

**“Nice to meet you, I am..”: Identity Content Analysis of Speed Dating
Conversations**

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Abstract

One way of understanding identity is by considering it as embedded and dynamically related to its social context. From this point of view, identities are formed in the moment-to-moment actions, such as interactions with others. Identity development research has focused mostly on processes of identity (e.g., exploration), resulting in a gap in current knowledge of the topics and domains that are seen as relevant to identity (identity content). Acknowledging this gap, the present qualitative study aims to investigate the type, frequency, and distribution overtime of identity domains. Specifically, the study consisted of conversations from a same-sex speed- dating event. Conversations were recorded and transcribed, and references to one's identity (i.e., identity claims) were organized under domains and used for subsequent analysis. Results revealed a strong prevalence of personal identity claims in comparison to other domains such as dating and gender. Furthermore, great irregularity was observed in the domain trajectories over the speed-dating rounds. The study provides some insight into identity content and positions itself as an additional step toward a more comprehensive understanding of identity.

Keywords: Identity, identity content, identity domains, speed-dating conversations, same-sex dating.

“Nice to meet, you I am..”: Identity Content Analysis of Speed Dating Conversations

The term “identity” is ubiquitous in both the academic and the popular language (Stryker & Burke, 2000). Despite its common usage, conceptualizations of what identity is have varied greatly (Woodward, 2004, p. 6). One possible approach understands identity as allowing individuals to position and understand themselves in relation to the external social reality and others (Hammack, 2015). Embedded in the social surrounding, identity can be considered as being constructed through daily occurrences, such as interaction with others and the shared claims made about one’s own identity (Schacter, 2015). While research on identity has focused mainly on the *processes* (e.g., exploration) underlying its development (Johnson et al., 2022), the very elements and topics that constitute identity (Galliher et al., 2017) have been mostly neglected (Johnson et al., 2022). This gap in knowledge of identity *content*, has led to an incomplete understanding of identity in its entirety (Galliher et al., 2017).

The present study acknowledges this gap and aims towards the investigation of identity mainly from a content point of view. Specifically, the study focuses on identity-related disclosures (i.e., claims) within homosexual speed-dating interactions. These identity claims have been analysed with regard to their content, but also to their patterns over the course of the conversations, thereby adding a time perspective to identity content. With this bifold objective, the present research aims towards an extension of the current knowledge of identity by investigating the type and distribution of identity-related topics within this context.

Defining Identity

A clear definition of identity is difficult to determine (Owens, 2006). McAdam (2013) defined identity as a tool that allows for the link between the ‘internal self’ and the ‘external world’. From this point of view, identity carries a social-relational function to

understand the social and psychological world (Owens, 2006). This bridging function of individual identity has been thought to provide individuals with a sense of internal coherence and consistency, which allows for an individual sense of sameness and difference in relation to a specific social context (Hammack, 2015). Research on identity has branched off into a nuanced collection of approaches, which vary in their ontological and epistemological stands (De Ruiter & Gmelin, 2021).

Conceptualising Identity

More traditional research approaches, largely based on Erikson's views (1968), have conceptualised identity in terms of cognition and reflection on the self (Bamberg, 2011). These approaches have primarily focused on an internalised process of identity development, understood as occurring mostly within the individual (Breakwell, 1986). A diverging, more recent, conceptualization of identity, has shifted towards the acknowledgement of the role of daily actions and events as relevant in the development of identity (Van Der Graag et al., 2017). According to this approach, identity is situated in its social context, and is constructed through various activities, such as storytelling (e.g., Bamberg, 2006) and identity claims (Schacter, 2015). This situated approach values the role of daily actions and moment-to-moment dynamics, and understands identity as being continuously constructed through social interactions. (Breakwell, 1986; Josselson, 2009). A potentially viable way of investigating identity, therefore, could be the analysis of identity-related information that occurs during interactions between individuals.

Identity Claims in Interactions

At the level of everyday interactions identities have been conceptualised as *identity claims* that emerge during interactions. In their integrative model of identity, Schachter

(2015) defines identity claims as utterances made by an individual about themselves. In their most basic form, an identity claim might follow the simple structure of describing an aspect of the speaker, such as “*I am an honest person [...]*”. Speakers might generate *explicit* or *implicit* identity claims. The former refers to claims in which the speaker mentions culturally relevant categories, such as gender or religious affiliation (e.g., “*I am a Muslim*” and “*I am a woman*” Gmelin & Kunnen, 2021). Implicit identity claims, on the other hand, can be observed in references to attributes that are associated with a certain category (e.g., “*I am on my own with my daughter*” in reference to being a single mother, or “*I am not that kind of person [to do that]*” in reference to aggressive behaviours) (Stokoe, 2009). Importantly, identity claims are not to be understood as the reflection of an inner, existing identity, but rather as the reflection of what the speaker considers worth sharing and communicating in a given situation (Schacter, 2015, McLean et al., 2016).

Claims about the self can be observed in three main settings: (a) *self-reflective thinking*, which occurs when an individual thinks about themselves, (b) *Interactions*, which occurs when claims about the self are shared with a conversational partner (c) *interactions about a third party*, which occurs when individuals share identity claims about a third entity, external to the conversational partners. While self-reflective thinking is not easily observable, due to its internal nature, identity claims that emerge during interactions can be more readily accessible, for example, when conducting analysis of moment-to-moment conversations, such as by recording phone-call conversations (Wilkinson & Kitzinger, 2003) or face-to-face exchanges (Johnson et al., 2022).

The investigation of identity on this timescale, can be seen as part of an emerging trend in identity conceptualization. This “micro-level” timescale was defined as occurring at the level of second, minutes, hours, and days (Lichtwarck-Aschoff et al., 2008) as opposed to the “macro- level”, long-term scale, which spans across longer periods of time,

such as weeks, months and years (Hellinger & Schachter, 2021). Observations conducted on the micro or macro levels, are thought to yield qualitatively distinct and unique information about identity (De Ruiter & Gmelin, 2021): the micro-level provides information about moment-to-moment variability, by looking at concrete behaviours that are considered to be identity-relevant (e.g., Anderson, 2009, Korobov, 2011); the macro-level, on the other side of the spectrum, could provide information regarding developmental changes and patterns (Lewis, 2002, Witherington & Margett, 2011).

The observation of identity claims from moment-to-moment interactions, as in the case of the present speed-dating setting, is therefore also considered to inform identity-related considerations, by providing qualitatively unique types of data. Schachter (2015) highlighted this informative value of micro-scale observations, by discussing how macro-scale, long-term identity changes find their origin in the moment-to-moment scale, which overtime might develop into long-lasting identity developments. The data obtained via numerous observations of micro-level interactions is composed of a multitude of diverse identity claims, and therefore requires an overarching framework for its organisations and understanding.

Identity Domains

Previous investigation of identity content has made use of domains as a means for categorising different claims based on their central topic (e.g., Johnson et al., 2022). Domains can be defined as overarching themes under which different types of information can be clustered. Starting with the work of Marica (1996) with adolescents, eight central domains have been commonly used across studies (e.g., Balistreri et al., 1995; Forkosh et al, 2019). Within this framework, domains can be distinguished in two main categories: *interpersonal* and *ideological* domains. The former refers to topics about interpersonal

aspects of identity, such as friendship and family. Other domains such as education, religious and political affiliations, and gender-related remarks are conceptualised as part of ideological domains.

Categorization under domains can allow for insightful considerations about the data. Domains are considered to vary in how central and salient they are for different individuals (Meca et al., 2015). For example, Johnson et al., (2021) conducted a study based on a shortened version of the Twenty Statements Tests (TST; Kuhn & McPartland, 1954), a sentence completion task in which adolescent participants were asked to fill in twenty incomplete “*I am..*” sentences. The study revealed that young adults referred to the domains of family and friends more frequently than they referred to the domain of romantic relationships. Presumably, this might be related to the developmental relevance that family and friends might have in that stage of life, as opposed to romantic involvements (Johnson et al., 2021). Variability in salience and subsequent selection of topics might be attributed to an array of different factors, such as ethnic identification (Brittian et al., 2013) and group membership in society (Bombay et al., 2010).

Domain coding, therefore, provides insight into which topics are touched upon by different individuals when they engage, for example, in identity claims. In other words, identity content can be observed. As mentioned, this aspect of identity has been mostly neglected in identity development research, in favour of the investigation of identity processes (Johnson et al., 2021). As a consequence of this gap, little knowledge has been collected on characteristics of identity content, such as its development and distribution over time. The present study made use of domain coding to also gain insight into how identity content is distributed, re-presented, or changed over time. Specifically, the patterns of domains across time were researched.

Patterns of Domains

In their work about identity content among groups of American adolescents, Johnson et al., (2022) decided to exploratorily investigate the patterns of certain domains. Specifically, their focus laid on observing in which type of combinations certain domains would be used. This investigation yielded a total of eight different patterns (e.g., only personal claims, only personal and relationship claims). This exploratory investigation allowed to provide additional information and understating of identity content and how it is presented. In the light and model of this study, the present research aims to undertake a similar exploratory analysis of the content of identity claims by observing the patterns of domains across time. While the work of Johnson et al., (2022) was conducted with written identity claims in the TST, the present study unfolded across different speed-dating conversations. The pattern analysis, therefore, aimed at providing information about how different identity domains were referenced by different participants across different rounds of the speed-dating event.

Speed-dating paradigm

When discussing potential research designs for the study of social interactions, researcher Elizabeth Stokoe presented the speed-dating paradigm as a suitable design for conversation analysis (Stokoe, 2010). The use of this paradigm for the study of interactions allows to gain insight into real-life conversations between individuals. Within the specific context of identity research, speed dating events allows to record and observe identity claims as they appear in conversations, while simultaneously allowing for considerations about developments over time via pattern analysis within and across dating conversations. This paradigm provides a unique opportunity for investigation of very diverse aspects. In fact, the use of speed-dating events as a setting for psychological research is widespread

(Eastwick & Finkel 2008). Due to its romantic nature, the speed dating paradigm has been employed primarily for the investigation of different aspects of attraction and relationship (e.g., mate selection by Fisman et al., 2006; romantic desire by Eastwick et al., 2007).

Nevertheless, this paradigm has been progressively employed across fields.

Present study

In light of the current literature and body of knowledge about identity content, the present study aims to investigate the content of identity-related disclosures in the setting of speed-dating conversations. For this purpose, identity claims have been identified and analysed with regard to their domain. Domains have then been further observed and analysed in order to determine the frequency distributions and patterns of the different identity domains. Implications of the study include the enhancement of our current understanding of identity content, as well as insight into interpersonal dynamics in the context of speed-dating events.

Methods

Participants

A total of 9 speed dating events were conducted, including a total number of 75 participants. Participants were recruited by means of posters, flyers and social media posts on Facebook, advertising an homosexual speed-dating event as part of a research project. For the purpose of this study, only events 4 and 6 were selected for successive analysis, resulting in a sample of 16 same-sex attracted male participants. Age of participants varied between 22-33 years, with a mean age of 27 in event 4 (23-33) and a mean age of 24 in event 6 (22-28). Conversations were held in English, which was spoken as a second language by all but two native English-speaking participants.

Materials and Procedure

The speed dating event took place in the cafeteria of a University building in the Netherlands. Prior to the speed-dating events, demographic and contact information of all participants were gathered. Before the start of the conversations, participants were equipped with a headset, a recording device, and a nametag. The procedure of the speed dating event was elucidated and participants were asked for their consent. No detailed information about the objective of the study was provided at this stage.

During the various rounds, a group of men remained at their specific table, whereas the other participants rotated from table to table after each conversation. The tables were set up in a way to provide participants with more privacy and anonymity as well as enable the conversation to be as uninterrupted as possible. This was achieved by firstly separating the tables with sufficient space from each other and secondly, installing partitioning walls in the area around the event. Each conversation was six minutes, and the researchers indicated the beginning and the end of each round. All communication preceding and following those six minutes was recorded as well. Upon the end of each round, subjects answered a scorecard revealing if they were interested in seeing the conversation partner again. This scorecard was sealed away and later opened by the organisers. In case of both participants having stated to be interested in the other, a notification of a “match” was sent out the following day. After completion of the speed-dating participants were debriefed

Coding and Analysis

The current study used a qualitative approach. For the analysis of the conversations, the *Iterative Micro-Identity Content Analysis* (IMICA; Gmelin & Kunnen, 2021) methodology was used. After the initial familiarisation with the data through repeated reading of the conversational transcripts (step 1), the analysis focused on the identification

of identity claims (step 2). These claims consisted of references of the speaker to a certain aspect of their identity, such as categories (e.g., “I am a clumsy person), general tendencies (e.g., “I never know how to deal with conflict”) and stable states (e.g., “I am Dutch”). By reading through the transcripts of the conversations identity claims were identified and extracted from their context to have a comprehensive list of all identified claims. Subsequently, identity claims were deductively coded for their identity content domains based on the existing taxonomy by McLean and Syed (2011).

The domains used for coding were of two types: *ideological* domains (personal, politics, religion, recreation, education and occupation) and *relational* domains (dating, family, friends, gender). Depending on the core theme of the claim, each claim was assigned to one individual domain. As illustrated below, the domain coding process involved several steps: after having preliminarily assigned domains to each claim, multiple coders would compare their work to determine whether the domain was unanimously assigned. The final domain codes were collected and used for subsequent analysis.

The coding was carried out by seven trained coders. Prior to the coding of the data, in an effort to achieve consistency, all coders went through a period of training, during which codes were applied to sample data, and group discussions followed until a shared understanding of the coding process was established. In order to assure reliability of the data analysis, coders were always placed in either pairs or groups of three, in order to allow for comparisons of the coding outputs. In line with this structure, the transcripts were equally divided across the sub-pairs and groups. Throughout the coding process, regular group intervision sessions were conducted, to allow for questions and doubts and seek for shared solutions. Once the data was fully coded, the output was collected in a comprehensive file, ready for the individual analysis to take place.

Analysis Plan

To investigate the frequency and distribution of identity-claims across domains, all extracted claims, with their corresponding domain codes, were collected in one comprehensive dataset. As a first step, the relative frequency distributions of the different domains across all conversations were calculated. This was done by identifying the total claim count of each domain and calculating its proportion by dividing it by the total number of claims across all domains. Additionally, as a consequence of the high diversity of claims within the personal domain, further exploratory inductive analysis of this domain yielded three additional sub-domains. Finally, via an exploratory analysis of the patterns of different domains across time, the trajectories of domain-specific claims were calculated. These trajectories were obtained by plotting the frequency of claims per speaker across the given domain for each of the seven speed-dating rounds. An individual trajectory was calculated for each participant who had disclosed claims within the considered domain. Specifically, the three most frequent domains were selected for this pattern analysis, namely: personal, education & occupation and recreation. The present paper focused on the analysis of the education & occupation domain, under which $n = 16$ participants had constructed an identity-claim.

Results

The analysis of the data focused on the ten domains under which the identity claims were coded. Results revealed a variety of aspects regarding the distribution of the different domains: while some domains were frequently observed, others were more scarcely present (Figure 1). Furthermore, while some domains were referred to by all participants at least once, other domains were mentioned by fewer participants, sometimes by one single individual alone (Figure 2). Patterns of domains across the speed-dating rounds revealed differential trajectories, which varied greatly across participants. The

following sections illustrate the observed results in each domain and provide examples from the raw data to better illustrate the type of claims that were observed.

Figure 1

Distribution of the number of claims across domains

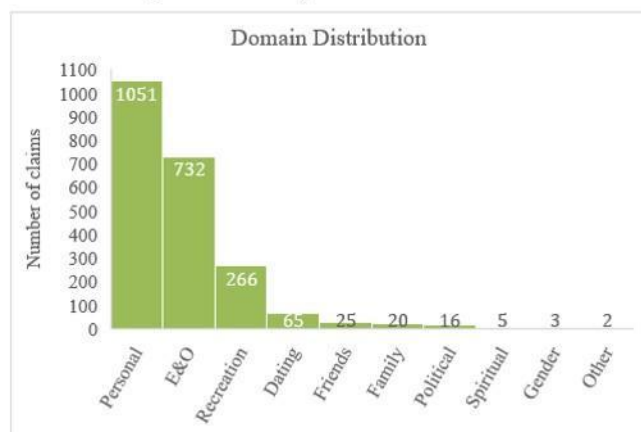
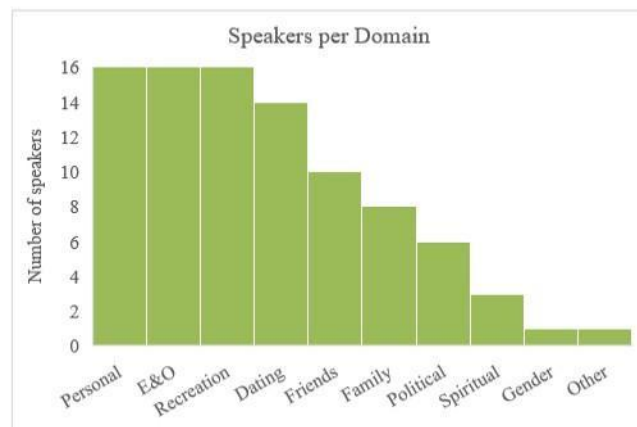


Figure 2

Number of speakers per domain



Personal

The personal domain was the most frequently mentioned domain. Out of the total number of identity claims, 48.10% regarded personal topics, and all participants referred to their personal sphere at least once. Claims within this domain addressed various aspects of the speaker, such as demographics and migration history (e.g., E4M1 “*Uhm, so I was born in South Africa <> and then I was there for a little while*”). In addition, claims within this domain also addressed aspects such attitudes and opinions of the speaker (e.g., E4M4 “*The older you get the more you want to avoid that question [how old are you?].> I- It's been my experience, anyway*” with regards to attitudes towards ageing). It was further observed that multiple claims addressed the likings and preferences, by referencing things that are liked, loved and disliked, as well as things that the speakers tend to prefer (e.g., E4M1 “*I just wanted to say that I very- I miss Bucharest and I love it very much (..) as a city. < I love it. >*” and E4M4 “*Yeah. I have family in Spain, but I prefer, like, the Italian culture*”).

Furthermore, multiple types of evaluations were present. Participant E4M1, for example, evaluated the effect that a life of frequent moving has had on them by saying “*No, really!*”

[the constant travelling] *it didn't really affect me as much as it affected my sister*". With regard to their decision to move abroad, participant E6M4 said "*So. I'm glad I made the deci(h)si(hh)on [to move here]*".

Education & Occupation

As suggested by its name, this domain is concerned with aspects of the speaker's identity that relate to their academic, educational and/or working sphere. Claims coded under this domain represented the second most observed domain of the collected data, with 33.50% of all claims falling under this category. A multitude of aspects of these two topics were touched upon. References to educational careers (e.g., E6M1 "*I'm studying Master's in Neurolinguistics*"), academic interests (e.g., E4M7 "*I was kind of like 'I like literature'. So I was hugely into literature*"), and future plans were observed. Mentioning of any employment (e.g., E4M7 "*I am also a mailman*") and work-related claims were also present. While many claims referred to learning within academic curriculums and specific employments, some claims also regarded leisure learning (e.g., E6M4 "*I th- just learning more about humans is just so much fun, the more you know*").

Recreation

The recreation domain was concerned with claims about activities and things the speakers disclosed to engage in for leisure. Third in terms of usage, a variety of claims was observed within this category: recreational activities (e.g., E4M7 "*Uhm, but I actually do some sports. Uhm, I play lacrosse, uhm, I do <> swimming (..) And I like computer games*") specific hobbies (e.g., E6M2 "*Yea, well... I- I- Most of my hobbies are, like, from the art part, you know <> like music, theatre.*"), social activities (e.g., E4M5 "*I:: spend a lot of time with friends. Just kind of, like, hanging out, <> I: go out a lot*").

Dating

2.97% of all claims were found to fall under the dating domain. Statements in this category were concerned with dating experiences (e.g., E6M5 “*I actually NEVER dated before (laughs)*”) including use of dating apps (e.g., E4M1 “*Yeah. I deleted my Grindr, actually. I got tired of it*”) previous experiences with speed-dating (e.g., E4M5 “*(chuckles) Yeah, [this is] also [my] first. [speed date]*”) as well as expectations and purpose of part-taking in the event (e.g., E4M2 “*Yeah, I real- I decided originally to come to know people*”). Only one observed claim represented a direct reference to the immediate dating status between the conversational partners themselves, with participant E4M1 stating how “*You- You- You’re making me even more interested in you*”.

Friends

The friends domain was the fifth domain in order of number of claims observed. With 1.14% of all claims falling under this domain, claims referenced the friendship sphere of the speaker. Conversational partners mainly discussed their friendship circles (e.g., E6M2 “*[...] I always have my best friend to rely on*”). Additionally, the friendship circles were also described within their context (e.g., E3M2 “*Ja, I have actually a lot of friends from high school*” and “*I think I have, ehm, many friends, eh much more friend here than I was at my back university, my home university*”). A multitude of references to friends, however, did not constitute a direct identity claim, meaning that the speaker discussed friends as a self-standing topic, but not in explicit relation to the self and their identity.

Family

The family domain encompassed 0.92% of all claims. This domain encompassed references to family members, such as relationship with parents and family rituals (e.g., E6M6 “*Yeah, [I speak to my parents] fairly often. <> Uhm, still in contact with them, of*

course” and E6M3 “*Well, the first one [concert by Marco Borsato] I’m going to with my mother <> because we always go to his concerts*”). Similarly to the *Friends* domain, within this domain family members were mentioned, but only in a few instances were these references related to the speaker via identity claims.

Political

The seventh most common domain was the political domain, which included 0.73% of all identity claims. Under this category, claims were concerned with an array of political references, such as opinions regarding political topics (e.g., E6M6 “[...] *That [Brexit] is another reason why I’m happy to be away from the country*” and “[...] *I’m quite left wing (.) so for me that [living in a Right-leaning country] was (.) not comfortable*”) and comparisons of political landscapes (e.g., E4M7 “*I like that about the Netherlands, that it’s, like, weirdly progressive in ways that you wouldn’t think of*”). Additionally, three out of the five speakers who engaged in political identity claims referred to the politics surrounding the topic of homosexuality and LGBTQ+ rights (e.g., E4M1 “*I would actually go back to Romania [instead of staying in the Netherlands], if I had to choose (.) if it wasn’t that homophobic. And the stigma[tisa]tion. Ah, sure, I’d go back.*” and E6M2 “*Even in, like, more conservative societies like back home. <> I would just hang out with girls and <> all of the girls would be okay with it [my sexuality], like, <> every single one.*”).

Spiritual

With 0.23% of all claims being spiritual, this domain was concerned with the spiritual or religious dimension of the speakers. The five claims observed within this domain regarded the two main topics of zodiac signs (e.g., E4M5 “[My tattoo] *It’s, like, uh::m, the symbol of Gemini, because I’m Gemini*”) and opinions about religion (e.g., E6M4 “*I think the world would be much much MUCH better off if there we- if:: religion*”).

just didn't exist <> at all. (.) It's not like I wanna eradicate it, but if it just (.) wasn't there in the first place, I think we would be MUCH better off.”).

Gender

The second to last most frequently observed domain was the gender domain. With only one speaker, claims within this category were concerned with the topic of femininity and masculinity. The participant who engaged with these gender-related claims, shared their views and opinions on the origin of these gender categories (e.g., E6M2 *“I think that ge- uh, I think that gender isn't (..) <> a social construct. (chuckles) [...] <> I think that there's some relation between sex and gender”* and *“Like, I < And I also, like, don't want concepts such as masculinity and femininity to just completely die out and dissolve, like... I think that (.) < Yeah, like, they're exciting, I think.”*). No further gender-related claims were observed.

Other

The final category of other, encompassed 0.09% of all claims, with only two claims having been observed, both by the same speaker and within the same conversation. The first claim regarded smoking (E6M3 *“No. I don't smoke”*), while the second claim regarded alcohol usage (E6M3 *“I know, it's [alcohol] bad for me. (laughs)”*).

Patterns

With regards to the patterns of the *education & occupation* domain, the frequency trajectories of all participants revealed an array of patterns. A collection of all the trajectories can be observed in Appendix A. As an example, Figure 3 illustrates how four participants showed an overall *decreasing pattern*, indicative of a progressive decrease in

the amount of references to the domain. With an opposing trend, two participants displayed an overall *increasing pattern* (Figure 4). Furthermore, two participants displayed a *peaking pattern* characterised by a sudden increase by 8 or more claims, followed by a drop of the same or higher amount. Finally, two participants displayed an overall *oscillating pattern*, characterised by alternations of high and low frequencies across rounds. The last identified grouping of trajectory was represented by *indiscernible patterns*, which were characterised by the absence of any immediately observable consistencies or trends.

Figure 3

Decreasing trajectory of Educational and Occupational claims across rounds

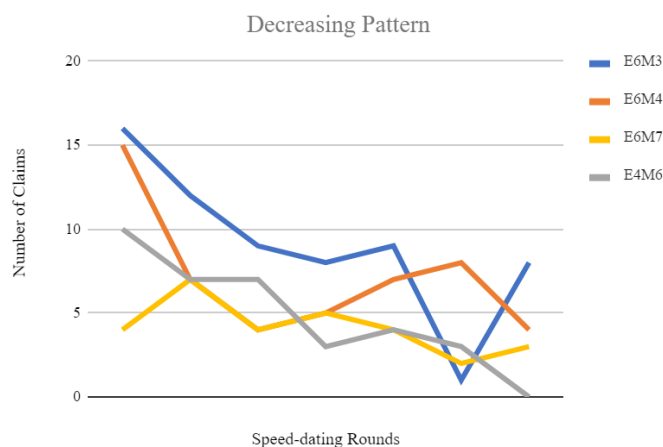
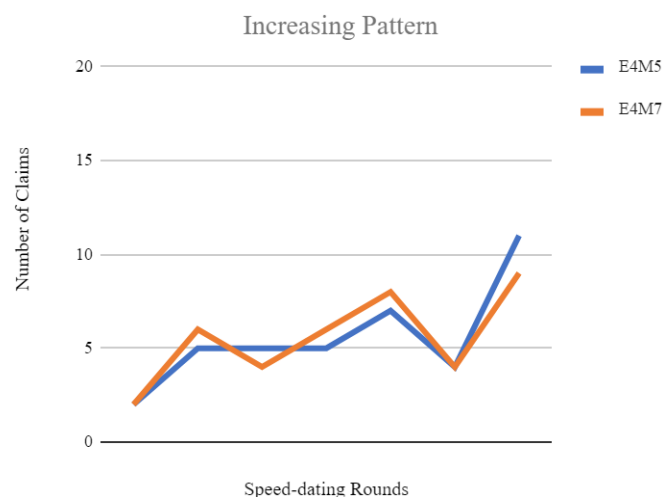


Figure 4

Increasing trajectory of Educational and Occupational claims across rounds



Pattern Irregularity

Importantly, most patterns were characterised by some degree of irregularity: while a few participants (e.g., E4M6 and E4M8) showed a consistent downward and peaking trend, other participants displayed more irregular patterns, by, for example, showing changes in trend during a specific conversational round (e.g., E4M7 and E4M4).

Discussion

The present study aimed at the investigation of the different domains of identity claims emerging during speed-dating conversations. The different identity claims that speakers produced were observed to belong to different domains. Interestingly, all but two claims (“other” domain) were coded as belonging to one of the 9 identity domains, supporting the suitability of the chosen categories. A series of considerations can be highlighted from the results. Despite the current study not having developed a fixed set of expectations with regards to the results, previous literature and overall psychologically informed predictions can be seen as aiding the interpretation of the current results.

Overall, the results revealed two main findings: claims were differentially distributed across domains, resulting in considerable differences in frequency across domains. Secondly, trajectories of educational and occupational identity claims across time were characterised by a number of patterns, but irregularity or indiscernibility characterised the majority of cases.

Domain Frequency

With regards to the distribution and frequency of domains, results were

differentially in line with what might be expected from previous literature. As mentioned, however, identity content has been scarcely investigated within identity development research. (Johnson et al., 2022); as a consequence, the present study does not possess numerous means of comparison for its results. The predominance of the *personal domain* is in line with previous work by Johnson et al., (2022), in which personal characteristics represented the most commonly mentioned identity domain.. This prevalence is also relatively unsurprising given the speed-dating context in which the conversations took place, as personal topics might be expected in a situation in which individuals usually seek for affinities and similarities (Eastwick & Finkel 2008) to determine potential attraction (Montoya & Horton, 2013).

Additionally, the highly inclusive and broad conceptualization of this domain makes it naturally more likely to be more frequent compared to more specific domains. The *recreational domain*, third in terms of frequency, can also be reflected upon with a similar logic of affinity seeking. Furthermore, the presence of fewer claims in this domain, in comparison to the personal domain, might be explained by its higher specificity to a specific aspect of the speaker's identity.

Taking a step back into the second most frequent domain, *Education & Occupation*, results are again in line with previous research, in which participants who are likely to be students tend to display high salience of this domain (Johnson et al., 2022). Furthermore, these results are also in line with identity process research conducted by McLean et al., (2016) with university students. It might also be argued that, additionally to the age range and student status, the very avenue of the speed-dating event (cafeteria of an academic building), might have further increased salience of the education and occupation domain.

In contrast to the previously discussed results, the prevalence of the *dating domain*

might be considered unexpected based on contextual salience grounds. More specifically, the dating setting did not seem to lead to as many dating-related claims as one might expect from the situation. Similarly, dating claims did not represent a central domain despite the hypothesised shared romantic availability and interest of participants who decide to take part in a speed-dating event (Eastwick & Finkel 2008). Further research might be needed to determine whether and why conversational partners in speed-dating events seem to refrain from explicit reference to their dating identities.

The domains of *Friends and Family* were also scarcely observed. In comparison to Johnson et al., (2022), in which these domains It might be speculated that references to one's identity as a friend or as a family member might require a longer period of conversation (i.e., beyond the 6 available minutes), and that this identity domain is not as central as other domains, which received priority in the limited time allocated to each conversation. Noteworthy, however, identity claims within these domains were scarce, but a noticeable number of references to friends or family members were present, but not as part of an identity claim per se.

With regards to the *Political domain*, a particular emphasis on the political stances and opinions on LGBTQ+ related politics was observed. Given that all participants participated in a same-sex dating event, the relevance of these topics makes its presence expectable. The prevalence of political identity claims is also in line with previous research. More specifically, while the investigation on adolescents by Johnson et al., (2022) yielded an extremely low number of political references (i.e., 3 statements out of the total 3.985), the investigation on college students by McLean et al., (2016) showed a more prevalent incidence of political claims. Taken together, the evidence might be seen as suggesting a differential saliency of political topics across age ranges and contexts.

The final domains of *spiritual, gender and other* represented the less frequently observed domains. More data and research would be needed to explain the apparent unimportance of these domains when it comes to identity disclosure during speed-dating conversations.

Patterns

The exploratory analysis of educational and occupational claim frequency across the seven speed-dating rounds revealed irregularity or indiscernibility of patterns. Despite several patterns having been identified, they presented multiple irregularities, and clear and consistent patterns were scarce. Overall, the evidence obtained from the present pattern analysis indicated great variability in the amount of domain-specific identity references that speakers constructed throughout the various conversations. From a theoretical point of view, this variability could be explained by the fact that identity is embedded in its social context (Woodward, 2004, p. 6), and as such, it is constructed and shared differently on a moment-to- moment basis. The setting of speed-dating conversation brought different conversational partners to interact with each other over a short time frame: from this point of view, the high variability in identity claims can be interpreted as a natural adaptation to the changing social context by which identity is influenced. In conclusion, the present data suggests the need for further investigation in order to understand which factors, if any, determine the development of claims into a given direction or the other.

Implications

The conducted investigation on the identity content and its domains in the setting of speed-dating conversations represented a unique in its kind combination. The focus on moment-to-moment identity actions via identity claims, as well as the focus on the content,

as opposed to process, of identity, positions this study in a new, scarcely explored area of identity development research (Johnson et al., 2022). The collected results provide insight into what kind of topics people select when talking about themselves and their identity to a newly encountered person. The prevalence of personal, E&O and recreational topics provides evidence in support of their centrality in identity, as well as their potential role in the context of dating and of the student age range. With regards to the speed-dating setting, the present study adds to the emerging employment of the speed-dating paradigms beyond romance and attraction.

Strengths, Limitations and Future Directions

One of the strengths of this study was the use of real speed dating conversations recordings, which allowed for the observation and analysis of unique type of data, not easily achievable in the laboratory setting. Furthermore, the involvement of a relatively large number of researchers has ensured higher reliability in the coding process, by allowing for constant comparisons and discussions. A number of limitations, however, were also present.

Firstly, the total number of participants ($n= 16$) might be considered relatively small when considering the generalizability of the results. However, the present study did not aim towards generalisation, but rather toward exploration of a neglected stream of identity research. As a second limitation, the present study, as well as previous literature, made use of one single personal domain, despite this domain encompassing a very diverse range of claims. A potential step forward in this stream of research could be the use of more nuanced domains. This might provide a more detailed account of which aspects of each domain are the most referenced when identity is being disclosed in interactions.

A series of further potential future research directions has been mentioned

throughout the present paper: future studies could focus on the presence and role of dating-related claims in the dating context, to further elucidate how and why dating identity is addressed with a conversational partner. Similarly, the conceptualization of identity in the family and in the friends domain could be further investigated, as the present study observed a limited number of claims in order to elaborate further. Finally, more attention to patterns of identity claims domains might provide valuable insight into development of identity across different moments, as well as into the potential role of conversational partners in the disclosure of identity-related claims.

Conclusion

The present study aimed to provide insight into identity content and its domains. Analysis of the data revealed differences in how frequently identity claims were focused on different domains of life, and particular attention was drawn to the personal domain. Furthermore, patterns of educational and occupational claims over the course of the speed-dating rounds were found to be characterised by irregularity, thereby opening multiple questions as to the factors affecting these disclosures and their distribution. In conclusion, the current study aimed to investigate and stimulate further research into the very content of identity disclosures, in an effort to contribute further understanding of identity in its entirety.

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Appendix A

