

## University of Groningen

### Groningen Identity Development Scale

van der Gaag, Mandy; Famiglini, Matilda; Kunnen, Saskia; Bosma, Harke

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# GIDS-L

## Groningen Identity Development Scale: Landscape version

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### Reference

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## **1. Theoretical framework**

The GIDS is a semi-structured identity interview. It results in a representation of identity that is qualitatively unique to the individual, but at the same time is also quantifiable, making it possible to compare individuals with each other. The interview is rooted in the view of Erikson and Marcia on identity development, and is particularly suited to assess macro-level identity. It measures identity in separate domains of life, but also integrative identity structures that combine these domain-specific identities into a coherent whole.

### **1.1. Theoretical roots**

The interview is rooted in the basic ideas on identity development by Erikson (1956) and Marcia (1966): in the process of identity development the individual forms commitments, ideally through exploration. Commitments can take various shapes, but in their most abstract or macro-level form, commitments may contain goals, values and interests (e.g. van der Gaag et al., 2020). The GIDS assesses these abstract types of commitments, both their qualitative content, as well as various characteristics, such as their strength and utility. Importantly, such commitments are a reflection of the individual in the specific context that they live in (e.g., Bosma & Kunnen, 2001). This is also reflected in the interview: both the individual and their context are assessed, as well as what the context means to the individual and how they navigate it.

### **1.2. Domain specific and overarching commitments**

The GIDS combines a domain specific approach to identity with an integrative approach (also reflected in the landscape of identity model; van der Gaag et al., 2020). Specifically, the GIDS assesses commitments in various domains of life, but also assesses the existence of one or more overarching commitments.

Like most assessments of identity, the identity domains that are included in the GIDS are both interpersonal and intrapersonal (see also Schwartz, 2001). The choice for domains is based on Bosma (1985), with a few optimizations resulting from various rounds of data collection with the GIDS (see also appendix 6.3 for GIDS history). Domains included in the GIDS-L are: education, leisure time, parents, friendships, intimate relations, a flexible domain and finally one or more overarching commitments. These domains are meant to reflect those areas of life that the target group typically spends much time on or engages with frequently. The domains included here are optimized to be suitable for both adolescents and emerging adults, but may be adjusted to accommodate for different target groups (for example, for middle and late adulthood the education domain may be replaced with occupation, and the domain of children or grandchildren may be added, see also appendix 6.1). The flexible domain is meant to capture domains of identity that are important to some individuals, but that may not be so prominent in the entire target group as a whole. These may be themes such as mental health, body image,

religion, sexuality, being part of a minority, etc. (of course for some target populations certain themes are common, for example 'being deaf' in a population of deaf people, and in these cases it is possible and recommended to add the common theme to the interview as a standard domain, see also appendix 6.1).

Overarching commitments assess the integration of various domain-specific commitments into one coherent whole. Each individual may identify one or several overarching commitments, or none at all. An overarching commitment contains a configuration of domain-specific commitments that is unique to the individual. This configuration is characterized by a common theme, or a general principle, that connects all of these separate domain-specific commitments and integrates them into one coherent whole. In this way, the GIDS allows for the assessment of 'contextual integration' (Syed & McLean, 2016).

### **1.3. Interview structure**

Each domain within the GIDS is assessed with their own semi-structured interview. Thus the GIDS actually consists of 5 relatively brief domain-specific interviews, plus an optional flexible domain interview. In its core the interview is the same for every domain, but may differ in some specific questions that are adapted to that particular domain. The core of each domain interview is three questions about the individuals past, present and future in that domain. Each domain interview results in a domain-specific commitment statement: one or a few sentences that reflect the core ideas that the individual has about themselves in the context of that particular domain. This commitment statement may thus integrate past, present and future, and therefore has a certain level of temporal integration (Syed & McLean, 2016) and as such reflects a macro-level identity commitment (van der Gaag et al., 2020).

### **1.4. Questionnaire content**

Each domain-specific interview (and also the overarching commitment) is followed by the same questionnaire. In this questionnaire, various characteristics are assessed of the commitment itself, but also of the processes that have shaped the commitment. The GIDS-L measures two commitment characteristics. Firstly a very common characteristic, that is, the strength of the commitment - this measure is used in nearly all empirical studies on identity in the Erikson/Marcia tradition (for an overview see for example Meeus, 2011). Secondly, the GIDS-L measures a novel characteristic, that is, commitment utility, which reflects the extent to which the commitment is integrated with everyday life (van der Gaag et al., 2020). Besides these characteristics of commitment, the GIDS-L also gives an indication of the developmental process that has led up to this commitment. Commonly, exploration is considered to be an essential part of identity development and various forms of exploration have been distinguished, most importantly broad and in-depth exploration (Luyckx et al., 2006) and commitment reconsideration (Crocetti et al., 2008). These three exploration measures are included in the GIDS-L. This is supplemented by measures of identity relevant experiences that have recently

been proposed as an additional important component of the identity development process (e.g., van der Gaag et al., 2017; Van der Gaag et al., 2020). However, a word of caution is appropriate when using the GIDS-L to assess identity development: the GIDS-L can only provide a rough retrospective on the process. For a more detailed and arguably more accurate picture of the identity development process it may be better to use intensive longitudinal approaches (such as Becht et al., 2021; Klimstra et al., 2010; van der Gaag et al., 2017).

### **1.5. Strengths**

The strengths of the GIDS-L lie first of all in its ability to generate a unique combination of qualitative data (with interviews) and quantitative data (with questionnaires). The quantitative data allows us to both compare individuals to each other, but still uses the unique qualitative content of the individual as its basis. Second, it provides a thorough overview of macro-level identity features, that is, patterns of identity actions, experiences and self-representations (De Ruiter & Gmelin, 2021). Moreover, it is uniquely suited to measure various forms of integration that have been hard to capture empirically (Syed & McLean, 2016). Specifically, the GIDS-L allows us to capture both temporal integration (measured within each domain-specific interview) and contextual integration (measured as overarching commitments that integrate domain-specific commitments into one coherent whole). Finally, the instrument is firmly rooted in both classic and more recent theory on identity development (Bosma & Kunnen, 2001; Erikson, 1956; Marcia, 1966; Van der Gaag et al., 2020) and incorporates commonly used quantitative measurements of identity (Bosma, 1985; Crocetti et al., 2008; Luyckx et al., 2006; van der Gaag et al., 2016).



## **2. General explanation of the GIDS-L procedure**

The GIDS is a long interview, it generally takes about 3 hours to complete for each participant, although large individual differences may occur - some are lengthy in their answers, others are short, some may include a flexible domain or overarching commitment, others may not. The procedure starts with a short introduction in which you explain (1) the procedure, (2) the aim, (3) confidentiality and (4) questions that may be too personal for the participant (for a step-by-step instruction on the introduction see chapter 3.1). Then the interviews on each of the separate domains are administered (chapters 3.2 until 3.6), followed by an optional interview on an additional, flexible domain (chapter 3.7), and it is concluded by an interview on the overarching commitment (chapter 3.8). After this, any additional questionnaires may be administered.

### **2.1. How to do the interview**

The participant is interviewed about each domain separately. For each domain, there are three core themes that need to be discussed, they are focussed on the past, present and future. It is a semi-structured interview, this means that these themes need to be discussed, but you do not need to use the exact wording noted here.

- Present
  - What is the topic like?
  - What does the topic mean to you?
  - How does this topic affect your daily life (e.g., your feelings, thoughts or behavior)?
  - What are you like in regards to this topic?
- Past
  - Have you always felt or been this way?
  - If not, how was it before, and how did it change?
- Future
  - How do you see the future with regard to the topic?
  - Do you have doubts or uncertainties with regard to the topic, are there aspects you would like to change in the future? If so, how?

The aim is to have an open discussion, in which the interviewer reacts to what the participant says. To help with this, for each domain some additional questions have been formulated (see chapter 3). These additional questions may be used but it is not necessary. If the participant does not talk easily they may be helpful. The interviewer is free to choose the order of the questions, and the kind of questions she asks. Core questions and additional questions may be mixed, whatever suits the flow of the conversation best. The important thing is that the interview

is fluent and natural, it is important to follow up on interesting or important things that the participant says. In general, it is good to cover both the specific real life aspects of a domain (for example, "I tell my best friend all my secrets") but also, as far as possible for the subject, the more abstract ideas (for example "for me, the most important thing in friendship is mutual trust"). And, importantly, make sure that the core questions are addressed in each domain interview. During the interview please pay attention to reoccurring themes that may warrant a separate interview (for example, religion or immigration status) there is room for this during the flexible domain interview (see chapter 3.7). These may be topics that are mentioned often, or that are emphasized by the participant, it is recommended to make note of such topics during the interview.

If you feel that you are done with the interview part, ask the participant if there is anything important that has not been discussed yet.

## **2.2. Help the participant write down a commitment statement**

Before you let the participant write down the commitment statement, you explain to them what is expected. It is important that you clarify that the statement on the card reflects the essence of the conversation, the most important themes, the core of the commitment of the individual in that domain. The statement could cover both the specific real life aspects of a domain (for example, "I tell my best friend all my secrets") but also, as far as possible for the subject, the more abstract ideas (for example "for me, the most important thing in friendship is mutual trust"). Whether the commitment on the card expresses the abstract of specific themes is up to the participant. It may contain one coherent theme, or it may contain several aspects that may or may not be in harmony with one another. Some participants find it difficult to know what to write down, particularly for the first domain. If they need help, you can ask them what the most important themes were that were discussed during the interview, and then ask them to write a short summary of this.

## **2.3. Administer the questionnaire**

When the commitment is written down, you administer the questionnaire about that commitment and that domain. This questionnaire assesses various dimensions of the current commitment (the strength and utility) and the type of developmental process that has preceded it (the type of experiences and amount of explorations in the domain).

The questionnaire is identical for each domain. Questions refer to "commitment" and "topic". The interviewer explains that commitment refers to the written commitment statement (emphasize this point by pointing to the written commitment statement), and topic to the domain (name the domain just discussed, e.g. friendships). The way of administering the questionnaire is discussed with the participant. It can be read by the interviewer or by the participant. In general, it is recommended that for the first domain, the questionnaire is read by the interviewer.

By intonation the meaning of the questions can become clearer, and at the same time the interviewer can check whether the participant understands the question. This is especially important because in some cases the formulated commitment does not neatly fit in the sentences. Therefore, it is useful to practice reading the questionnaire before administering the GIDS-L. When administering the questionnaire digitally, reading the questions to the participant is practically difficult. In that case, let the participants read the questions for themselves, but make sure to emphasize that they ask you about any questions that they may have and to express any doubts with regards to answering the questions.

## **2.4. Materials**

### *2.4.1. Essentials*

- GIDS-L protocol
- GIDS-L questionnaires
- Small papers/post-its
- Pen

### *2.4.2. Optional but recommended*

- Data collection protocol (see appendix 6.4 for an example of a corona-proof data collection protocol with the GIDS-L)
- Research information (1 per participant, describes the purpose of the study, contact details of the researcher etc.)
- White board (to arrange identity commitments in relation to one another, see chapter 3.8)
- White board stiff (to indicate relations between commitments, see chapter 3.8)
  
- Camera without internet connection (to capture the structure of identity commitment, see also chapter 3.8; the lack of internet connection helps keep the data safe from accidental uploading to commercial cloud servers)
- Laptop with 2 USB ports (for digital administration of questionnaire)
- Medical keyboard (for corona-proof digital administration of questionnaire)
- Medical mouse (for corona-proof digital administration of questionnaire)
  
- Tissues

### 3. The interview

#### 3.1. Introduce the GIDS to the participant

The procedure starts with a short introduction to the participant in which you explain (1) the procedure, (2) the aim, (3) confidentiality and (4) questions that are too personal. Below are examples of what you might say about each part of the procedure, but feel free to put it into your own words.

1. Procedure. "First we'll talk about a certain subject. Then we'll see if you can write down a short conclusion or summary about this subject. After that, there will be a questionnaire about what you wrote down. Then we'll follow the same procedure with the next topics until we've covered all domains. Finally, we will have a look at how these topics in your life relate to one another. The interview will last about two to three hours. We will discuss these domains:
  - Friendship
  - Parents
  - Education
  - Leisure time
  - Intimate relationships
  - Flexible domain(s)
  - General principle(s)
2. Aim. "We want to get an idea of who you are. We are trying to find out how you think about a few themes that you come into contact with and how you deal with them and think about them".
3. Confidentiality. "Our conversation is confidential. Information will be shared only with a few other persons who help with the data analysis (also on the questionnaire). None of them will know your full name. Other people will never know what you said in this interview. If you want to know more on how your data is handled, have a look at the research information."
4. Questions, which are too personal. "If some of the questions are too personal or too difficult you can just say "I don't know" or "let's skip this one". We do not want to make it difficult for you"

Before starting, ask the participant if he or she has any questions. Next, you ask if the participant prefers to start with a specific domain. If not, you start with a domain that is easy for the target group, for adolescents and young adults the domain friendship is often a good choice.

At the end of the interview, if it turns out that the participant has many personal or mental health issues, please refer the participant to a study advisor or mental health professional.

## **3.2. Friendship**

### *3.2.1. Introduction*

Friendships are different for different people. Some have many friends, others prefer to have one good friend, for some friends are extremely important, for others they are less important. How is that for you?

### *3.2.2. Core questions*

1. What are your friends like? What do your friends mean to you? How do your friendships affect your daily life (e.g., your feelings, thoughts or behavior)? What are you like as a friend?
2. Have you always felt or been this way? If not, how was it before, and how did it change?
3. How do you see your future with regard to your friendships? Do you have doubts or uncertainties with regard to your friendships, are there aspects you would like to change in the future? If so, how?

### *3.2.3. Additional questions*

Do you have real friends?

What do you do with your friends?

Did you recently have important experiences with your friends? How did these affect you?

How do your friends see you?

What do you expect from friends?

Do you have conflicts with others (e.g. parents) about your friends? How do you feel about that?

### *3.2.4. Anything else?*

Is there any aspect that was left out which you consider worth mentioning?

### *3.2.5. Commitment statement*

Can you write down the core or essence of your commitment in the domain of friendship?

### *3.2.6. Administer questionnaire*

### **3.3. Parents**

#### *3.3.1. Introduction*

The relationship with parents is different for everybody. For some it is easy, for others it is more complex, and it may differ for both parents. How is that for you?

#### *3.3.2. Core questions*

1. Do you still have both your parents? What are your parents like? What do your parents mean to you? How do your parents affect your daily life (e.g., your feelings, thoughts or behavior)? What are you like as a son/daughter?
2. Have you always felt or been this way? If not, how was it before, and how did it change?
3. How do you see your future with regard to your parents? Do you have doubts or uncertainties with regard to your parents, are there aspects you would like to change in the future? If so, how?

#### *3.3.3. Additional questions*

Do you have conflicts with others about your parents? How do you feel about that?

For some people, their commitment to one parent is different from that to the other parent. How is that for you? How do you get along with your parents?

Are there topics you do not discuss with your parents? Why not?

What do you expect from your parents? What do you appreciate or admire in them? What do you dislike?

How do you feel about the way your parents live? Would you like to have a similar life?

How do your parents see you?

Did you recently have important experiences with your parents? How did these affect you?

#### *3.3.4. Anything else?*

Is there any aspect that was left out which you consider worth mentioning?

#### *3.3.5. Commitment statement*

Can you write down the core or essence of your commitment in the domain of parents?<sup>1</sup>

#### *3.3.6. Administer questionnaire*

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<sup>1</sup> The participant may have very different commitments concerning his/her mother and father, and maybe also step-parents. The participant may formulate one commitment concerning the parents in general, focus on one parent, or formulate different statements for different parents (and do a separate questionnaire for each, or choose the most important one for the questionnaire). The participant decides.

### **3.4. Education**

#### *3.4.1. Introduction<sup>2</sup>*

During your education you have to study a lot. Most often, you start with a compulsory program, while later on you get more freedom to choose. Some people like their studies and work hard. Others do not like their studies, and prefer to spend time on other things. How is that for you?

#### *3.4.2. Core questions*

1. What is your education like? What does your education mean to you? How does your education affect your daily life (e.g., your feelings, thoughts or behavior)? What kind of student are you?
2. Have you always felt or been this way? If not, how was it before, and how did it change?
3. How do you see your future with regard to your education and career? Do you have doubts or uncertainties with regard to your career path, are there aspects you would like to change in the future? If so, how?

#### *3.4.3. Additional questions*

Which aspects in your studies do you like, and which ones do you not like?

How do others see you as a student?

What are your strengths in your studies? And your weaknesses?

Do you talk with others about your studies? What is it that you talk about?

How do your parents and/or friends feel about your studies? How do you feel about that?

How do you like the atmosphere in your school/university?

Why did you choose this education/this school? How did you make that choice?

Do you have to make other choices in the near future, concerning your education? What choices? How do you cope with such choices?

Did you recently have important experiences with your education? How did these affect you?

#### *3.4.4. Anything else?*

Is there any aspect that was left out which you consider worth mentioning?

#### *3.4.5. Commitment statement*

Can you write down the core or essence of your commitment in the domain of studies and education?

#### *3.4.6. Administer questionnaire*

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<sup>2</sup> This version is adapted to university students. Depending on the target group it is best to adjust the formulation to for example, school, career, higher education

### **3.5. Leisure**

#### *3.5.1. Introduction*

People differ greatly in how they spend their leisure time. Some like to sport, play music, others prefer to relax, or play computer games. How is that for you?

#### *3.5.2. Core questions*

1. What do you do in your leisure time? What does this mean to you? How does your leisure time affect your daily life (e.g., your feelings, thoughts or behavior)? What are you like in your leisure time activities?
2. Have you always felt or been this way? If not, how was it before, and how did it change?
3. How do you see your future with regard to your leisure activities? Do you have doubts or uncertainties with regard to your leisure activities, are there aspects you would like to change in the future? If so, how?

#### *3.5.3. Additional questions*

What is important for you in your leisure time?

Do you prefer specific people to spend your leisure time with?

Do you prefer specific activities, hobbies, and do you prefer being active or to relax?

Do you have a job next to your studies? Is that important for you? Why?<sup>3</sup>

How do your parents feel about the way you spend your leisure time?

How do you feel about combining leisure with duties and education/school?

Are you happy with the way you spend your leisure time?

Do you have conflicts with others (e.g. parents) about your leisure time? How do you feel about that?

Did you recently have important experiences in your leisure time? How did these affect you?

#### *3.5.4. Anything else?*

Is there any aspect that was left out which you consider worth mentioning?

#### *3.5.5. Commitment statement*

Can you write down the core or essence of your commitment with regard to leisure?

#### *3.5.6. Administer questionnaire*

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<sup>3</sup> Only in case the participants is a student



### **3.6. Intimate relations**

#### *3.6.1. Introduction*

This domain is about love and intimate relationships. Different people and also different couples have different ideas about how love and intimate relationships are and how they should be. How is that for you?

#### *3.6.2. Core questions*

1. Do you have an intimate relation? If so, what is your partner like? What does an intimate relationship mean to you? How do your intimate relationships affect your daily life (e.g., your feelings, thoughts or behavior)? What are you like in an intimate relationship?
2. Have you always felt or been this way? If not, how was it before, and how did it change?
3. How do you see your future with regard to your intimate relation(s)? Do you have doubts or uncertainties with regard to your intimate relation(s), are there aspects you would like to change in the future? If so, how?

#### *3.6.3. Additional questions*

How does your partner see you?

Have you ever been in love? What do you mean by “being in love”? By “loving someone”? What do/did you mean for each other? How do you get on with each other? How did your parents and your friends feel about your relationship?

How do you think a relationship should be? Do you think it is possible to have such a relationship?

Do you have conflicts with others (e.g. parents) about your intimate relations? How do you feel about that?

Did you recently have important experiences in your intimate relations? How did these affect you?

#### *3.6.4. Anything else?*

Is there any aspect that was left out which you consider worth mentioning?

#### *3.6.5. Commitment statement*

Can you write down the core or essence of your commitment with regard to intimate relationships?

#### *3.6.6. Administer questionnaire*

### 3.7. Flexible domain(s)

#### 3.7.1. Procedure

Interviewers might ask about other domains that seem to be important to the participant. 1 or maximally 2 additional domains may be added to the interview. In order to do this, the Interviewer should pay attention to recurring themes during the interview. The interviewer can decide to inquire more about a certain topic in case the participant:

- seems to place a lot of emphasis on a certain topic
- mentions a topic often during the interview

#### 3.7.2. Introduction topic choice

We want to make sure that we cover all the things that are important to you. We have discussed friendship, parents, education/career, leisure time, and intimate relationships. But other topics may be important to you as well, other things that you spend time on, that you think or talk about a lot. Are there any topics in your life that we have not explicitly discussed, that you spend a lot of time or mental effort on? Take your time to think about it.

*If no answer comes, you may:*

1. Ask about a recurrent theme that you have noticed:
  - I heard you talk a lot about XXX, would that be something that you spend much time/energy on?
2. Give examples of potential topics, such as:
  - Religion
  - Spiritual beliefs
  - Politics
  - Activism
  - Body image
  - Sexuality
  - Membership of a minority community (e.g. LGBT, immigration background)
  - Important family members other than parents, such as siblings, children, grandparents

*-> Write down the additional topics that the participant wants to discuss. If there are many, have the participant pick the two that are most important to them.*

### *3.7.3. Introduction flexible domain interview*

Is it ok if we do an interview round about topic XXX? Would you like to tell me more about it?

### *3.7.4. Core questions*

1. What is the topic like for you? What does this topic mean to you? How does this topic affect your daily life? What are you like with regard to this topic?
2. Have you always felt or been this way? If not, how was it before, and how did it change?
3. How do you see your future with regard to this topic? Do you have doubts or uncertainties with regard to this topic, are there aspects you would like to change in the future? If so, how?

### *3.7.5. Anything else?*

Is there any aspect that was left out which you consider worth mentioning?

### *3.7.6. Commitment statement*

Can you write down the core or essence of your commitment with regard to this topic?

### *3.7.7. Administer questionnaire*

### **3.8. Overarching commitment**

#### *3.8.1. Procedure*

The overarching commitment is different from the other domains. It should always be administered as the last part of the interview.

The participant is asked to find an overarching commitment, which can also be described as a general principle or a theme that underlies the various domains of the individuals' life. This can be one general principle that connects (nearly) all commitments, or several principles that connect a few commitments. The commitments that have been written down during the domain interviews are used to help the participant formulate this overarching commitment.

For some participants it is difficult to formulate an overarching commitment, and some (especially younger people) are not able to do so. If the participant is struggling a lot, and is becoming frustrated by it, indicate that it is totally OK to not be able to formulate a general principle, that this is perfectly normal. If this does not reassure the participant, the interviewer is allowed to help a little bit, but not too much. For example, the interviewer can point out that two (or more) commitments share a similar theme, and ask the participant how he/she feels about that. If suggestive help has occurred please include this as a note that accompanies the written commitment statements.

#### *3.8.2. Preparation*

Place all commitment cards in front of the participant on a big sheet of paper or white board. Make sure that stifts or pens are available.

#### *3.8.3. Introduce identity arrangement and the overarching commitment*

For each domain you have written down your commitment. Now we want to know how these domains relate to one another, and what connects these domains, perhaps you can see common themes or general principles that come back in different domains of your life. We call this an overarching commitment. Some people see one or several overarching themes, and others do not see themes. This is all perfectly ok. I would now like to see if you see such themes.

To do this, I would like you to do three things.

1. First arrange your commitment in a way that you feel is fitting (on the white board). You may arrange them any way you like. You may move them around and group them together, for example if you see similarities, you may draw lines or arrows to indicate relations. Any arrangement that you find fitting is ok.
2. When you're happy with the arrangement, see if you can find one or more general principles, these are themes that you may see coming back in the different domains. These themes may be the basis of your statements on each topic, or something that

links them together. There can be one, two or more common themes, but it also occurs that there are no common themes or that they are difficult to capture, and this is perfectly fine as well. Cards can belong to more than one principle. Take your time to look at the cards. If you have found one or more overarching commitments, write them down on separate cards, make sure that you note down which domains are included in the general principle.

3. Finally, place the overarching commitment statements into your arrangement of commitments and rearrange your commitments if necessary, so that it feels fitting to you. You may also draw new relations.

#### *3.8.4. The structure of identity commitments*

Can you tell me about the arrangement that you made? What is the logic behind it, what do distances, placement, lines mean for you? Do you feel like this arrangement is a good reflection of your identity?

*-> Make notes of the logic behind the arrangement on a separate sheet of paper and include it with the written commitments as part of the data.*

#### *3.8.5. The overarching commitment*

Which overarching principles have you discovered? Is it ok if we do another questionnaire about it/each of them?

#### *3.8.6. Administer questionnaire*

Administer a questionnaire for each of the general principles. Make sure to write the same title above each general principle and questionnaire (e.g., general principle 1, general principle 2 etc) so we do not lose track of which belong to which.

#### *3.8.7. Mental health referral*

If the participant is struggling with mental health issues and/or serious problems in their personal life or education. Please suggest the possibility to talk to a specialist who can help them with these issues (e.g., a study advisor, a coach, a psychologist).

#### *3.8.8. End of the interview*

#### *3.8.9. Administer any additional questionnaires at this time.*

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## **6. Appendices**

### **6.1. Adding, removing or changing domains and adding questionnaires**

The domains that are described in this manual are the default GIDS domains. For most adolescents and emerging adults they cover the most relevant domains in their life. However, depending on the target group and the interests of the researcher, domains can be added or left out. For example, in a group of deaf adolescents “being deaf” was added, in a group of immigrant adolescents “living in two cultures”, etc. Also the domain philosophy of life, that was left out in this revision, may be relevant for specific groups or research questions.

Sometimes research may be needed to know which domains are relevant in specific groups (for example in older people, in adolescents from different cultures).

Sometimes domains can be left out or changed. For example “education/career” could be replaced by “work” in an older age group.

Any new domain can be administered by using the flexible domain interview as a base (see chapter 3.7), and replacing the generic ‘topic’ with the domain of interest.

Sometimes it may be useful to add questionnaires to the GIDS. These additional questionnaires should always be included following the GIDS interview, because they may influence the GIDS outcomes. It is strongly advised not to include any long questionnaires as the interview already takes a lot of focus and energy from the participant.

## 6.2. Procedure repeated measurement

Basically, the repeated administration should result in outcomes that have the same meaning as the first administration, because we want to compare both outcomes. However, the repeated administration differs a little bit as compared to the first interview.

In order to make the interview relevant and natural, we start to ask whether there have been changes in the domain since the previous interview. If there are any changes, the participant is stimulated to tell about them, and about how he/she feels about them. If there are no changes, the participant is asked whether he/she can tell something about the domain and the commitment he/she has. In general, if there are no changes, the repeated interviews are much shorter than the first interview. Whether there are changes or not, the participant is asked, following the interview, **to write down the commitment as it is now**. As a next step, the questionnaire is administered in the same way as in the first administration. There are some questions in the questionnaire that refer to 'the past year', you may replace this with 'since the last interview'.

The introduction of the new administration is often rather short. You may start to ask how the participants felt about the previous interview. Next, you repeat shortly the structure of the interview. Next you mention that you will talk about eventual changes, but will also focus on the situation as it is now.

It is recommended to read the cards and eventual notes of the previous interview before you start the interview so that you know what was important that time.

### 6.3. History of the GIDS

The GIDS is a semi structured identity interview method, originally developed by Bosma in 1985. The interview protocol was revised in 2012 (GIDS-r), and revised again in 2021 (GIDS-L) including updated questionnaires.

The main idea has stayed the same over the years: the GIDS consists of an interview part and a questionnaire part. The interview part results in statements of the participant's identity commitments in different domains of life, and this commitment statement is then used as input for the questionnaire. The interview protocol has been improved in the 2012 version and again in the 2021 version, while the questionnaire also has had a thorough update in 2021. The 2021 update allows us to measure new identity concepts, the core concepts proposed in the Landscape of Identity model (Van der Gaag et al., 2020).

#### 6.3.1. GIDS: origin in 1985

The notion that identity is a crucial development stems from Erikson (1968). The fourth phase of his life span developmental model, in adolescence, concerns the conflict between identity and identity confusion. However, the question of the definition of identity and the way it can be assessed is still alive and unsolved. Marcia's identity status theory (1966) has made a great contribution to the possibilities to operationalize and assess identity. This theory hypothesizes four identity statuses, based on the two dimensions of exploration and commitment strength. The identity achieved status represents a strong commitment that is formulated following a period of reflection and exploration. It is thus a self-chosen commitment that in general fits well with a person's interests and capacities. A person in a moratorium status is amidst the process of exploration and has not yet formulated a commitment. In the foreclosed status, a person has formulated strong commitments but without prior exploration. The commitments are often adopted from parents or other authorities. In a diffuse status a person has no commitments, and is not exploring. In this status, ad hoc choices are made and sometimes superficial and weak commitments emerge for a short time.

Bosma (1985) used the two dimensions of exploration and commitment strength as the basis for the original GIDS. Instead of using a dichotomous representation, he chose a dimensional approach. A major advantage of a dimensional approach is that small changes and developmental progress can be assessed. Bosma (1985) also investigated which domains can be considered relevant for the large majority of adolescents. The most important domains were parents, school and friends. In addition, leisure was important. In the original version, Bosma included the topic leisure to the topic school and work. The domains of intimate relationships, personal characteristics and philosophy of life also turned out to be relevant domains for most adolescents. These six domains were included in the original version of the GIDS.

### 6.3.2. *GIDS-r: revision in 2012*

The target group in the first GIDS research were adolescents of 14-15 and 18-19 years old. Recent research (Arnett, 2007) stresses that identity development is not restricted to the adolescent period, but continues in emerging adulthood and even after that. For these older age groups other domains may become relevant. In the revised GIDS we discuss explicitly how new domains can be added to the instruments.

The revised GIDS contains eight domains, specifically chosen for the adolescent period. Domains that are considered less relevant for the target groups can be left out. Other domains can be added (see chapter 4). Examples of such added domains are for example "being deaf" (Kunnen, 2014), or "being Moroccan" (Ketner, Buitelaar & Bosma, 2004).

The revised GIDS has two additional domains as compared to the original version. Based on the large amount of experience with GIDS administration with several interviewers in the identity development project (Kunnen, 2006, 2010) and the career choice project (Kunnen et al., 2008) we frequently noticed that it is difficult for respondents to formulate one clear commitment for the domain study/work and leisure. Serious attempts to do so often result in a statement about the balance between these sub domains. And although that may be important, it is not always the most important topic in the domain. For that reason we have separated study/work and leisure time in two different domains. In addition, we have included a domain suggested by Bosma (1992), that would represent a kind of higher order commitment, overarching the different domains. This domain is defined as "General principle" or overarching principle, and it is a kind of underlying dimension or integrative aspect under (most) of the specific domains.

### 6.3.3. *GIDS-L: revision in 2021*

The GIDS-L features two major adaptations: reconstruction of the questionnaire, the addition of a flexible domain and a protocol for discovering the structure of identity including multiple general principles. After initial construction of the instrument, we performed a pilot study (in december 2020) to optimize the interview protocol and the content validity of the questionnaire. This pilot version of the questionnaire was drafted based on the GIDS-r (Bosma, Kunnen & van der Gaag, 2012) after critically analyzing the items on their fit with current theories of identity. This resulted in the removal of unclear items and adding items from the DIDS (Luyckx et al., 2006), U-MICS (Crocetti et al., 2008) and RECS-E (van der Gaag et al., 2016). Moreover, the questionnaire was supplemented with novel items that measure the integration of commitment with everyday life (also called utility) as proposed in the landscape of identity model (van der Gaag et al., 2020). In addition, a protocol was constructed to allow for the assessment of multiple overarching commitments. We pilot tested the interview protocol and questionnaire among 10 first year psychology students. We adjusted the protocol and questionnaire items after analyzing response patterns of the participants and gathering qualitative data on how well the questionnaire items were understood. The result was the GIDS-L in its current form, which we have used to collect the data for this study.

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### 6.3.5. Selection of published studies that have used (a version of) the GIDS

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## 6.4. Example of Data Collection Protocol using GIDS-L (corona-proof)

### Remember Corona rules

We are responsible for the safety of our participants and ourselves, so

- Keep at least 1.5m distance at all times
- Do not shake hands
- Wash/disinfect your hands frequently
- Cancel if you have cold symptoms
- Wear a mask in the hallways (not necessary during the interview)

### Remember privacy demands

- Do not make pictures or recordings with your phone, to prevent data security risks
- Do not write the name of the participant on any paper, only use the *participant number* (not the SONA number). You can find the participant number in the google calendar of the landscape project.
- Treat anything that the participant tells you confidentially

### You need these materials

*Present in the room:*

- Data collection protocol (this thing here)
- Research information (1 per participant)
- White board
- White board stiff
- Small papers/post-its
- Pen
- Camera
- Keyboard
- Mouse
- Tissues
- Disinfectant
- Gloves

*Bring yourself*

- Laptop with 2 USB ports (bring your own)
- GIDS-L protocol

## Follow this Protocol

### *Preparation phase*

- Be there 20 min before the start of the interview for preparation

- Leave at least 1 hour in between interviews for ventilation (corona rules)

- Put everything in position
  - Provide yourself the interview protocol and start checking boxes of this data collection protocol
  - Provide to participant a table with research information, cards and a pen
  - Hang a whiteboard sheet on the wall, place the stift nearby
  
- Set-up the laptop
  - Turn it on
  - Attach medical mouse and keyboard
  - Put it in reach of the participant.
  
- Open four qualtrics questionnaires on your laptop:
  - Informed consent
  - Basic demographic information
  - GIDS-L Questionnaire
  - Additional questionnaire for after the interview (TIPI & HASD)
  
- Disinfect everything that people touch as a last step:
  - Keyboard
  - Mouse
  - Pen
  - Stift
  - Doorknob
  - Table
  - Your own hands



### *Data collection phase*

- Welcome
  - Welcome the participant. Ask if they have corona symptoms, are currently being tested for corona, or awaiting a test result.
    - If they answer yes to any of these, please ask them to go home and perhaps reschedule.
  - Give the research information, let them read it.
  - Ask if they want coffee, tea or water, make sure to disinfect your hands before you touch the kitchenwares, keep distance when giving the drink to participant (use a tray)
  - Ask if they have any questions and answer them
  - Emphasize confidentiality
  - Sign informed consent
  - Fill in basic demographic questionnaire in qualtrics
  
- Interview
  - Explain interview protocol and conduct interview
  - When the interview is finished: have the participant fill out the additional questionnaire

### *After the interview*

- Finalize and secure data
  - Put on gloves
  - Write participant number on white board
  - Make picture of commitment statements (with provided camera, not own phone)
  - Participants are allowed make a picture for themselves as well
  - Put the commitment statements in an envelope and write the participant number (not SONA number) and date on the outside. Leave the envelope in the green bag with the material.
  
- Finalize contact with the participant
  - Remind participants of their right to withdraw their data and to email any questions.
  - Make sure the participants leave with the research information
  - Assign SONA credits
  
- Closing off
  - Open window if another interview follows, close window at the end of the day
  - Disinfect everything
  - Lock the room when leaving, at the end of the day also turn on the alarm and lock the building

## 6.5. Cheat Sheet: a schematic representation of the procedure

- Explain procedure
  - Per domain an *interview*
  - Then formulate a statement (commitment)
  - Answer questionnaire
- Reassurance
  - Confidential use of data
  - Don't need to answer too personal questions
  - Always allowed to stop and retrieve your data
  - Everything is in the Research information
  - Questions?
  - Preference for a specific domain to start with? If not, start with friendship.
- Interview
  - Present
    - What is the topic like?
    - What does the topic mean to you?
    - How does this topic affect your daily life (e.g., your feelings, thoughts or behavior)?
    - What are you like in regards to this topic?
  - Past
    - Have you always felt or been this way?
    - If not, how was it before, and how did it change?
  - Future
    - How do you see the future with regard to the topic?
    - Do you have doubts or uncertainties with regard to the topic, Are there aspects you would like to change in the future? If so, how?
  - Anything else you want to say about this topic?
  - Write down commitment
    - Can you write down the core most essential of this domain, concerning how you think and feel about it?
  - Administer questionnaire
- Repeat the above interview for each domain.
- End with the General principle(s) interview.

## 6.6. GIDS-L questionnaire

Items are answered digitally on a visual analogue scale, ranging from 0 - 100, with labels  
Scores for each scale are calculated by taking the average of the items. Some items are scored reverse, indicated with (r).

### 6.6.1. Commitment strength

1	7 (r)	Could you easily give up this...(commitment)...?	Yes	Yes, with difficulty	No
2	18 (r)	Are you uncertain about this...(commitment)...?	Often	Sometimes	Rarely
3	24 (r)	Could you change your...(commitment)...?	Yes	Maybe	No
4	26	Are you certain of this...(commitment)...?	Yes, completely	A little bit	No
5	28	Do you defend your ...(commitment)...when others don't agree?	Yes	Sometimes	No
6	DIDS	Are you sure that this ...(commitment)... is right for you?	Yes	Sometimes	No
7	new RECS-E	Are you convinced that this commitment fits you well?	Yes	Sometimes	No

### 6.6.2. Commitment integration

8	new	Do you feel that this ...(commitment)... involves many aspects of your life?	Yes	Somewhat	No
9	new	Does this ...(commitment)... help you deal with many different types of situations?	Yes	Somewhat	No
10	new	Can you use this commitment to guide your actions?	Yes, often	Sometimes	No, rarely
11	new	Do you know what to do because of this commitment?	Yes, often	Sometimes	No, rarely

### 6.6.3. Broad Exploration / Commitment Reconsideration

12	8 (DIDS)	Do you try to develop another...(commitment)...on this topic?	Yes	Sometimes	No
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13	21 RECS- E	Do you try to find a...(commitment)...that fits you better than the one you have now?	Yes	Sometimes	No
14	U-MIC S	Are you searching for a different ...(commitment)..?	Yes	Sometimes	No
15	DIDS RECS- E	Do you think about whether this ...(commitment)... really suits you?	Often	Sometimes	Never

#### 6.6.4. Exploration: in-depth

16	new U-MIC S	Do actively try to further develop this ...(commitment)...?	Often	Sometimes	Never
17	new U-MIC S	Do try to learn new things to develop this ...(commitment)...?	Often	Sometimes	Never
18	6	Do you talk with others about ...(topic)..?	A lot	With some people yes, with others, no	Almost never
19	17	Do you try to learn more about your...(commitment)...?	As much as possible	Some things yes, other things no	Little

#### 6.6.5. Experiences

20	new	In the past year, did you have a major positive experience on this ...(topic)...?	Yes, very positive	yes, somewhat positive	No
21	new	In the past year, did you have a major negative experience on this ...(topic)...?	Yes, very negative	yes, somewhat negative	No
22	new	How often do you have positive experiences on this ...(topic)...?	Often	Sometimes	Rarely
23	new	How often do you have negative experiences on this ...(topic)...?	Often	Sometimes	Rarely

### 6.6.6. Effect on life

24	5	Does this...(commitment)...influence your daily life?	Strongly	Sometimes	No
25	22	Does this...(commitment)...give you direction in your life?	A lot	Sometimes yes, sometimes no	No
26	33 new	Does this commitment influence your daily thoughts and feelings?	Strongly	Somewhat	Not at all
27	34 new	Does this commitment influence your behavior and the choices that you make?	Strongly	Somewhat	Not at all
28	new	Is how you behave in line with this ..(commitment)..?	Yes, in nearly all situations	In some situations	No, rarely
29	new (r)	Do you experience conflict between this ..(commitment).. and how you behave?	Often	Sometimes	Rarely

### 6.6.7. Valence of commitment

30	new	Do you have positive feelings about this...(commitment)...?	Yes	Somewhat	No
31	new	Do you have negative feelings about this...(commitment)...?	Yes	Somewhat	No

### 6.6.8. Well-being

32	new	How satisfied are you about this ...(topic)...?	Very satisfied	Somewhat satisfied	Very unsatisfied
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### 6.6.9. Identity distress

33	new	To what extent have you recently been upset, distressed or worried over this ...(topic)...?	Not at all	Somewhat	Very severely
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6.6.10. Overview of constructs and items

<b>Construct name</b>	<b>Item numbers</b>	<b>Amount of items</b>
Commitment strength	1-7	7
Commitment integration	8-11	4
Broad exploration	12-15	4
In-depth exploration	16-19	4
Positive experiences	20, 22	2
Negative experiences	21, 23	2
Effect on life	24-29	6
Positive valence commitment	30	1
Negative valence commitment	31	1
Well-being	32	1
Identity distress	33	1
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>33</b>

**NOTE.** *This is the first version of the questionnaire, before item analysis has taken place. After item analysis, some items may be removed or recategorized.*