; Thompson et al., 1999) was used to investigate the participants' internalization of societal body ideals. The statements were phrased differently for women (e.g., "I wish I looked like the underwear models in magazines") and men (e.g., "I often find myself comparing my physique with those of athletes pictured in magazines").

Participants

The participants in this study come from a community sample recruited in schools in all areas of Gothenburg, the second largest city in Sweden with 520,000 inhabitants. In this fourth wave of the longitudinal study, the participants were 18 years old. A total of 714 participants (74.4% of the 960 participants in the first wave of the longitudinal study), 394 women and 320 men, completed the questionnaire. The great majority of the participants were students (91.7%, $n = 655$) and were just about to finish the third and final grade of upper secondary school.

Main findings

In line with the first hypothesis, women were indeed more likely to explore identity issues than were men, the differences, specifically, being noted on the subscales for interpersonal and ideological explorations. Moreover, gender explained more of the variance in interpersonal exploration than in ideological exploration. Women were more likely to explore both interpersonal and ideological issues, but the difference was greatest for interpersonal issues.

The second hypothesis was that women would have poorer body-esteem and more body ideal internalization than men. Indeed, women were less satisfied with their appearance and their weight than were men and had internalized society's body ideals to a greater extent than had men. There were no gender differences in the body-esteem scale that measured attributions to others.

As expected from the third hypothesis, there were associations between identity formation, body-esteem, and body ideal internalization. For women, more interpersonal identity exploration and commitments were associated with more positive beliefs about how others viewed their own appearance (attribution); however, more interpersonal exploration was also related to more body ideal internalization. For the men, stronger interpersonal commitments were related to higher general evaluations of their own appearance (appearance).

In sum, Study III demonstrated that there were associations between identity formation and body image, and that these relationships mainly concerned the social aspects of both constructs, particularly in the case of women.

GENERAL DISCUSSION

Overall, this thesis attempted to advance the understanding of the many ways in which people grow up and try to construct a sense of identity. The results demonstrated that identity formation continued into emerging adulthood, and that a person's position in the identity formation process was related to the social contexts of love and work, as well as to gender. The results also demonstrated that identity exploration was related to psychological distress in general and to identity-related distress in particular. Moreover, young people's identity formation was related to how they felt about their bodies and how much they internalized societal body ideals. In the following, I will address how the studies of this thesis add to the knowledge of identity formation in young people today. In addition a methodological discussion will treat these studies limitations and make suggestions for future research.

Global identity status distributions

Identity achievement was the most common overall identity status, but fewer than half of the participants were coded to this position. This finding is consistent with those of other studies of participants in their early twenties (Kroger, 2007b; Kroger et al., 2010). A longitudinal study of identity formation in adulthood conducted in Finland found that the proportion of participants in the identity achievement group continued to increase between the three points at which data were collected, that is, ages 27, 36 and 42 (Fadjukoff et al., 2005). However, in Study I most participants had the identity statuses signified by established commitments, that is, identity achievement or foreclosure. That almost a third of the participants were assigned to the foreclosure status can be interpreted in at least two ways. For example, it has been suggested there are two subcategories of the foreclosure status: firm foreclosure and developmental foreclosure (Kroger, 1995). Firm foreclosure is seen as a more rigid and fixed structure and is described as more of a developmental endpoint. In contrast, developmental foreclosure is regarded as indicating that identity

development has yet to begin. Had the distinction between developmental and firm foreclosure been possible to make in Study I, it could have advanced the understanding of the identity status distributions in the study. That is, if most of the individuals in the foreclosure group could have been assigned to the developmental foreclosure subgroup, a large proportion of the 25 year old participants would have been at a developmental starting point in terms of identity formation. On the contrary, if they had been assigned to the firm foreclosure subcategory, this would have implied that most participants had established a sense of identity even though some of them had done so without first undergoing a process of exploration. The positions in the identity formation process of the participants in the foreclosure group therefore have implications for the understanding of whether or not many of the emerging adults were at the beginning of the identity versus identity confusion stage or whether identity formation was no longer the most prominent issue for them.

Independent of whether the foreclosure found in this study could be described as developmental or firm, the results of this and other studies indicate that identity formation is an ongoing process. Many people establish an initial identity in emerging adulthood, whereas others may begin identity formation later in life. Though identity formation is accentuated by the development in adolescence and in emerging adulthood, it really is a life-long process. Grotevant (1987) suggested that the process of identity formation should be viewed from a lifespan perspective, as it begins with the self-development in infancy, is accentuated by the development in adolescence, and remains open to reformulation throughout one's life course. Marcia (2002) has also pointed out that to maintain the sense of sameness and continuity offered by an established identity, one's identity needs to be reformulated and adjusted as one undergoes developmental and social changes.

These notions are in line with how both social psychological and narrative approaches to the study of identity view identity formation, that is, as more of a fluid and changing process (Kroger, 2004). However, from a social psychological perspective, the psychosocial approach to the study of identity has been criticized for viewing identity as too much of a fixed structure and not taking sufficient account of societal influences on identity formation (Lalander & Johansson, 2007). In the narrative approach to the study of identity (e.g., McAdams, Josselson, & Lieblich, 2006) the individual's on-going construction of a life story forms the point of focal interest. The ability and need to form a coherent life story is also said to be

triggered by the development occurring in adolescence and emerging adulthood, but the emerging life story is described as a dynamic and evolving identity configuration (McAdams, 2001). Both the narrative perspective and the identity status approach build on Erikson's theory, but with somewhat different focuses (Syed, 2012). Some studies have investigated how the different models are connected, for example, in terms of ethnic identity (Syed & Azmitia, 2008) and the relations between identity status and meaning making in emerging adults' narratives (McLean & Pratt, 2006). McLean and Pasupathi (2012) argued for an integration of the two approaches by describing how, when taken together, they offer a richer understanding of identity formation. These authors claim that people perform their identity exploration using narratives and that these narrative processes also reflect and promote the narrators ways of integrating their commitments and their behaviors. They further argue that identity statuses offer structured snapshots of these processes, whereas the narrative approaches describe the processes themselves. While people explore their identities and make commitments to identity-defining alternatives, they are also constructing their life stories. Although several approaches are certainly necessary in order to capture the richness of identity formation, the identity status interview leads to several valuable insights with regard to people's positions in the process of figuring out who they are.

Identity formation in different life areas

The patterns of identity status distributions indicated some differences in identity formation across the various life areas included in Study I. The distributions of identity status for the life areas of occupational choice, work/family priorities, and global identity status were similar. That is, identity achievement was the most common status, followed by foreclosure and the two non-committed statuses—identity diffusion and moratorium. However, the life areas of parenthood and romantic relationships differed from the other domains in that the identity achievement and moratorium groups were smaller, while the foreclosure group was larger.

It has been suggested that commitment to an actual relationship is more important to identity than is commitment to an ideology of relationships (e.g., Grotevant, 1987). The impression gained from the interviews was that, while participants who talked about an actual

relationship tended to express more elaborate views of what it meant to them and what they expected of their partner, those who talked about relationships only in abstract terms seemed to offer more succinct and less elaborate responses. This could indicate that an interview that focused more on the here-and-now, and on emotional aspects of relationships, rather than on exploring relationships at a more ideological level, would yield different results. To obtain a deeper understanding of the meaning of romantic relationships to the identities of emerging adults, further investigations in which these issues are explored in more depth are required. There is also a need for investigations of the personal meaning that emerging adults assign to issues of love, romantic relationships, and being single. Nonetheless, Study I demonstrated that, at least at an ideological level, identity exploration concerning romantic relationships was less common than exploration of other issues. Some further clarification of these issues was found in an additional analysis of the identity status interviews in which the focus was on how the participants' talked about their parents' role in their occupational and relational identity formation (Wängqvist, Frisé, Ignell, & Fernros, 2011). This investigation revealed that the participants had more explicit perceptions of their parents' ideas regarding occupational than relational issues. The participants often seemed to perceive their ideas about relational issues as similar to their parents' ideas, though this impression was conveyed more implicitly, whereas occupational issues were discussed directly. Taken together, these findings might indicate that issues of whether one wants a relationship and what to expect from such a relationship are viewed more as facts than as issues that need to be considered from several perspectives before making a personal commitment.

Becoming a parent lay some years ahead for most participants. Only 12 of the 136 participants had or were expecting children. However, it is noteworthy that past or present exploration of work/family priorities was more common than was exploration of parenthood issues. Hence, work/family priorities seemed to be a more salient issue for many of the participants. It could also be that work/family priorities were viewed as an issue that needs to be considered in many ways before one can reach a commitment. That exploration of parenthood issues was less frequent could indicate that, as in the case of romantic relationships, these commitments were viewed as more of a given. An ensuing thematic analysis of interview responses with regard to both parenthood and work/family priorities in the group without children revealed that a large majority of the participants

were certain that they wanted to become parents: no one said no, and only a few were hesitant (Frisén, Carlsson, & Wängqvist, 2013). However, parenthood was something they saw in their future, not when they were 25 years old. Before they became parents, they wanted to be prepared, usually in the sense of having settled in a career and a long-term relationship. Another theme was that they wanted to wait before becoming parents because now was a time for them to focus on themselves. This corresponds to the idea of emerging adulthood as a time of self-focus (Arnett, 2006). Together these findings indicate that wanting to become a parent is more or less normative for many Swedish 25-year-olds, but that for most of them it is something they want in the future, not now. Future investigations of changes in identity status in these life areas, and of the meaning of these identity issues when the participants actually make the transition to parenthood, may yield valuable insights into whether the importance and meaning of these issues to identity formation may change.

Identity formation and romantic relationships

If this had been a goofy Swedish youth film about a teenager with identity problems, these problems would have been solved by now. Once the guy shows up and rescues the situation . . . the girl's problems immediately disappear. But this is not a chick flick, this is good old reality and I still don't sleep at night and there is still a worry that keeps me from sleeping.

It is reassuring. It would have been terrible if I felt myself lucky just because I met a guy in a patterned cardigan. This knowledge gives me strength to continue the project. Something here needs to be investigated. (Svensson, 2008, p. 135, own translation)

In the above extract from the novel *Hey Dolly* by Amanda Svensson, the narrator questions the way love is emphasized as a solution in illustrations of young women's struggles with identity issues. The narrator sees few associations between establishing a romantic relationship and solving her identity-related problems. In her view, identity does not seem to be a necessary prerequisite for achieving intimacy, as Erikson (1968) has suggested, nor does she seem to believe that a romantic relationship will help her find out who she is, as is indicated in descriptions of romantic

relationships as contexts for identity exploration (Montgomery, 2005). Instead, she continues to feel confused and her identity project continues.

Although the narrator in *Hey Dolly* may not necessarily agree, the results of Study I support the idea that identity and romantic relationships are interrelated, as seen in the differences in the number of participants in each identity status group that had a long-term relationship. Whereas being in a long-term relationship was most common in the identity achievement group, it was least likely in the identity diffusion group. Study I focused on romantic relationships as social context; it was not intended as an investigation of inner processes such as intimacy. Nevertheless, these results fit well with Erikson's theory in which intimacy is described as a task to be undertaken subsequent to achieving an identity (Erikson, 1968). The results also fit well with the empirical findings of intimacy status research, which demonstrate the existence of a relationship between achieved identity and commitment to a romantic relationship (Orlofsky, 1993; Årseth et al., 2009). However, as Study I is a cross-sectional investigation, the findings only indicate that identity and involvement in a relationship appear to be related, not that identity formation preceded involvement in a romantic relationship. All in all, the results were in line with the idea suggested by Årseth et al. (2009), that identity and intimacy interact and amplify each other, rather than the idea that achieving identity is a necessary prerequisite for the attainment of intimacy. Moreover, domain-specific analyses revealed that it was more common for people involved in relationships to have explored or be exploring work/family issues. Thus, involvement in a relationship might make people more aware of the need to consider and come to a decision regarding how they want to prioritize between work and family in their lives. Taken together, the research findings suggest that the social context in terms of romantic relationships is associated with people's identity formation.

Identity formation and occupational contexts

The relationship between the participants' identity status and their occupational context was investigated in Study I. Three types of occupational context were investigated: (1) working without having a university education, (2), being enrolled in university studies, and (3) working after having completed a university education. Most participants in the identity diffusion group were working without having any higher

education, whereas most participants in the identity achievement group were students. In this sense, the results obtained differed from those of Munro and Adams (1977) and Morash (1980) who found that identity achievement was more common among working youth. Instead, the results appear to correspond better to those of a study from Norway (Danielsen et al., 2000) in which university students were primarily in the identity achievement or moratorium groups. Moreover, Study I included people who were working after having finished their university education, which was not the case in the previous studies (i.e., Danielsen et al., 2000; Morash, 1980; Munro & Adams, 1977). These participants were rarely found in either the moratorium or identity diffusion groups, but rather in the groups with established commitments, that is identity achievement or foreclosure. Being uncertain as to one's overall sense of identity and as to one's occupational identity was uncommon among people who were pursuing a career after the completion of their university studies.

As for the other occupational contexts, the findings of Study I corresponded more to those of Danielsen et al. (2000) than to those of the other two studies with similar research questions (Morash, 1980; Munro & Adams, 1977), as identity achievement was more frequent among students than among the participants who were working but did not have a university degree. This could be due to historical effects, as the two other studies are from the 1970s and early 1980s, and to similarities between Norwegian and Swedish culture. In particular, the highly developed nature of the Scandinavian-style welfare systems found in both Sweden and Norway might explain why the people in the identity achievement group were often university students. The consequences of delaying one's entry into higher education may not be as great in societies where social and financial security have a more pronounced collective dimension, which may make the task of planning and starting a career appear less urgent. This may in turn, cause people to wait until they have figured out some identity issues before they embarking on a career. When entering university in Sweden, students decide on a direction that affects the future path of their studies. Any subsequent change of mind is often associated with a number of setbacks. Consequently, opportunities to engage in the active exploration of one's occupational direction tend to be limited after entering university.

There were larger proportions of university students in the identity achievement than in the moratorium group, which indicates that, in Sweden, once at university, a direction in life with regards to overall

identity has often already been chosen. Even if these people had yet to start their working life their identification with a work role and the establishment of a sense of identity had already occurred. Thus, embarking on a career may not be necessary in order to establish a subjective sense of being an adult, in terms of figuring out who one is and where one is heading in life. Furthermore, investigation of the particular effects of the Swedish university system (particularly the fact that that a very influential decision concerning the path of one's studies is made at an early stage for many students) on the process of exploring and making commitments would be of great value. For example, investigation of the effects on identity formation of entering university immediately after secondary school versus later on could yield new insights.

A gap between upper secondary school and higher education is in some ways more or less normative in Sweden (the Scandinavian trend of taking a "gap year" after the end of upper secondary school has been described by Douglass, 2007). Not taking advantage of this gap may be more closely associated with firmly held commitments established earlier on in life. In this regard, Kåks (2007) found that the norms of individualization and globalization (e.g., taking time off to travel during emerging adulthood and postponing parenthood and working-life for the sake of self-actualization) were highly influential in emerging adults' ideas of what the transition to adulthood should be like. Interestingly, Kåks (2007) also found that such norms could also affect young people who did not follow them so that they might feel that they had failed to do everything that a young person is expected to have done before settling down.

Additionally, it is important to note that, in this study, the group with no university education was the most heterogeneous of the three, including both those who had settled for an occupation early on and remained in it, and those with a history of incomplete university studies. This latter category may have included people who had engaged in exploration by trying out a potential career option, but for whom the exploration had not led to identity-defining commitments. An impression from the interviews was that some participants categorized in the group with no university education indicated that they wanted to start such an education at some future time. It is apparent that the occupational contexts of young people are involved result not only their own decision-making, but also from social factors. The increasing unemployment rates and job-instability among young people today are likely to affect individual identity formation as well. The instability and exploration said to accompany emerging

adulthood (Arnett, 2000, 2006), may become more or less involuntary for larger groups of people, who are still facing the same norms concerning how one should explore, seek new experience, travel, and develop the self.

Identity formation and psychological distress

Study II investigated identity in relation to psychological distress. The first step involved exploring the associations between identity status, identity distress, and psychological symptoms. These analyses demonstrated that participants in the moratorium identity status group had higher levels of identity distress and psychological symptoms than did participants in the other three status groups. Thus for emerging adults in Sweden, moratorium appeared to be the most distressful position in the identity formation process. However, it does not seem to be the “not knowing” (who to be and what to do) in itself that is associated with increased distress since, if that were so, the distress reported by the participants in the identity diffusion group would equal that of the moratorium group. Rather, it seems to be “not knowing—but wanting to know” that is associated with distress, that is, the active struggle over identity issues associated with moratorium. In the case of identity distress, this makes sense, given that individuals lacking identity-defining commitments and who are not attempting to make such commitments by exploring alternatives are less likely to be troubled by identity issues. However, the lower levels of distress over psychological symptoms in the identity diffusion group are not as easily understood.

The low levels of identity distress and psychological symptoms among the men in the identity diffusion group imply that the identity diffusion experienced by these young men resembles the status called carefree diffusion (cf., Luyckx et al., 2005; Marcia, 1989; Schwartz et al., 2011). Carefree identity diffusion has been described as representing people who are “happily uncommitted” (Schwartz et al., 2011, p. 841). An explanation as to why the identity diffusion group in this study seemed relatively carefree may be that their lack of firm commitments corresponded well with norms and popular views of people in emerging adulthood in Sweden. That is, being “easy-going” and “taking the day as it comes” are seen by many as constituting an adaptive approach in emerging adulthood. This is also related to descriptions of identity in late modern society as being more fluid and reflexive in nature (Giddens, 1991). Identity diffusion might thus be functional in emerging adulthood, which in

addition to its inherent instability, is also subject to social and cultural variation (Arnett, 2000). Without firm commitments and with low engagement in exploration, there is not much to lose, and, as a consequence, the individual may be more flexible when presented with new opportunities (Born, 2007). However, the delaying of commitments and identity exploration that accompanies identity diffusion may also be interpreted in less positive ways. The subcategory of identity-diffused men found in this thesis may have some resemblance to the subculture among young men sometimes called “Guyland” (Kimmel, 2008) or “Youthhood” (Côté, 2000). Within these frameworks, the seemingly carefree lifestyle in some subcultures is described as perilous in that it involves a postponement of commitments that is detrimental for individual development and relationships and is a lifestyle that involves risk-taking. Thus, to understand the seemingly carefree identity diffusion experienced by some emerging adults’ future investigations could take other aspects than psychological distress into account.

The second analytic step of Study II tested a mediational model that hypothesized that the association between identity status and psychological symptoms would be mediated by identity distress. The testing supported the model’s hypothesis and the results indicate that active identity exploration (moratorium) can be accompanied by increased psychological symptoms, but that an individual’s perceived distress over identity issues mediates this association. It may be that what can be seen as normative for development in emerging adulthood—that is, exploration of identity issues (Arnett, 2000, 2006)—does not in itself lead to increased psychological symptoms. Rather, it is that the issues being explored are experienced as distressful that leads to increased psychological symptoms. It is important to note that the identity distress and psychological symptoms associated with the moratorium phase should not necessarily be considered in a negative light, since undergoing a moratorium is the only way to reach identity achievement. The moratorium phase is a crisis and as such involves the opportunity for growth as well as the risk of more problematic development should one fail to resolve the crisis. That it is associated with psychological distress does not imply that it is a position to be avoided, merely that some individuals might need guidance and support when exploring their identities.

Identity formation and body image

Study III set out to investigate the association between identity formation and aspects of body image in a group of Swedish 18-year-olds. The study group in this study were thus on the threshold of emerging adulthood. The study found associations between identity formation and the body image aspects, body-esteem and body ideal internalization.

For women, interpersonal identity formation was related to their views of what others thought about their appearance and to their internalization of body ideals. However, there was a difference in the direction of these associations. More exploration of interpersonal identity issues was related to more positive views of what others thought about their bodies, which may be seen as a positive aspect of body image. However, more interpersonal identity exploration was also related to more internalization of society's body ideals, which is associated with a more problematic body image. This is a complex finding. When people undergo a process of exploring their identities, they are by definition uncertain about their opinions concerning many things (Kroger, 2007a); they may therefore be more open and susceptible to the opinions of others. This study indicates that, at least with regards to aspects of women's body image, this openness holds for both positive and negative social influences.

The findings of different directions for the relationships between interpersonal identity explorations and attributions to others (positive) and body ideal internalization (negative) may also indicate that what is considered positive with regard to body image is not unambiguous. It might be that the attributions to others have both positive and negative meanings with regard to body image, and that this may vary among both items and individuals. The attributions subscale of the Body Esteem Scale for Adolescents and Adults (BESAA; Mendelson et al., 2001) might have two meanings: one that involves being satisfied with one's body (positive), and another that involves finding one's appearance highly important in interactions with others (potentially negative). For example, if people "always" agree with the attribution item "I think my appearance would help me get a job," this might indicate that they are satisfied with their appearance; however, it might also indicate that they believe appearance to be what others value the most about them. Viewing appearance as one's most valued attribute might be problematic, whether or not one is satisfied with it. This ambiguity with regard to what is positive in terms of body image has been noted by Piran and Teall (2012), who argued that body

image represents an outside-in perspective on the body, in which the body remains an object evaluated independent of whether the body image is positive or negative. These authors argue that this outside-in perspective represents the internalization of the evaluative gaze of “the other.” As this internalized gaze involves the objectification of the body it may affect the feeling of being at home in your body; that is, embodiment, in a negative way, whether or not the evaluations represented by the person’s body image are positive or negative.

Moreover, women’s stronger commitments with regard to family roles, friendships, romantic relationships, and gender roles—the interpersonal identity issues—were also related to more positive evaluations attributed to others about their appearance, but not to the internalization of society’s body ideals as was the case for the exploration of the same issues. This could indicate that once identity commitments have been established and a more stable sense of individual identity is formed, the influence of the more negative social body image aspects, such as body ideal internalization, decreases. For men, it was how they themselves felt about their body that was related to their commitments in interpersonal life areas. This means that men who felt certain about what they valued with regard to their romantic relationships, friendships, gender roles, and family role, were more satisfied with their bodies. The sense of individual identity that firm commitments represent may make people feel more satisfied with themselves in general, as research into identity and self-esteem has demonstrated (e.g., Schwartz et al., 2011), as well as with their bodies. It may also work the other way around as well, that is, that men who are satisfied with their appearance more easily commit themselves to interpersonal relationships.

Study III also demonstrated that women had lower body-esteem, regarding their appearance and weight, and had internalized society’s body ideals more than men. As mentioned in the introduction, several frameworks attempt to understand the frequent gender differences found in body image research, and these frameworks may help the understanding of the gender differences found in Study III as well. First, these gender differences might be explained through gender socialization theory (Calogero & Thompson, 2010) and the tripartite theory of social influences (Keery et al., 2004): In line with traditional gender roles, women receive more prevalent messages (from parents, peers, and the media) about the importance of appearance than do men (Murnen & Don, 2012). Furthermore, the female body is more often objectified and sexualized than

is the male body (Fredrickson & Roberts, 1997; Lindberg & McKinley, 2006), which could lead to women feeling as though their bodies are objects available for the evaluative gaze of “the other”. The following quote from the novel *Pojkarna* (“the boys”) is dramatic example of the feeling that one does not own one’s body and of how difficult it may be to integrate the body into one’s sense of identity:

My body sat on me like something alien, a rubber suit that was sticky and scratchy, but no matter how I tore and scraped with my nails it stayed put. At night I would dream that my body fell off me. It was so simple, suddenly I found a zipper in the skin. Sometimes it ran along the thighs, sometimes over the stomach, along the back or between the legs. I opened it, could feel the air tingle on my real skin underneath, like a vacuum when it releases. And I peeled my skin off, got out of it like getting out of a dirty garment, and felt the cool floor against my new soles. But when I went to the mirror to see what I really looked like, I always woke up before I got there. (Schiefauer, 2011, pp. 19-20, own translation).

The frameworks address the issue of gender differences in body image from several perspectives. What all these explanations share is that they emphasize how social structures and gender inequalities shape the images and attitudes concerning the importance of appearance that women and men are confronted with in contemporary Western cultures.

Identity formation and gender

The results of Study I indicated that the patterns of identity status distribution across life areas differed more for men than for women. Whereas identity achievement was the most common identity status for most life areas included in the study (foreclosure was somewhat more common for parenthood and equally common for romantic relationships) and for the overall identity status for women, the most common identity status for men differed across the life areas. It might be that the developmental sequence in which the various issues are dealt with is less uniform for men than for women. Overall, the results indicated that identity achievement was more common among the women than among the men. It was only for work/family priorities that identity diffusion was the most

common identity status for men, but the men were more likely than the women to be in the identity diffusion group for the global identity status and across all life areas, with the exception of occupational identity. The results of Study III also indicated that among 18-year-olds, identity exploration was more common among women than men. Although these findings of gender differences in identity formation are in part consistent with the results of some previous studies (Bergh & Erling, 2005; Klimstra, Hale III, Raaijmakers, Branje, & Meeus, 2010; Lewis, 2003; Pastorino et al., 1997) such pronounced gender differences, particularly for the global identity status distributions, are not common (Kroger, 1997). There certainly were similarities between Swedish men and women with regard to identity formation, but nonetheless the gender differences that did emerge may be viewed as surprising given that Sweden is often described as one of the most gender equal countries in the world (e.g., Guiso et al., 2008; Hausmann, Tyson, & Zahidi, 2012).

The gender differences reported in Studies I and III, as well those reported in some previous studies (Bergh & Erling, 2005; Fadjukoff et al., 2005; Lewis, 2003; Pastorino et al., 1997) could indicate that occupational issues are more important to men and relational issues more important to women. However, there were no statistically significant gender differences in identity formation in the occupational domain in Study I, and in Study III, women were more likely than men to explore the ideological issues that included occupation. The idea that occupation should be a more important aspect of men's identity formation than of women's is not supported by the results from either Study I or Study III. Nonetheless, as the gender differences that emerged in both studies were most pronounced for interpersonal identity issues, the findings still appear to accord with traditional views of women as oriented more toward interpersonal relationships than are men. Taken together this could indicate that, in Sweden, women are still socialized to focus more on relationships with others than are men.

Furthermore, that a large proportion of the men were coded to the identity statuses defined by a low degree of exploration (i.e., diffusion and foreclosure) in Study I and displayed less exploration than did the women in Study III could reflect that, for young men in Sweden today, there is a lack of social factors that stress identity exploration as an important developmental task. Contributing to this may be the fact that, in Study II, both the individuals in the foreclosure group and those in the identity diffusion group were found to have levels of psychological distress as low

as those in the identity achievement group. Identity exploration is a psychologically challenging and tiring process in which people are unlikely to engage without perceiving some sort of pressure or feeling that such efforts are necessary. It could be that the dual roles that women hold in Swedish society mean that identity formation is a more pressing issue for young women than it is for young men. Although in Sweden today men are more involved in the family sphere than ever before, such participation is, nevertheless, still just an option for many. Magnusson (2006) found that young couples in the Nordic countries had ideals that ranged from conservative to radical. Even so, while men are fully able to take on the role of primary breadwinner, for women, either staying at home as a housewife (after the conclusion of paid parental leave) or focusing primarily on work and financially supporting the family are both not only uncommon but indeed controversial solutions to the work/family dilemma (the former in particular more so than the latter). Thus, the title of the *New York Times* article “In Sweden men can have it all” (Bennhold, 2010) may very well be true, but an important gender difference still remains, as it appears that whereas men *can*, women *should* have it all. An interesting issue for future research would be to explore whether the identity formation of men in cohabiting relationships characterized by an equal division of responsibility for the family sphere differs from that of men in cohabiting relationships with a more traditional division of responsibility.

The gender differences could also be related to the salience of the life areas included in the identity status interview (Marcia et al., 1993) and in the Ego Identity Process Questionnaire (Balistreri et al., 1995). Even though they appear to cover salient identity issues for young women in Sweden, the issues may not be as important to young men. Other areas might be important to the identity formation of young men in Sweden as well as to young women. Moreover, from a social psychological perspective, lifestyle and consumption are often described as highly significant for the definition of the self in late modern societies such as Sweden, whereas work and family are associated with more modern societal ideals (Lalander & Johansson, 2007). Even though it is argued that modern and late modern ideals coexist and influence the identities of young people in contemporary society (Lalander & Johansson, 2007) the lack of examination of more late modern life areas in this study may have affected the results.

Methodological discussion

When the longitudinal project of which Studies I and II in this thesis are part, started in 1982 the study group was considered representative of families in Gothenburg (Broberg, 1989). However, this may have changed over the years. Rough comparisons indicate that there might be a larger proportion of people with a university degree in this study group compared to a national sample of 25-year-olds (Statistics Sweden, 2009a). In this study 22.1% of the participants were students and 38.2% were working after having finished a post-secondary education, whereas in the national sample 39% had some post-secondary education. Nonetheless, as many identity studies of emerging adults include only students, this study still has the advantage of including participants from a variety of occupational contexts. Moreover, the participant groups in all three studies of this thesis were community samples recruited from a variety of socio-economic areas in Gothenburg.

The first two studies of this thesis are based on identity status interviews with 25-year-olds. There are great advantages in using interviews when studying identity, but this approach also entails several methodological limitations. First, since interviews are time-consuming, this method limits the number of participants who can be included in any study. However, the participants in Studies I and II were recruited in 1982 and the use of questionnaires instead of interviews in the current wave of the project would therefore not have affected the number of participants. Instead, as the number of participants was predetermined, and as the participants, for the sake of minimizing attrition, had personal appointments with the research staff, there was an opportunity to perform interviews and gain the additional insights and depth that qualitative data afford. Still, although the data and coding procedure are qualitative, statistical analyses are the basis of both Studies I and II and the number of participants affects what statistical analyses can be performed. In addition, even though tests of reliability were performed, the interview format is more sensitive to the relationship between the interviewer and the interviewee, and to the impression of the rater (Bourne, 1978). A common criticism of the identity status interview is that an identity status assignment can be affected by the participants' ability to verbalize their exploration and commitments (Van Hoof, 1999). A question relating to this is whether the person's actual sense of identity is equated to their ability to verbalize it. However, the interview and coding manual is designed to limit the risk of

confounding identity formation with verbal ability (Marcia et al., 1993), though it can never be entirely excluded.

For example, Luyckx et al. (2006) have claimed that exploring the personal meaning of a commitment after it has been reached (i.e., explorations in depth) is as important as exploring alternatives before reaching a commitment (i.e., exploration in breadth) and have criticized the identity status model for over emphasizing exploration in breadth. However, it may be argued that this applies mainly to questionnaire measures of identity status, in which questions aimed at measuring exploration focus mainly on whether or not the person has tried out several alternatives. In this way, the criticism points to a limitation with the questionnaire measure used in Study III (i.e., the EIPQ; Balistreri et al., 1995). However, using interviews as in Studies I and II, makes the personal meaning of an individual's commitments and exploration easier to grasp and include in the coding procedure (Marcia et al., 1993). Nevertheless, the interviews are based on the model in which different dimensions of explorations are not differentiated explicitly. Adding the process of exploration in depth (e.g., Luyckx et al., 2006) might yield additional information in studies in which interviews are used as well.

Another problem associated with the identity status interview is the categorical coding. Although one identity status is often predominant in most people's interview responses, this is not always so and features of all of the statuses are evident in many interviews. A coding procedure that takes this into account would more accurately describe the identity formation of the participants in any study. Several alternatives for coding the interviews have been suggested (Marcia et al., 1993). One suggestion is to rate each participant on a Likert-type scale for each identity status (Bartholomew, Henderson, & Marcia, 2000; MacKinnon & Marcia, 2002). An advantage of this approach would be that it would allow the study of identity statuses as continuous, as well as categorical measures. However, it is important to note that, even when categorical coding is used, it is performed based on a coding manual that emphasizes the training as well as the clinical sensitivity of the interviewers who subsequently conduct the coding (Kroger & Marcia, 2011). Finally, the identity status coding never concern the content of the participant's exploration and commitments, but rather the presence of these processes in the participants' narratives. The findings of both Studies I and II suggest several avenues whereby the content of these narratives could be explored qualitatively. For example, qualitative analyses of the interviews with participants in the identity

diffusion group could yield further insights into whether their lack of commitments and explorations represented a way for them to adapt to their social contexts or whether it expresses distress and troubles not captured by the measures included in Study II.

Moreover, with respect to the life areas included in an identity measure, there is always a risk that people for whom other life areas (i.e., ideology or lifestyle) are the most salient to their sense of identity may be categorized in the identity diffusion group, even though they would not be if other relevant domains were examined. This risk applies mainly to the global identity status categorization, as its definition extends beyond the participants' position in a particular domain. However, the life areas are chosen for their assumed salience to the study group. Nevertheless, a more extensive examination of the salience of various life areas to emerging adults' sense of identity, by means, for example, of an exploratory interview study or a focus-group study, would be valuable to find domains of salience both for the particular study group, and with regard to the cultural and historical context. Another way of addressing this problem might be to ask to participants whether, in addition to the life areas included in the interviews, there is anything else that they feel is an important part of their lives and who they are.

Despite the problems associated with it, the interview format provides a potentially rewarding avenue for investigating complex phenomena such as identity formation. Additionally, identity formation is not just a complex phenomenon, but also a process that is profoundly affected by the cultural context. By using an interview, not only general paths, but also the unique cultural and individual meanings of concepts can be explored and illustrated using the participants' own words.

Like identity formation, distress over identity issues is a complex phenomenon. However, the measure used in Study II to capture identity distress is a brief questionnaire. Although it may give a valid indication of the amount of distress the respondent experiences concerning identity issues, it can arguably fail to capture some aspects of identity distress. In terms of identity formation, interview studies may yield deeper insights and advance the understanding of the distress sometimes associated with identity issues. However, the results of Study II support the idea that originally led to the development of the Identity Distress Survey (IDS; Berman et al., 2004), namely, that measures of identity formation do not properly capture the distress that can sometimes be a constituent of the

identity formation process. Measuring identity distress using this measure reveal additional information about processes related to identity formation.

In the analyses of romantic relationships in Study I, the aim was to capture relationships that involved serious commitment and, to achieve this, the decision was made to include only those individuals who were in relationships that had lasted for a year or more. The advantage of this procedure was that the participants included in this category were likely to be committed to their relationships. However, as a consequence, participants who were in relationships that involved serious commitments, but that had lasted less than a year, ended up in the “non-committed” group. In future analyses, an alternative definition of a stable relationship might be desirable, as would a more profound investigation of the nature of the commitments involved in the romantic relationships of emerging adults.

Moreover, one limitation of the mediational model testing conducted in Study II relates to the use of concurrent data. To make inferences about causation, a longitudinal design would be necessary. The reasons for pursuing a mediational model and testing it with cross-sectional data were theoretical. That is, in theoretical descriptions of the importance of identity development for mental health and psychological well-being, the causal relationships in the directions of the model tested are often assumed (Erikson, 1968; Montgomery et al., 2008). Another limitation of the study was that the identity status measure in the mediational model was categorical. Future research could use a measure of identity formation that includes continuous measures of identity exploration and commitment such as the Ego Identity Process Questionnaire or code the identity interviews in that way.

A limitation of Study III is that it represented the first time that the Ego Identity Process Questionnaire (EIPQ) was used in Sweden. Moreover, the internal reliabilities of this Swedish measure were lower than those reported in other studies (e.g., Balistreri et al., 1995). However, the analyses of inter-item correlations for the measure revealed no patterns of certain life areas being particularly problematic in terms of reliability. Further evaluations are needed to ascertain the usefulness of the measure in Sweden. Nevertheless, the study revealed results that were similar to those of Swedish studies using other identity measures (e.g., Bergh & Erling, 2005). As mentioned above, another limitation is that the questionnaire does not measure the differentiated aspects of exploration and commitments that some models of identity formation propose (Crocetti et al., 2008; Luyckx et al., 2006; Luyckx, Schwartz, Berzonsky, et al., 2008).

It has also been argued that the use of questionnaires instead of interviews involves the risk that the identity definition is furthered from the original definitions in Erikson's theory (Kroger & Marcia, 2011). The reasoning behind this argument is that the identity status interview was developed to reveal indications of the underlying identity structure; if the questionnaires are, in turn, seen as indications of the identity statuses, they are one step further from the underlying identity structure. However, as there are advantages and disadvantages to both interviews and questionnaires, research of a complex phenomenon such as identity formation is probably best served by using both methods. Moreover, the identity statuses that can be retrieved from the EIPQ displayed moderate agreement with identity statuses from identity status interviews (Balistreri et al., 1995). Advantages of the questionnaire are that it includes issues that have been found to be relevant to Swedish adolescents in previous studies (Bergh & Erling, 2005) and that it encompasses a wide range of identity issues.

Study III demonstrated that identity formation is related to certain aspects of body image. This is valuable knowledge, particularly as it was the first study to investigate identity formation, body-esteem, and body ideal internalization. However, further research is needed to fully understand these associations. For example, as all the aspects of body image included as predictors in the regression models were correlated, the contributions of the individual predictors could be interpreted to only a limited extent. Further analyses could more thoroughly investigate the associations between identity formation and the individual body image aspects. Moreover, even though there are good reasons to use different questions when investigating the body ideal internalization of women and men, this does of course affect the interpretation of the gender differences that did emerge. However, should the same items be used the measure would tap into the ideals of only either women or men. The study findings point to several avenues for future research, such as the aspects of identity formation and body image that are related for women and men. Future research could place special emphasis on the role of both relational and societal influences on people's sense of identity and body image. For example, focus group studies and interviews could be used to determine how young people themselves think about the associations between identity formation and body image. Another way to gain more insights into the importance of the body to identity formation could be by asking people to describe situations in which they have become aware of their body's importance to who they are and then to analyze these narratives.

Moreover, in future research it might be useful to investigate bodily aspects of identity formation more directly. One way to do this would be to include bodily aspects in identity interviews. This could yield insights into how people explore and commit themselves to a decision regarding how their bodies and appearances are related to their sense of who they are. More specific knowledge of what role the body, compared with other identity areas, plays in the processes by which people form a sense of identity could also be achieved through such a procedure. Additionally, while aspects of body image appear to be absent from previous studies of identity formation, the same can be said about identity in the study of body image. A bridge between the study of identity formation and the study of body image could be offered by theory and research on embodiment (e.g., Piran & Teall, 2012) as embodiment represents an inside–out perspective on the body, and as feeling at home in one’s body, that is, to be embodied, is an important aspect of a person’s sense of identity. Future studies could consider experiences of embodiment in order to further explain the relationships between identity formation and body image.

There are several ways of viewing the gender differences observed in this thesis. One apparent explanation is that they indicate how being one of the most gender-equal countries in the world does not make Sweden a gender-equal country. More research is needed to understand the effects of these gender differences and gender inequalities on both women and men. To truly understand these differences between men and women with regard to identity formation and body image, further investigations are required. For example, in-depth analyses concerning the issues included in the identity interview and concerning the importance of the body in identity formation might advance the understanding of these issues. Finally, future research could also use a longitudinal framework in order to understand how identity formation unfolds during emerging adulthood and how its association with the aspects of love, work, psychological distress, and body image investigated here develop over time.

Conclusions

This thesis focused on emerging adults’ identity formation. Broadly stated, identity exploration and commitments may be seen as ways in which young people approach the question “Who am I?”—the first and most central question with regard to identity and identity formation. Whereas our

identity can be described as the answer to this question at any given moment, identity formation is the process of asking and searching for an integrated answer to the question. Although simple in its appearance, the question is complex and deeply existential, as it involves our knowledge of ourselves and our place in the world.

The results presented in this thesis indicated that, in emerging adulthood, identity formation is an ongoing process for many. Identity formation is also a developmental process in which individual development constantly interacts with socio-cultural context. This was seen in the fact that people's positions in the identity formation process varied across life areas and in the finding that, at age 25, many people had not yet settled into a set of identity-defining commitments. The thesis also demonstrated that identity formation was related to other aspects of emerging adults' development, such as their romantic relationships, occupational contexts, psychological distress, and aspects of body image. Moreover, the results of all three studies indicated that the identity development occurring in emerging adulthood is to some extent gendered. These gender differences are other examples of how socio-cultural context interacts with personal development.

In sum, this thesis demonstrated that identity formation is indeed a relevant developmental task for young people in Sweden, that it is related to other aspects of their development and living situations, and highlights how socio-cultural characteristics may affect the individual development.

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APPENDIX

- I. Frisé, A., & Wängqvist, M. (2011). Emerging adults in Sweden: Identity formation in the light of love, work and family. *Journal of Adolescent Research*, 26, 200–221. doi: 10.1177/0743558410376829
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UNIVERSITY OF GOTHENBURG
DEPT OF PSYCHOLOGY

ISBN 978-91-628-8666-0