



Brief report

Short forms of the Utrecht-Management of Identity Commitments Scale (U-MICS) with the domains of job, romantic relationship, and region



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ABSTRACT

The U-MICS is a self-report questionnaire designed to assess the identity dimensions from a domain-specific perspective. The present study reports on the development of a short-form version for the domains of job and romantic relationship in young adults from Germany and extends this scale to include the domain of region ($n_{Sample1} = 95$, 84% female, mean age 22.45 years; $n_{Sample2} = 1,795$, 71% female, mean age 24.53 years). We found the short form to possess adequate psychometric properties and to demonstrate a factor structure congruent to the long-form version. Regarding validity, the small correlations across domains within dimensions support a domain-specific approach to identity. The associations between the different identity domains with personality traits are similar, indicating a consistent pattern of convergent validity for all domains. We conclude that “region” provides a valuable complement to the established domains that can all be reliably assessed with the U-MICS–Short Form.

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Based on the work of Erikson (1968) and Marcia (1966), Meeus and Crocetti (Crocetti, Rubini, & Meeus, 2008) introduced the three-dimensional model for identity development. This three-dimensional model stresses the continuous necessity to maintain and revise one's identity throughout the lifespan and focuses on the three identity dimensions of commitment, in-depth exploration, and reconsideration of commitment. *Commitment* is defined as a firm decision among several possible alternatives, *in-depth exploration* signifies dealing with one's current commitments, and *reconsideration* represents contrasting one's current commitments with possible alternatives (Crocetti et al., 2008).

As identity development shows strong variations across domains, these identity dimensions are domain-specific; with romantic relationship and job being considered classical identity domains (Luyckx, Seiffge-Krenke, Schwartz, Crocetti, & Klimstra, 2014). These identity domains reflect distinct developmental tasks driven by societal expectations for young adults (Heckhausen & Krueger, 1993). Over the past few decades, however, residential mobility—i.e., changing one's place of residence—has become a ubiquitous phenomenon in Western societies (Oishi, 2010). It was recently postulated that therefore one's everyday living environment (i.e., *region*) represents a new key domain of identity (Schubach, Zimmermann, Noack, & Neyer, 2016).

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1. The present studies

We aimed (a) to develop a short version of the U-MICS (Crocetti et al., 2008) for the domains of job and romantic relationship in young adulthood and (b) to extend the current three-dimensional identity model to include the domain of region. To do this, we first reduced the number of items based on empirical item analysis and expert judgment (*item selection*), then assessed the properties and reliability of the short form (*psychometric properties*). Lastly, we explored factorial validity, domain specificity, and convergent validity (*validity*).

We expected domain specificity to be indicated by small correlations across domains within dimensions (i.e., correlations between the domains of job, romantic relationship, and region within a single dimension such as commitment). We also expected that, for all domains, a more established identity (as indicated by higher levels of commitment and in-depth exploration, and lower levels of reconsideration) would correlate with personality traits associated with maturity (i.e., higher levels of conscientiousness, agreeableness, and emotional stability), thus pointing to convergent validity.

2. Method

2.1. Participants and procedure

2.1.1. Study 1

Sample 1 ($N = 95$) was made up of undergraduate psychology students (84% female, mean age 22.45 years, $SD = 2.95$ years) from Germany. Data were collected using paper-and-pencil questionnaires. Sample 1 was used to select items and to compare the psychometric properties of the short and long version of the questionnaire.

2.1.2. Study 2

Sample 2 ($N = 1,795$) consisted of post-secondary graduates (71% female, mean age 24.53 years, $SD = 2.50$ years) who were part of another large German study (Zimmermann et al., 2016). Assessments took place two months before graduation (Time 1; T1; $n_{T1} = 1,635$; i.e., 76% of the initially 2,146 participants registered for study participation) and four months after graduation (Time 2; T2; $n_{T2} = 1,451$; i.e., 68% of the initially 2,146 participants). Data were collected using online questionnaires (cf. Arslan, 2013). Sample 2 was used to assess the psychometric properties of the short version and to investigate validity.

2.2. Measures

2.2.1. Identity dimensions

For Study 1, the U-MICS (Crocetti et al., 2008) was translated from English to German by a bilingual psychologist. The original measure used 13 items to assess each domain of *job* and *romantic relationship* (commitment: five items, in-depth exploration: five items, reconsideration: three items). We used this measure to develop additional items to assess the domain of *region*; five items were used to assess commitment, five items for in-depth exploration, and three items for reconsideration. Sample items for the domain of *region* include “Living in this place of residence/this region gives me certainty in life” (commitment), “I think a lot about my place of residence/the region I live in” (in-depth exploration), and “I often think that another place of residence/region would make life more interesting for me” (reconsideration). All items were rated on a 5-point scale ranging from 1 (*completely untrue*) to 5 (*completely true*).

In Study 2, participants completed the short version of the U-MICS developed in Study 1. For each domain, we assessed each dimension using three items (three items \times three dimensions \times three domains), resulting in 27 items in total.¹ The items were rated on a 5-point scale ranging from 1 (*completely true*) to 5 (*completely untrue*). All scales were recoded before further analyses were carried out, such that higher scores reflect higher levels of commitment, in-depth exploration, and reconsideration.

2.2.2. Big Five personality traits

In Study 2, we assessed the personality traits using the BFI-S (Gerlitz & Schupp, 2005). Openness was assessed using four items, while all of the other four traits were assessed using only three items each. All items were rated on a 7-point scale ranging from 1 (*does not apply to me at all*) to 7 (*applies to me perfectly*). Coefficient alpha (T1) was .64 (openness), .64 (conscientiousness), .81 (extraversion), .56 (agreeableness), and .74 (neuroticism).

2.2.3. Life satisfaction

In Study 2, we measured life satisfaction using a single question (“All things considered, how satisfied are you with your life as a whole?”; Wagner, Frick, & Schupp, 2007). Participants indicated their life satisfaction on an 11-point scale ranging from 0 (*completely dissatisfied*) to 10 (*completely satisfied*).

¹ The domain of romantic relationship was only assessed for participants who reported being in romantic relationships.

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