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G.I.D.S. : Groningen Identity Development Scale Revision 2012

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G.I.D.S.

Groningen Identity Development Scale

Revision 2012

GIDS original: Dr. H.A. Bosma, 1985

GIDS revision: Dr. E.S. Kunnen & M.A.E. van der Gaag, Msc, 2011

Minor revisions in 2012, 2013, 2015

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1. Introduction GIDS

The GIDS is a semi structured identity interview method, developed by Bosma in 1985. The method consists of an interview part and a questionnaire part. The interview part results in the formulation of the participant's commitments in different domains. Generally commitments are different between domains. For each commitment a questionnaire is administered. This questionnaire assesses the strength of the commitment and the amount of exploration in the domain. In this way the GIDS combines qualitative and quantitative information in a unique way. It results in a representation of identity that is at the same time idiosyncratically adjusted to the individual, and can also be handled in a quantitative way, allowing statistical analyses and comparison between individuals and times

Theoretical background

The notion that identity is a core concept in 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 into 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 GIDS. Instead of using a dichotomous representation, he choose for a dimensional approach. A major advantage of a dimensional approach is that small changes and developmental progress can be assessed.

Bosma (1985) 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 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

Revision

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 vast 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 (in personal communication, 1994), 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.

2. Procedure GIDS

The procedure starts with a short introduction in which you explain (1) the procedure, (2) the aim, (3) confidentiality and (4) questions that are too personal.

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”. The interview will last for about two hours. We will discuss these domains:

- Parents
- Friendship
- School – occupation
- Leisure time
- Personal characteristics
- Intimate relationships
- General principle

Aim. “We think that young people have to make some important life decisions. The questions I want to ask you are about this. We are trying to find out how young people think about a few themes that they come into contact with and how they deal with them and think about them”.

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.

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 the domain friendship is often a good choice.

Interview and formulating the Commitment

The participant is interviewed about each domain separately. For each domain, there are three core questions. These have to be discussed anyway. It is not necessary to use the exact words of these text.

- What does the theme mean for the participant?
 - o How does the person think and feel about the topic? (present)
- Has it always been this way?
 - o If not, when did it change, and how was it before?(past)
- Does the participant feel uncertain or does he or she experience problems in this domain?
 - o Are attempts undertaken to change this? How? (future)

The aim is to have an open discussion, in which the interviewer reacts to what the participant tells. As a help, for each domain some specific questions have been formulated (see chapter 3). These specific questions may be used but it is not necessary. If the participant does not talk easily they may be a help.

The interviewer has much freedom in the sequence and kind of questions. Core questions and specific questions may be mixed. It is more important that the interview is fluent and natural. The interview skills of the interviewer are an important guideline for the selection of questions, as long as the main aim is kept in mind: the participant should be helped to get a clear picture of his or her commitments and position in the domain, to express the essence of her or her position in the domain, and finally, to write that down on the card.

It is important that the statement on the card reflects that essence, the core commitment of the individual in that domain. The interview should 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.

So, in the interview the aim is to get a picture that is as complete as possible, on the card the core of the domain is written down.

If you feel you are ready with the interview part, it is good to ask if there is anything important that has not been discussed yet.

Questionnaire

When the commitment is written down, a questionnaire is administered about that commitment. This questionnaire assesses the strength of the commitment and the amount of exploration in the domain. The questionnaire is identical for each domain. The questions refer to "statement" and "domain". The interviewer explains and demonstrates that statement refers to the commitment, and domain to the domain.

(see appendix 1). 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. In this way the interviewer can make clear the meaning of the questions by the intonation, and at the same time check whether the participant understands the question. This is especially important because in some cases the commitment as formulated does not fit in neatly in the sentences. For this reason it is important to practice with reading the questionnaire before administering the GIDS.

A schematic representation of the procedure

Introduction

- Aim
 - Explanation of procedure
 - I. per domain an *interview*
 - II. formulating a *commitment*
 - III. answer questionnaire
 - Confidentiality
 - I. anonymous use of data
 - II. too personal questions
 - III. you are always allowed to stop
 - Questions?
1. Start
 - Preference for specific domain? If not, start with friendship.
 2. Interview
 - How do you think and feel about this domain?
 - Has it always been like this?
 - Do you want to change things?

3. Write down commitment

- Can you write down the core most essential of this domain, concerning how you think and feel about it?
-

4. Questionnaire

- Discuss with participant how to proceed. Read by interviewer or by participant?
-

Step 2 t/m 4 is repeated for each domain.

3a. Friendship

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?

Core questions

1. What do your friends mean to you? What is your point of view?
2. Have you always felt this way? If not, how was it before, and how did it change? When?
3. Do you have doubts or uncertainties with regard to your friends? Are there aspects you would like to change? How?

Specific questions

Can you tell something about your friendships?

Do you have real friends?

What do you do with your friends?

What do you expect from friends?

What do they mean to you?

What do your parents think about your friends?

Are there things you would like to change in your friendships?

Formulate commitment

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

3b. Parents

Introduction

The relation 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?

Core questions

1. What do your parents mean to you? What is your point of view?
2. Have you always felt this way? If not, how was it before, and how did it change? When?
3. Do you have doubts or uncertainties in this domain? Are there aspects you would like to change? How?

Specific questions

For some people, their commitment to one parent is different from that to the other parent. How is that for you? How do you go around 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 if you have a family?

How do you see your parents in comparison with other adults?

Formulate commitment

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

* 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. The participant decides.

3c. Education¹

Introduction (version for university students)

During your studies 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?

Core questions

1. What do your studies mean to you? What is your point of view?
2. Have you always felt this way? If not, how was it before, and how did it change? When?
3. Do you have doubts or uncertainties with regard to your studies? Are there aspects you would like to change? How?

Specific questions

What do you feel is important in your education?

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

How do your parents feel about your studies? And how important are their feelings for you?

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

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

How do you like the atmosphere in your school or studies?

Why did you chose this studies/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?

Formulate commitment

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

¹ Depending on the target group it is best to adjust the formulation to this group. Do they speak about their school, or about their studies?

3d. Leisure

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?

Core questions

1. How do you feel about your leisure time? What is your point of view?
2. Have you always felt this way? If not, how was it before, and how did it change? When?
3. Do you have doubts or uncertainties with regard to your leisure time? Are there aspects you would like to change? How?

Specific 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? ²

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

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

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

Formulate commitment

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

² Only in case the participants is a student

3e. Personal characteristics

Introduction

By personal characteristics we refer to those characteristics that make you into what you are. That may include aspects of your character, but also of your appearance, of your roles in society and of how you feel about these roles.

Core Questions

1. How do you feel about your own characteristics? What is your point of view about them?
2. Have you always felt this way? If not, how was it before, and how did it change? When?
3. Do you have doubts or uncertainties with regard to your own characteristics, with who you are? Are there aspects you would like to change? How?

Specific questions

Which characteristics make you happy?

Do you have characteristics you are not satisfied with? Which ones? Do you try to change that? How?

How do you feel about your appearance? Is appearance important for you? [next question only if it is important] Are there aspects of your appearance you want to change? Do you experiment with your appearance?

Do you feel you have to live up to specific expectations (for example being a man/woman/ student/daughter/son)? Which ones? How do you feel about that?

How do you think you are perceived by the people around you? Do you agree with their perception? How would you like to be perceived by others?

In what kind of situations you feel you can really be yourself? How are you if you are yourself?

Formulate commitment

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

3f. Intimate relations

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?

Core questions

1. How do you feel about intimate relationships? What is your point of view about them?
2. Have you always felt this way? If not, how was it before, and how did it change? When?
3. Do you have doubts or uncertainties with regard to love and intimate relationships? Are there aspects you would like to change? How?

Specific questions

Have you ever been in love? What do you mean by “being in love”? By “loving someone”? Do you have a romantic relationship now? Ever had one?

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?

Formulate commitment

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

3g. General Principle

Procedure

The general principle is a bit different from the other domains. It should always be administered as the last domain. The participant is asked to find a general commitment, an overarching principle, a common underlying theme in the relevant domains in his or her life.

The commitments that have been written down already can be used to help the participant in formulating this general principle.

For many participants it is difficult to formulate a general principle, and some (especially younger people) are not able to do so. The interviewer is allowed to help a little bit, but not too much. Not being able to formulate a general principle is OK as well. Probably, it indicates a relatively immature level of identity development.

Preparations

Place all commitment cards in front of the participant on the table.

Introduction

For each domain you have written down your commitment for that domain. Now we ask about what is essential in your life in general. You may call that philosophy of life, thus your perspective on your life. For many people, this question is not easy to answer. It may help to have a look at the cards you have filled in already. Is there a kind of underlying general principle, a common theme, something that is the basis of all your commitments?

It is good to give the participant some time to think, but if he/she hesitates and does not answer, you can ask additional questions.

What principles guide the decisions you make?

When you are later an old man/woman, what would make that you can feel satisfied with your life? What do you want to have reached or done or experienced?

What is most important for you in your life, considering your work, but also friends, family, a partner, yourself?

Do you feel your life has a meaning in this world?

Core questions

1. How do you feel about what is essential in your life? What is your point of view about that?
2. Have you always felt this way? If not, how was it before, and how did it change? When?
3. Do you have doubts or uncertainties with regard to this? Are there aspects you would like to change? How?

Formulate commitment

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

Attention

Especially if not all GIDS domains have been administered it is important to refer explicitly to those domains that have not been administered. For example, in interviews in a study into career choice the relational domains are sometimes not administered. In such a case it is relevant to refer to the relationships with friends, parents, partner as a relevant part of this general commitment.

4. Other domains and added questions

The domains that are described in this manual are the default GIDS domains. For most adolescents they cover the relevant domains in their life. Dependent on the target group and the demands 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 domain scan be left out or changed. For example “study” could be replaced by “work” in an older age group.

Below we give some guidelines of how to fill in a new domain.

Procedure

In each interview the core questions should be addressed

1. How do you feel about [the domain]? What is your point of view about that?
2. Have you always felt this way? If not, how was it before, and how did it change?
When?
3. Do you have doubts or uncertainties with regard to this? Are there aspects you would like to change? How?

Sometimes it may be useful to add questions to the GIDS. These additional questions should always be included following the standard GIDS administration, because they may influence the GIDS outcomes. In most GIDS research so far we added a very short questionnaire to measure how the participants feel about their own commitments. This questionnaire is added in appendix 2. It is strongly advised not to include long or directive questionnaires: they may influence the outcomes of the domains that still follow.

5. 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.

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..

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7. Appendices

1. GIDS Questionnaire ready for administration, with answers for participant
2. GIDS Questionnaire with coding information
3. Additional questionnaire

GIDS questionnaire

Topic:

Date:

Participant:

1	Are you satisfied with your...(commitment)...?	Yes	Sometimes yes sometimes no	No	Don't know
2	Do you think about...(topic)...?	A lot	sometimes	Almost never	Don't know
3	Does this ...(commitment)... make you feel sure of yourself?	Yes	Sometimes yes sometimes no	No	Don't know
4	Do you have problems with...(topic)...?	Often	Sometimes	Rarely	Don't know
5	Does this...(commitment)...influence your daily Life?	Strongly	Sometimes	No	Don't know
6	Do you talk with others about ...(topic)...?	A lot	With some people yes, with others, no	Almost never	Don't know
7	Could you easily give this...(commitment)...up?	Yes	Yes, with difficulty	No	Don't know
8	Do you try to develop another...(commitment)...on this topic?	Yes	Sometimes	No	Don't know
9	Does this...(commitment)... give you the feeling that you know what you want to do with your life?	Strongly	Somewhat	No, it doesn't	Don't know
10	Do you find it necessary to search for all sorts of different ways of committing you to ...(topic)...	Yes	Well, somewhat	No	Don't know
11	Do you think you should make more effort to live in harmony with this...(commitment)...?	Yes	Well, somewhat	No	Don't know
12	Have you noticed that others can have a different commitment to...(topic)...?	Yes	Sometimes	No	Don't know
13	Do you feel involved in this...(commitment)...?	Yes	Sometimes	No	Don't know
14	Do you fluctuate in your...(commitment)...?	Yes	Sometimes	No	Don't know
15	Do you have support for the future in your...(commitment)...?	A lot	Sometimes yes sometimes no	No	Don't know
16	Do you compare your...(commitment)...to that of others?	Often	With some people yes, with others, no	No	Don't know
17	What do you try to find out about...(topic)...?	As much as possible	Some things yes, other things no	Little	Don't know
18	Are you uncertain about this...(commitment)...?	Often	Sometimes	Rarely	Don't know
19	Do you have conflicts with others about...(topic)...?	Often	Sometimes	Rarely	Don't know
20	Does this...(commitment)...give you the feeling that you can meet the feature with optimism and trust?	Strongly	Somewhat	Not	Don't know
21	Do you try to find a...(commitment)...that fits you better than the one you have now?	Yes	Sometimes	No	Don't know
22	Does this...(commitment)...give you support in your life?	A lot	Sometimes yes, sometimes no	No	Don't know
23	Do you have the feeling you must make choices regarding	Yes	Sometimes	No	Don't know

	this...(topic)..?				
24	Could you change your mind about your...(commitment)...?	Yes	Maybe	No	Don't know
25	Do you take all kinds of steps such as searching for information, reading, talking with others in order to reach another...(commitment)...?	Yes	Sometimes	No	Don't know
26	Are you certain of this...(commitment)...?	Yes, completely	A little bit	No	Don't know
27	Do you try to find out what others think about this...(topic)...?	Yes	Sometimes	No	Don't know
28	Do you defend your ...(commitment)...when others don't agree?	Yes	Sometimes	No	Don't know
29	Are you disappointed in this...(commitment)...?	Yes	Sometimes	No	Don't know
30	Are ready to undergo difficulties and problems in order to keep your...(commitment)...?	A lot	Somewhat	No	Don't know
31	Is this...(commitment)...completely your own choice?	Yes	More or less	No	Don't know
32	Does this...(commitment)...give you strength?	A lot	A little bit (some)	No	Don't know

Questionnaire with Coding information

1	Are you satisfied with your...(commitment)...?	N	C
2	Do you think about...(topic)...?	N	E
3	Does this ...(commitment)... make you feel sure of yourself?	N	C
4	Do you have problems with...(topic)...?	R	E
5	Does this...(commitment)...influence your daily Life?	N	C
6	Do you talk with others about ...(topic)...?	N	E
7	Could you easily give this...(commitment)...up?	R	C
8	Do you try to develop another...(commitment)...on this topic?	N	E
9	Does this...(commitment)... give you the feeling that you know what you want to do with your life?	N	C
10	Do you find it necessary to search for all sorts of different ways of committing you to ...(topic)...	N	E
11	Do you think you should make more effort to live in harmony with this...(commitment)...?	N	C
12	Have you noticed that others can have a different commitment to...(topic)...?	N	E
13	Do you feel involved in this...(commitment)...?	N	C
14	Do you fluctuate in your...(commitment)...?	N	E
15	Do you have support for the future in your...(commitment)...?	N	C
16	Do you compare your...(commitment)...to that of others?	N	E
17	What do you try to find out about...(topic)...?	N	E
18	Are you uncertain about this...(commitment)...?	R	C
19	Do you have conflicts with others about...(topic)...?	N	E
20	Does this...(commitment)...give you the feeling that you can meet the feature with optimism and trust?	N	C
21	Do you try to find a...(commitment)...that fits you better than the one you have now?	N	E
22	Does this...(commitment)...give you support in your life?	N	C
23	Do you have the feeling you must make choices regarding this...(topic)..?	N	E
24	Could you change your mind about your...(commitment)...?	R	C
25	Do you take all kinds of steps such as searching for information, reading, talking with others in order to reach another...(commitment)...?	N	E
26	Are you certain of this...(commitment)...?	N	C
27	Do you try to find out what others think about this...(topic)...?	N	E
28	Do you defend your ...(commitment)...when others don't agree?	N	C
29	Are you disappointed in this...(commitment)...?	R	C
30	Are ready to undergo difficulties and problems in order to keep your...(commitment)...?	N	C
31	Is this...(commitment)...completely your own choice?	N	C
32	Does this...(commitment)...give you strength?	N	C

R=Reversed; N=Non reversed; E=Exploration; C=Commitment

Coding normal items 2 1 0 0

Coding reverse items 0 1 2 0

On request: spreadsheet for automatic calculation on the basis of the raw scores.

Do you have negative feelings about your commitment? 0 1 2 3 4

Intimate relationships

Did your commitment change or remained it stable during the last months? stable much change
0 1 2 3 4

None Very much

Do you have positive feelings about your commitment? 0 1 2 3 4

Do you have negative feelings about your commitment? 0 1 2 3 4

General principle

Did your commitment change or remained it stable during the last months? stable much change
0 1 2 3 4

None Very much

Do you have positive feelings about your commitment? 0 1 2 3 4

Do you have negative feelings about your commitment? 0 1 2 3 4