

University of Groningen

Groningen Identity Development Scale: Landscape version 2 (GIDS-L2)

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GIDS-L2

Groningen Identity Development Scale: Landscape version 2

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Reference

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Table of contents

1. Theoretical framework	4
1.1. Theoretical roots	4
1.2. Domain specific and overarching commitments	4
1.3. Interview structure	5
1.4. Questionnaire content	5
1.5. Strengths and limitations	5
1.6 Application	6
2. General explanation of the GIDS procedure	7
2.1. How to do the interview	7
2.2. Help the participant write down a commitment statement	8
2.3. Administer the questionnaire	8
2.4. Materials	9
2.4.1. Essentials	9
2.4.2. Optional but recommended	9
3. The interview	10
3.1. Introduce the GIDS to the participant	10
3.2. Friendship	11
3.2.1. Introduction	11
3.2.2. Core questions	11
3.2.3. Additional questions	11
3.2.4. Anything else?	11
3.2.5. Commitment statement	11
3.2.6. Administer questionnaire	11
3.3. Family	12
3.3.1. Introduction	12
3.3.2. Core questions	12
3.3.3. Additional questions	12
3.3.4. Anything else?	12
3.3.5. Commitment statement	12
3.3.6. Administer questionnaire	12
3.4. Occupation	13
3.4.1. Introduction	13
3.4.2. Core questions	13
3.4.3. Additional questions	13
3.4.4. Anything else?	13

3.4.5. Commitment statement	13
3.4.6. Administer questionnaire	13
3.5. Leisure	14
3.5.1. Introduction	14
3.5.2. Core questions	14
3.5.3. Additional questions	14
3.5.4. Anything else?	14
3.5.5. Commitment statement	14
3.5.6. Administer questionnaire	14
3.6. Intimate relations	15
3.6.1. Introduction	15
3.6.2. Core questions	15
3.6.3. Additional questions	15
3.6.4. Anything else?	15
3.6.5. Commitment statement	15
3.6.6. Administer questionnaire	15
3.7. Flexible domain(s)	16
3.7.1. Procedure	16
3.7.2. Introduction topic choice	16
3.7.3. Introduction flexible domain interview	17
3.7.4. Core questions	17
3.7.5. Anything else?	17
3.7.6. Commitment statement	17
3.7.7. Administer questionnaire	17
3.8. Overarching commitment	18
3.8.1. Procedure	18
3.8.2. Preparation	18
3.8.3. Introduce identity arrangement and the overarching commitment	18
3.8.4. The structure of identity commitments	20
3.8.5. The overarching commitment	20
3.8.6. Administer questionnaire	20
3.8.7. Mental health referral	20
3.8.8. End of the interview	20
3.8.9. Administer any additional questionnaires at this time	20
4. References	21
5. Acknowledgements	23
6. Appendices	24
6.1. GIDS-L2 questionnaire	25

6.1.1. Scoring Information	27
6.1.2. Sources of the items	27
6.2. Adding, removing or changing domains and adding questionnaires	28
6.3. Procedure repeated measurement	29
6.4. History of the GIDS	30
6.4.1. GIDS: origin in 1985	30
6.4.2. GIDS-r: revision in 2012	31
6.4.3. GIDS-L: revision in 2021	31
6.4.4. GIDS-L2: revision in 2022	33
6.4.6. Selection of studies that have used the GIDS	33
6.5. Example of Data Collection Protocol using GIDS-L2 (corona-pandemic version)	35
6.6. Cheat Sheet: a brief overview of the GIDS-L2 procedure	38

1. Theoretical framework

The Groningen Identity Development Scale (GIDS) is a semi-structured identity interview. The purpose of the GIDS is to provide a comprehensive and quantifiable representation of an individual's identity by assessing domain-specific and overarching commitments in various areas of life, and measuring characteristics such as the strength and utility of these commitments, as well as the developmental process that has led up to them. By combining a domain-specific approach to identity with an integrative approach, the GIDS offers a unique perspective on identity that is both qualitatively unique to the individual and quantifiable, making it possible to compare individuals with each other.

1.1. Theoretical roots

The GIDS is based on the fundamental concepts of identity development put forward 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: the individual in their context is 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). It assesses commitments in various domains of life, such as occupation, leisure time, family, friendships, intimate relations and a flexible domain, as well as one or more overarching commitments. The domains included in the GIDS-L2 are based on Bosma's (1985) framework, optimized through data collection, and suitable for both adolescents and early to middle adults (see also appendix 6.3 for GIDS history). These domains are meant to reflect those areas of life that the target group typically spends much time on or engages in. The flexible domain captures themes that are important to some individuals but may not be prominent to most individuals in the target group, such as mental health, body image, religion, sexuality, being part of a minority, etc. Of course for some target populations a specific theme is common, for example 'being deaf' in a population of deaf people, and in these cases it is recommended to add the common theme to the interview as a standard domain (see also appendix 6.1). Each individual may also identify one or several overarching commitments, or none at all. An overarching commitment is a common theme, or a general principle, that connects and integrates all of these separate

domain-specific commitments into a coherent whole. In this way, the GIDS allows for the assessment of contextual integration (Syed & McLean, 2016).

1.3. Interview structure

Each domain-specific interview within the GIDS is semi-structured and consists of three questions about the individual's past, present, and future in that domain. The core of each domain interview is the same, but some specific questions may be adapted to the particular 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

Following each domain-specific interview and overarching commitment interview, a questionnaire assesses various commitment characteristics and processes that have shaped the commitment. The GIDS 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 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). Additionally, the GIDS gives an indication of the developmental process that has led up to the formation of 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). These exploration measures are included in the GIDS. 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 to assess identity development: the GIDS 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 and limitations

The strengths of the GIDS lie firstly in its ability to generate an 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. Secondly, it assesses identity in separate domains of life, as well as integrative identity structures that combine these domain-specific identities into a coherent whole. This makes it possible to assess both the complexity and coherence of an individual's identity. Thirdly, it provides a thorough overview of macro-level identity features as experienced by the individual, that is, patterns of identity actions, experiences and self-representations (De Ruiter & Gmelin, 2021). Fourthly, it is uniquely suited to measure various forms of integration that have been hard to capture empirically (Syed & McLean, 2016). Specifically, the GIDS allows us to capture both temporal integration (measured within each domain-specific interview) and contextual integration (measured as overarching commitments). Finally, the instrument is firmly rooted in both classic and 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). However, the GIDS also has some limitations. Firstly, it is a time-consuming method that requires a trained interviewer to administer. Secondly, the GIDS may not be suitable for all target populations, as some individuals may not be able to reflect on their identity in the way that the interview requires. Thirdly, the GIDS focuses primarily on macro-level identity and does not capture all aspects of identity, such as micro-level identity processes.

1.6 Application

The GIDS has many potential applications in research, clinical, and educational settings.¹ In research, the GIDS can be used to study identity development across various groups and cultures and investigate the relationship between identity and psychological constructs like well-being and self-esteem. It can also provide insights into developmental pathways of individuals struggling with identity formation. In clinical settings, the GIDS can be used as a tool to assess identity-related issues and monitor identity changes over time due to therapeutic interventions. In educational settings, the GIDS can provide valuable information for educators into the identity of their students, including beliefs, values, interests, and goals, which may influence students' motivation and engagement in the classroom. Moreover, the GIDS can be used to help students gain insight into their own identity in order to make informed decisions about their future career and educational path. Overall, the GIDS has the potential to contribute significantly to our understanding of identity development in various contexts.

¹ The GIDS is freely available for anyone who wants to use it. However, for correct application it is highly recommended to seek training from experienced GIDS interviewers, such as the authors.

2. General explanation of the GIDS procedure

The GIDS is a comprehensive interview that typically takes about 3 hours to complete per participant. However, the length of each interview may vary due to individual differences. Participants may provide longer or shorter answers, and some may include a flexible domain or overarching commitment, while others may not.

The interview procedure begins with a brief introduction where the interviewer explains the process, objectives, confidentiality, and potential sensitive questions (see chapter 3.1 for detailed instructions). Subsequently, the interviewer administers separate domain-specific interviews (chapters 3.2 to 3.6), optionally followed by an interview on a flexible domain (chapter 3.7) and concluding with an interview on the overarching commitment (chapter 3.8). Finally, 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, thus the 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 with regard 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 that you would like to change in the future? If so, how?

The aim of the interview is to have an open discussion where the interviewer reacts to what the participant says. To facilitate this, additional questions have been formulated for each domain (see chapter 3). These questions are optional to ask, meant primarily for participants who do not talk easily. The interviewer is free to choose the order and type of questions, mixing core and additional questions as needed to maintain a fluent and natural conversation. The interviewer

should follow up on interesting or important points made by the participant and ensure that core questions are addressed for each domain interview. In general, it is good to cover both the concrete, 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"). 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 such as religion, sexuality, mental health or immigration status. The flexible domain interview (see chapter 3.7) can be used to explore such topics if they are mentioned often or emphasized by the participant. It is recommended to take note of such potential topics during the interview. If the interviewer feels that they have covered all relevant topics, they should ask the participant if there is anything important that has not been discussed yet.

2.2. Help the participant write down a commitment statement

When the participant is ready to write their commitment statement, explain that the statement should reflect the essence of the conversation, the most important themes and the core of the commitments within the domain. The statement could cover both the concrete real-life aspects of a domain (for example, "I tell my best friend all my secrets") and abstract ideas that are important to the participant (for example "for me, the most important thing in friendship is mutual trust"). Whether the commitment on the card expresses the abstract or specific themes, or both, is up to the participant and their statement may contain one coherent theme or multiple aspects that may or may not be in harmony with each other. If the participant is struggling, you can help them by asking about the most important themes discussed during the interview and encouraging them to write a short summary of these themes. This may be particularly helpful for the first domain, as some participants may find it difficult to know what to write.

2.3. Administer the questionnaire

After the participant writes down their commitment statement, the next step is to administer a questionnaire that assesses various dimensions of their commitment in that domain, including strength and utility, as well as the type of developmental process that has preceded it (e.g., the type of experiences and amount of explorations in the domain). Although the questionnaire is identical for each domain, it refers specifically to the participant's commitment statement and the domain in question. The interviewer clarifies that "commitment" refers to the written commitment statement (emphasize this point by pointing to the written commitment statement), while "topic" refers to the domain just discussed (e.g., friendships). The method of administering the questionnaire is explained to the participant, and for the first domain, it is recommended that the interviewer reads the questions to the participant to ensure clarity and understanding. If administering the questionnaire digitally, participants should read the questions themselves, but the interviewer should emphasize that they ask any question or express any doubts they may

have with regard to answering the questions. It is also recommended to practice reading the questionnaire beforehand to ensure a smooth administration process.

2.4. Materials

2.4.1. Essentials

- GIDS-L2 protocol
- GIDS-L2 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)
- 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 stift (to indicate relations between commitments, see chapter 3.8)
- Camera without internet connection (to capture the configuration of domain-specific identity commitments, 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 corona-proof 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, (4) questions that are too personal and (5) the option of a break. 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
 - Family
 - Occupation
 - Leisure time
 - Intimate relationships
 - Flexible domain(s)
 - General principles
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.”
5. Break: “The interview takes approximately three hours, which can be tiring. I propose that we take a break about halfway through, but if you need one sooner, just tell me.”

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 a 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 you think 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. Family

3.3.1. Introduction

The relationship with family is different for everybody. For some it is easy, for others it is more complex, and it may differ for different family members. In this part of the interview we want to talk about the family members that are currently closest to you or have the largest impact on your life. For some this is their parents, for others it is their children, their siblings or grandparents. Who would you like to talk about?

Proceed with the chosen family members from here. Choose one category, such as parents, or children. It may also be more specific such as only a mother, or a specific child. When in doubt, choose the one that currently has the largest impact on their life. Romantic partners are discussed in a different domain interview: 'intimate relations'.

3.3.2. Core questions

1. What are your family members like? What do they mean to you? How do your family members affect your daily life (e.g., your feelings, thoughts or behavior)? What are you like as a son/daughter, father/mother etc.?
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 family members? Do you have doubts or uncertainties with regard to your family members, are there aspects you would like to change in the future? If so, how?

3.3.3. Additional questions

Do you have conflicts with your family members? How do you feel about that?

Are there topics you do not discuss with your family members? Why not?

What do you expect from your family members? What do you appreciate or admire in them?

What do you dislike?

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

How do your family members see you?

Did you recently have important experiences with your family members? 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?

3.3.6. Administer questionnaire

3.4. Occupation

3.4.1. Introduction

Many people have an occupation, meaning that they work somewhere, or they follow some form of education, or they pursue a certain career. For some, working or studying is an important part of their life, for others, not so much. In this part of the interview, we want to talk about your current occupation, so your job, education, or career plans. What is currently your main occupation?

When multiple occupations arise, focus on only one. When in doubt choose the more important occupation, the one that affects their life the most.

3.4.2. Core questions

1. What is your education/work like? What does your education/work mean to you? How does your education/work affect your daily life (e.g., your feelings, thoughts or behavior)? What kind of worker/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 occupation? 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 occupation do you like, and which ones do you not like?

What is important for you in your education/work?

How do others see you as a student/worker?

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

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

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

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

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

Did you recently have important experiences in your education/work? 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 occupation?

3.4.6. Administer questionnaire

3.5. Leisure

3.5.1. Introduction

People differ greatly in how they spend their leisure time. Some like to do sports, play music, others prefer to relax, watch tv, 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?²

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

² Only in case the participants is a student

3.6. Intimate relations

3.6.1. Introduction

This domain is about love and intimate relations. 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 relationship? 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 relationship(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/did you get on with each other? How do/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

This should be approximately $\frac{2}{3}$ of the interview. We want the participant fresh for the following parts. You may ask the participant if they would like to take a 10 minute break, perhaps get some coffee or tea.

3.7. Flexible domain(s)

3.7.1. Procedure

Interviewers might ask about other domains that seem to be important to the participant. One or maximally two 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, family, occupation, leisure time, and intimate relations. 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? For example by discussing it frequently, thinking about it a lot, researching it often, etc. Take your time to think about it.

If no answer comes, you may prompt them and:

1. Ask about a recurrent theme that you have noticed:
 - I have 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
 - Pandemic/Climate change
 - Activism
 - Mental health
 - Body image
 - Sexuality
 - Membership of a minority community (e.g. LGBT, immigration background)
 - Important family members that were not discussed before

-> 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, and 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, as well as 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 and how your commitments relate to one another.

To do this, I would like to first help you create an arrangement of your commitments. I shall guide you through this process step-by-step.

1. **Arrange.** First place your commitments on the board and arrange them in a way that you feel is fitting (on the white board). You may move them around and group them together if you see similarities, for example when they share a similar theme. But you do not have to find similarities, any arrangement that you find fitting is ok.

If the participant uses another basis for arrangement then similarity, such as hierarchy, this is ok, just make a note of it and include it with the statements.

2. **Connect.** As a second step, I would like you to think about how the different commitments are connected. Which ones do you think have a big influence on each other? You may draw a line between those. You don't have to find a connection between all domains, you can focus on just a few main ones, just 2 or 3 connections that you think are particularly strong. Can you also characterize the connections, by drawing a + or - symbol next to each line?

- A + means that the commitments are in harmony or reinforce each other
- A - means that the commitments are in conflict or hamper each other

Not everyone sees connections and this is ok, and not every connection can be clearly characterized with a + or -, which is also completely fine, then just leave the line blank.

3. **Find overarching commitment.** When you are happy with the arrangement and the connections, see if you can find one or more overarching commitments. Look for these overarching commitments in the content of your cards, and how you have arranged and connected them. Are there any themes or patterns that characterize you? Something that comes back in every domain, or something that connects them? There can be one, two or more overarching commitments, but it also occurs that there are no common overarching commitments or that they are too difficult to capture, and this is perfectly fine as well. Cards can belong to more than one overarching commitment.

If necessary, you can provide a more detailed explanation: Overarching commitments may be similar themes that you see coming back in the different commitments, something that links them together, perhaps found in the way that you have arranged your commitments. But they may also be or include a characterization of certain connections that you see between commitments, a pattern in how your different commitments affect each other, or ideas that explain connections between domains. Take your time to look at the cards. If you have found one or more overarching commitments, write them down on separate cards. The card should reflect the core or essence of the overarching commitment in one or a couple of sentences.

4. Finally, if you feel that it is possible, you may place the overarching commitment statement(s) back into your arrangement of commitments and rearrange your commitments if necessary, so that it feels fitting to you. If you want, you may also draw new connections with lines. If you do not find a fitting way to place back the overarching commitment, that is fine as well.

If the overarching commitment cannot be placed back in a fitting way, it may be placed at the top right, just so that we can make a picture of the arrangement of identity commitments, which does include all of the content.

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. GIDS-L2 questionnaire

Items are answered digitally on a visual analogue scale, ranging from 0 - 100. Each scale has three qualitative labels, at 0, 50 and 100. The phrasing of the labels is adjusted to the question, specified in the item table below.

Nr.	Item	Visual analogue scale labels		
		0	50	100
1. (r)	Could you easily give up this...(commitment)...?	Yes	Yes, with difficulty	No
2. (r)	Are you uncertain about this...(commitment)...?	Often	Sometimes	Rarely
3. (r)	Could you change your...(commitment)...?	Yes	Maybe	No
4.	Are you certain of this...(commitment)...?	Yes, completely	A little bit	No
5.	Do you defend your ...(commitment)...when others don't agree?	Yes	Sometimes	No
6.	Are you sure that this ...(commitment)... is right for you?	Yes	Sometimes	No
7.	Are you convinced that this commitment fits you well?	Yes	Sometimes	No
8.	Do you feel that this ...(commitment)... involves many aspects of your life?	Yes	Somewhat	No
9.	Does this ...(commitment)... help you deal with many different types of situations?	Yes	Somewhat	No
10.	Can you use this commitment to guide your actions?	Yes, often	Sometimes	No, rarely
11.	Do you know what to do because of this commitment?	Yes, often	Sometimes	No, rarely
12.	Does this...(commitment)...influence your daily life?	Strongly	Sometimes	No
13.	Does this...(commitment)...give you direction in your life?	A lot	Sometimes yes, sometimes no	No
14.	Does this commitment influence your daily thoughts and feelings?	Strongly	Somewhat	Not at all
15.	Does this commitment influence your behavior and the choices that you make?	Strongly	Somewhat	Not at all
16.	Do you try to develop another...(commitment)...on this topic?	Yes	Sometimes	No

17.	Do you try to find a...(commitment)...that fits you better than the one you have now?	Yes	Sometimes	No
18.	Are you searching for a different ..(commitment)..?	Yes	Sometimes	No
19.	Do you actively try to further develop this ...(commitment)...?	Often	Sometimes	Never
20.	Do try to learn new things to develop this ...(commitment)...?	Often	Sometimes	Never
21.	Do you talk with others about ..(topic)..?	A lot	With some people yes, with others, no	Almost never
22.	Do you try to learn more about your...(commitment)...?	As much as possible	Some things yes, other things no	Little
23.	In the past year, did you have a major positive experience on this ...(topic)...?	Yes, very positive	yes, somewhat positive	No
24.	How often do you have positive experiences on this ...(topic)...?	Often	Sometimes	Rarely
25.	In the past year, did you have a major negative experience on this ...(topic)...?	Yes, very negative	yes, somewhat negative	No
26.	How often do you have negative experiences on this ...(topic)...?	Often	Sometimes	Rarely
27.	Is the way that you behave in line with this ..(commitment)..?	Yes, in nearly all situations	In some situations	No, rarely
28. (r)	Do you experience conflict between this ..(commitment).. and how you behave?	Often	Sometimes	Rarely
29.	Do you have positive feelings about this...(commitment)...?	Yes	Somewhat	No
30.	Do you have negative feelings about this...(commitment)...?	Yes	Somewhat	No
31.	How satisfied are you about this ...(topic)...?	Very satisfied	Somewhat satisfied	Very unsatisfied
32.	To what extent have you recently been upset, distressed or worried over this ...(topic)...?	Not at all	Somewhat	Very severely

6.1.1. Scoring Information

The scores for each subscale are calculated by taking the average of the subscale items. Some items are scored in reverse, this is indicated with (r) after the item number in the questionnaire (see previous table).

Subscale	Item numbers
Commitment strength	1-7
Commitment utility	8-15
Broad exploration	16-18
In-depth exploration	19-22
Positive experiences	23-24
Negative experiences	25-26
Congruence with behavior	27-28
Positive valence commitment	29
Negative valence commitment	30
Well-being	31
Identity distress	32

6.1.2. Sources of the items

The GIDS questionnaire items are rooted in a combination of several questionnaires, in some cases modified minimally to fit the format (i.e., application to idiosyncratic commitments, application to a specific domain of life). The source of each of the items is listed below:

GIDS-r (Bosma, et al., 2012): 1-5, 12-13, 21-22
DIDS (Luyckx et al., 2006): 6,16
RECS-E (van der Gaag et al., 2016): 7,17
GIDS-L (van der Gaag et al., 2021): 8-11, 14-15, 23-30
U-MICS (Crocetti, et al., 2008): 18-20
MANSA (Priebe et al., 1999): 31
IDS (Berman et al., 2004): 32

6.2. 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 “occupation” could be replaced by “pension” 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 after 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.

6.3. 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 briefly repeat 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.

6.4. History of the GIDS

The GIDS is a semi-structured identity interview method that was originally developed by Bosma in 1985. It was revised in 2012, it received a thorough update of mainly the questionnaires in 2021, and this version was optimized in 2022.

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 the formulation of the participant's identity commitments in different domains, and this commitment is then used as input for the questionnaire. The interview protocol has been improved in the 2012 version, while the questionnaire had a thorough update in 2021. The 2021 update allows us to measure more fine grained exploration processes (broad and in-depth exploration) and new identity concepts such as those proposed in the Landscape of Identity model (Van der Gaag et al., 2020).

6.4.1. GIDS: origin in 1985

The notion that identity is a core concept in development stems from Erikson (1956, 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. 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 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.

6.4.2. *GIDS-r: revision in 2012*

The target group in the first GIDS studies 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 contained 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 of study/work and leisure. Serious attempts to do so often result in a statement about the balance between these subdomains. 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 commitment, and it is a kind of underlying dimension or integrative aspect under (most) of the specific domains.

6.4.3. *GIDS-L: revision in 2021*

The GIDS-L features a few major adaptations: removal of two domains and the addition of a flexible domain, a protocol for discovering the structure of identity including several overarching commitments, and finally, reconstruction of the questionnaire.

Based on many administrations with the GIDS, we noticed that participants typically came up with superficial commitments for the domain 'philosophy of life' (i.e. 'seize the day'). Only for those who had serious religious convictions did the interview in this domain have depth, but in those cases their life's philosophy was also central in the overarching commitment. We had similar experiences in the domain of 'personal characteristics'. This ended in quite generic self-descriptions and when these were important, then these self-descriptions were typically also central in their overarching commitments. We therefore decided to remove these two domains, but add a flexible domain. In the flexible domain, individuals who have important religious beliefs, political convictions, or particular views on themselves, could discuss them. This has the advantage that other issues that occupy the minds of specific individuals could also be addressed, such as nationality, sexuality, certain global events (e.g. global warming), self

image or mental health. This flexible domain is optional and is administered after the now five standard domains of friendships, parents, education, leisure time and intimate relations.

We were also interested to be able to gain more insight in the structure and integration of identity domains. We therefore designed a very open protocol where we allowed participants to organize their domain-specific commitment statements on a white board in any way they like. From this overview, we wanted to see how domain-specific commitments relate to one another. From this follows quite naturally the overarching commitment, where participants find a common theme or relations emerge from their commitment statements. We wanted to allow them to formulate more than one overarching commitment. Through experience with interviews we felt that some participants had several recurrent themes in their lives, and several of such structures should theoretically also be possible (based on the landscape model of identity; van der Gaag et al., 2020). Thus, in the GIDS-L we have made several integrative structures, overarching commitments, possible. A new protocol was constructed to allow for the assessment of such multiple overarching commitments.

We also re-made the questionnaire. After initial construction of the instrument, a pilot study was performed (in december 2020) to optimize the interview protocol and 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 (adapted) items from the DIDS (Luyckx et al., 2006), U-MICS (Crocetti et al., 2008), RECS-E (van der Gaag et al., 2016), IDS (Berman et al., 2004) and MANSA (Priebe et al., 1999). Moreover, the questionnaire was supplemented with novel items that measure the integration of commitment with everyday life, which we later termed *commitment utility* (in the GIDS-L2), as proposed in the landscape of identity model (van der Gaag et al., 2020). High scores on this construct should reflect a commitment that is rich in content and that can encompass a wide variety of situations. Moreover, we added four items that assess the role of *Experiences* on identity processes, separated into two items to measure positive experiences and two to measure negative experiences. High scores on one of these constructs indicate that the individual had either major or frequent positive or negative experiences. Finally we added items that assess the *Valence* of commitments, separated in a one-item measure for positive valence and one for negative valence. High scores on either one means that the individual has strong positive or negative feelings about the commitment.

We pilot tested the renewed 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.

6.4.4. GIDS-L2: revision in 2022

The GIDS-L2 features a few minor optimizations of the GIDS-L after a first round of large scale data collection. First, we have provided more structure for generating overarching commitments. We now explicitly instruct the participants to first arrange the commitments and suggest to do this according to similarity, although we also allow other arrangements (such as hierarchy). Second, they find connections between the commitments, and visualize these connections with lines, which may be augmented with a + or - to indicate whether the commitments are in harmony, or in conflict. Third, they use this arrangement to find one or several overarching commitments.

The second adaptation is the generalization of two domains, to allow the GIDS to be applied to a wider target group. Specifically, we changed the domain of 'parents' to 'family' and the domain of 'education' to 'occupation'. In both new domains, a first step is introduced, to specify the domain to the situation of the participant. In the domain of family, we first ask the participants to decide who to talk about, be it their parents, children, brothers, sister, grandparents... We ask them to choose those who are the most important to them or who have the largest impact on their life. Similarly, for occupation we first ask participants to specify whether they work, study, or are currently in between, and then ask them to choose the occupation that is currently most central or impactful in their life.

Finally, we optimized the questionnaire after analysis of data that was collected with the GIDS-L (Van der Gaag et al., in prep). We have removed one broad exploration item that did not correlate much with any of the other items. Moreover, we have renamed the commitment integration subscale to commitment utility, and added a few items to this subscale that were previously assigned to another subscale ('effect on life'), but showed high correlations with the commitment utility items and were similar in content. A few items from the integration (now utility) subscale behaved deviantly in terms of their relations with other variables, and we have decided to make a separate construct of these, called congruence with behavior. These items measure the extent to which the behavior is in line with the commitment, which may be an interesting way to measure a form of autonomous functioning.

6.4.6. Selection of studies that have used the GIDS

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6.5. Example of Data Collection Protocol using GIDS-L2 (corona-pandemic version)

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
- Confer with your participant about wearing a mask during the interview. If either one is uncomfortable without a mask, both shall wear a mask. Free FFP2 masks are available in the room.

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
- Post-its
- Pen

- Camera
- Spare laptop
- Usb adaptors for mac users

- Medical keyboard
- Medical mouse
- Tissues

Bring yourself:

- Laptop with 2 USB ports (If you have one)
- Interview protocol

Follow this Protocol

Preparation phase - be there 20 min before the start - there is always at least 1 hour in between interviews to refresh the air

- 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
- Set-up the laptop
 - Turn it on
 - Attach medical mouse and keyboard
 - Put the mouse and keyboard in reach of the participant, keep the laptop a bit out of reach.
- Open three qualtrics questionnaires on your laptop:
 - Demographic questionnaire - note that the Informed Consent is included in this, at the beginning
 - GIDS-L2 Questionnaire (open at least 6 times in different tabs, to complete all domains)
 - Additional questionnaires for after the interview (TIPI & HASD)
- Disinfect everything that people touch as a last step:
 - Keyboard
 - Mouse
 - Pen
 - Whiteboard 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 are awaiting a test result.
 - If they answer yes to any of these, please ask them to go home and perhaps reschedule.
 - Ask if they are comfortable without a mask. If they are not, keep the mask on, otherwise you may leave it off, if you are comfortable with that yourself.
 - Give the participant 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
 - Fill in the demographic questionnaire in qualtrics, which is preceded by a digital informed consent.

- Interview
 - Explain interview protocol, conduct interview and fill out domain-specific questionnaires
 - At the end of the entire interview: have them fill out the additional questionnaires

- After the interview
 - Put on gloves
 - Write participant number on white board
 - Make picture of the organization 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 other material.
 - Remind participants of their right to withdraw their data and to email any questions.
 - Make sure that the participant leaves with the research information
 - Assign SONA credits
 - Open window if another interview follows that day, close window at the end of the day
 - Disinfect everything again
 - Lock the room when leaving

6.6. Cheat Sheet: a brief overview of the GIDS-L2 procedure

- Explain procedure
 - Per domain an *interview*
 - Then formulate a statement (commitment)
 - Fill out questionnaire
- Reassure participant
 - 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 GIDS-L2 questionnaire

- Repeat the above interview for each domain.

- End with the optional Flexible domain, followed by the Overarching commitment(s) interview.