

# DEVELOPING INTO EARLY ADULTHOOD

## The Role of Identity and Personality

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Avhandlingen för avläggande av filosofie doktorsexamen i psykologi, som med vederbörligt tillstånd av samhällsvetenskapliga fakultetsstyrelsen vid Göteborgs universitet kommer att offentligens försvaras fredagen den 27 november 2020, klockan 14.00 i sal F1, Psykologiska institutionen, Haraldsgatan 1, Göteborg.

Fakultetsopponent: Associate Professor Jennifer Pals Lilgendahl, Department of Psychology, Haverford College, U.S.

Föreliggande avhandling baseras på följande artiklar:

- I. Syed, M., Eriksson, P. L., Frisé, A., Hwang, C. P., & Lamb, M. E. (2020). Personality development from age 2 to 33: Stability and change in ego resiliency and ego control and associations with adult adaptation. *Developmental Psychology*, *56*, 815-832. doi: 10.1037/dev0000895
- II. Eriksson, P. L., Wängqvist, M., Carlsson, J., & Frisé, A. (2020). Identity development in early adulthood. *Developmental Psychology*, *56*, 1968-1983. doi: 10.1037/dev0001093
- III. Eriksson, P. L., McLean, K. C., & Frisé, A. (2020). Ta det onda med det goda [accepting the bad that comes with the good] - A cultural framework for identity narratives of difficult experiences in Sweden. *Identity*, *20*, 157-169. doi:10.1080/15283488.2020.1781636



# Abstract

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Eriksson, P., L. (2020). *Developing into early adulthood: The role of identity and personality*. Department of Psychology, University of Gothenburg, Sweden.

The overall aim of this thesis was to investigate the development into early adulthood, focusing on identity and personality. The aim of **Study I** was to explore the developmental course and implications of the two meta-traits ego resiliency (i.e., individuals' capacity to adjust to their environment) and ego control (i.e., level of impulse restraint) from childhood (age 2) to early adulthood (age 33),  $N = 139$ . In general, the rank-order stability of proximal waves was consistently high for ego resiliency and ego control. Latent growth curve models showed that ego resiliency displayed high mean-level stability over time. Ego control demonstrated greater change in childhood relative to adolescence and adulthood. Analyses with intercepts and slopes of ego resiliency and ego control as predictors of adult well-being revealed associations with well-being, but these were generally accounted for by the Big Five traits. This study shows that ego resiliency and ego control are fairly stable personality constructs from childhood to adulthood, and highlights their association with adult adaptation. The aim of **Study II** was to investigate identity development across early adulthood (ages 25, 29, and 33,  $N=118$ ). Investigations of identity status revealed that fewer individuals were in the moratorium status (i.e., current exploration of identity) and more were in the identity achievement status (i.e., identity exploration before establishing commitments) in later years. At the individual level, stable identity statuses with established commitments were by far the most common patterns. Longitudinal qualitative analyses of identity interviews showed three processes of identity development within these stable patterns: *approach to change*, *story integration*, and *participation in a broader life context*. These results show how early adults maintain and evolve their identity within status stability. The aim of **Study III** was to use a cultural framework to understand how narratives of difficult experiences are told among early adults in Sweden (age 33,  $N = 116$ ), and then to examine the relations between these narrative patterns and well-being. Employing an open-exploratory approach, four equally prevalent emotional sequences were found: redemptive sequencing, neutral/vague sequencing, combination of positive and negative sequencing, and negative sequencing. While no differences were found in the use of the first three emotional sequences for well-being, the negative sequencing was associated with poorer well-being. These results show that there are several ways to narrate difficult experiences in the Swedish context. In conclusion, this thesis illuminates the important role of personality and identity – two central aspects of the understanding of the self – in people's psychological development and well-being.

*Keywords:* identity development, identity process, narrative identity, personality development, ego resiliency, ego control, early adulthood, cultural context