



United Way for Southeastern Michigan

SOCIAL IDENTITY WHEEL

OVERVIEW

United Way for Southeastern Michigan is committed to deconstructing systemic racism while advancing diversity, equity and inclusion for all. We open our arms to all people in collaboration, prioritizing both large and small matters of injustice, and keeping equity and inclusion at the center of our work while fighting for change. It is our hope that by remaining focused and united, we will create a better future for coming generations.

Critical to that mission is understanding the rich diversity we all bring to the table. The Social Identity Wheel is an evolving tool to help us better map out the different dimensions of our social identities. The wheel allows us to better understand how our identities shape experiences across all dimensions.

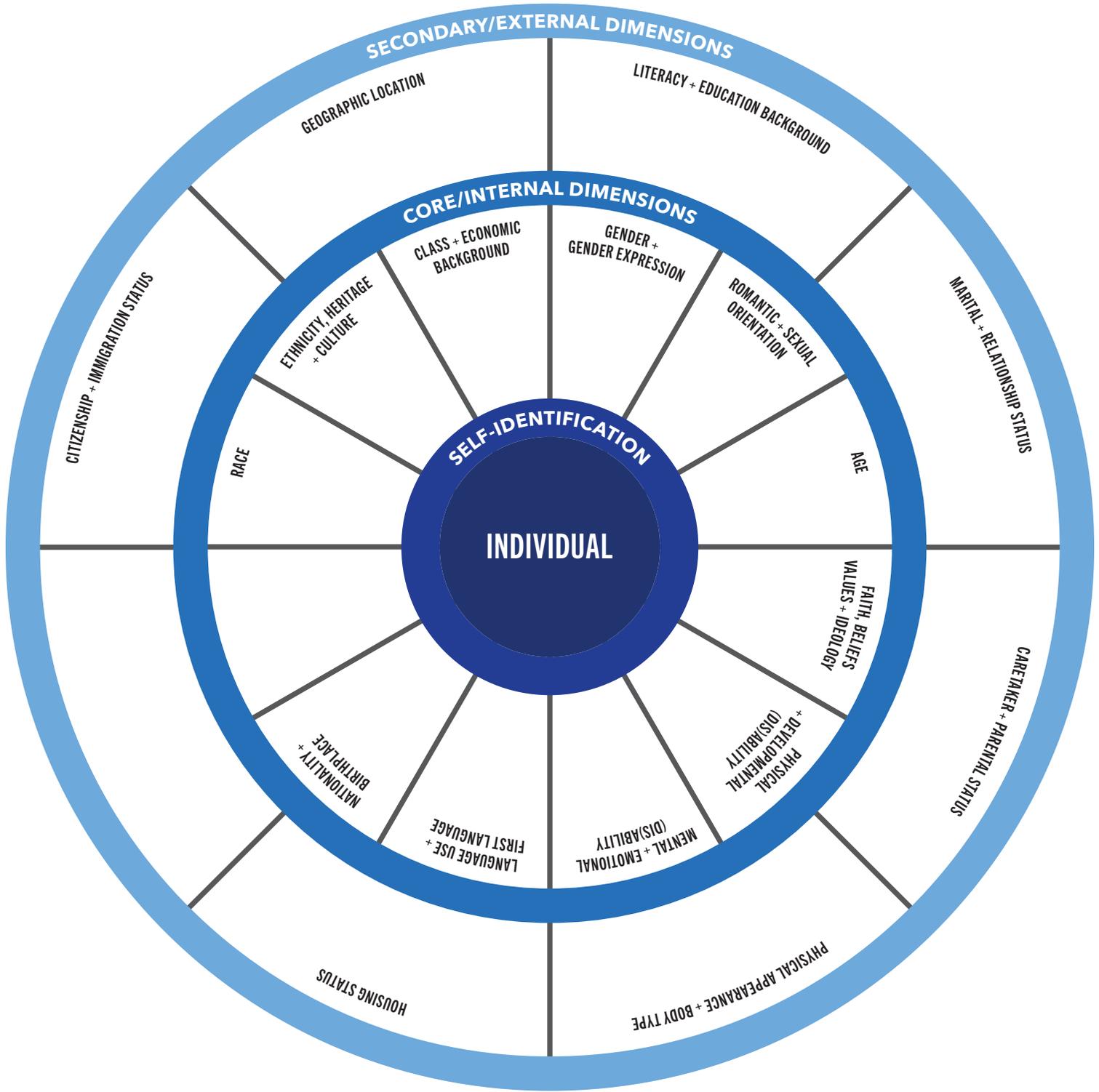
Social identity refers to the aspects of someone that are formed in relation to the society they belong to. Rather than personality traits or interests that make up your identity and sense of self, social identities describe the socially constructed groups that are present in specific environments within human societies (race/gender/religion, sexual orientation, etc.).

INSTRUCTIONS

On the following page you will find a social identity wheel and a page of examples to help you fill out the wheel.

As you review the wheel, take the following steps:

1. Take a moment to look over the wheel and notice the layers of Core/Internal, Secondary/External, Organizational Dimensions, and the Collective/Global Context
2. Now you will identify the memberships you claim or that have been ascribed to you for each identity group. You can write on the wheel directly or use a piece of paper to fill in the identity you hold that matches each group on the wheel. You will want to start with the Core/Internal Dimensions and then work your way outward.
3. The last page has examples of each identity group. Please note that many identities may overlap or intersect. If you do not see a term that you would use to describe yourself please use whatever terms you prefer.
4. You will notice a blank in each layer of the wheel. You can use this space to write an identity that is not represented in the categories presented.
5. Once you have filled in the wheel, follow up by going through the reflection questions. You can do this activity alone but it is better to discuss with others. We encourage you to share and discuss the wheel with your family, colleagues, classmates or community.



EXAMPLES

Feel free to use your own language for your identities.

CORE/INTERNAL DIMENSIONS

RACE

Asian, Pacific Islander, Native American, Latinx, Black, Arab American, white, bi/multiracial

ETHNICITY, HERITAGE + CULTURE

Hispanic/Latino, Irish, Chinese, Puerto Rican, Italian, Mohawk, Jewish, Guatemalan, Lebanese, European-American

CLASS + ECONOMIC BACKGROUND

poor, working class, lower-middle class, upper-middle class, owning class, ruling class

SEX, GENDER + GENDER EXPRESSION

woman, man, transgender, post-gender, agender, femme, butch, intersex

ROMANTIC + SEXUAL ORIENTATION

lesbian, gay, bisexual, pan-attractional, heterosexual, queer, attractionality, questioning, aromantic

AGE

child, teenager, young adult, middle-age adult, senior, elderly

FAITH, BELIEFS, VALUES + IDEOLOGY

Hindu, Muslim, Buddhist, Jewish, Christian, Pagan, Agnostic, Atheist, Secular Humanist

PHYSICAL + DEVELOPMENTAL (DIS)ABILITY

disabled, temporarily disabled, visually impaired, blind, deaf, Deaf, hard of hearing, able-bodied

MENTAL + EMOTIONAL (DIS)ABILITY

ADHD, PTSD, depression, anxiety, OCD, phobias, autistic, substance use disorder

LANGUAGE USE + FIRST LANGUAGE

English, ESL, Spanish, Arabic

NATIONALITY + BIRTHPLACE

United States, Nigeria, Korea, Turkey, Argentina, Canada

SECONDARY/EXTERNAL DIMENSIONS

CITIZENSHIP + IMMIGRATION STATUS

U.S. citizen, immigrant, temporary visa, Canadian citizen, Mexican citizen, Indian citizen

GEOGRAPHIC LOCATION

urban, suburban, rural, major city

LITERACY + EDUCATION BACKGROUND

literate, functionally illiterate, completed college, GED-certified, high school grad

MARITAL + RELATIONSHIP STATUS

single, widowed, married, seeing someone, monogamous, polyamorous

CARETAKER + PARENTAL STATUS

parent, mom, dad, aunt, uncle, grandma, grandpa, caretaker

PHYSICAL APPEARANCE + BODY TYPE

trim, fat, person of size, thin, in shape, muscular

HOUSING STATUS

home owner, renter, transitional, housing insecure, homeless

ACTIVITY REFLECTION QUESTIONS:

1. What identities are you most aware of or think about most often?
2. What identities are you least aware of or do you think about least often?
3. Which of your own identities would you like to learn more about?
4. Which identities have the most impact on how you perceive yourself?
5. Which identities have the most impact on how others perceive you?
6. Why is it important to reflect on our identities?
7. How do our identities give or take away power and privilege in society?
8. How do your identities influence your sense of belonging at work/home/school or in the communities that you are part of?