



Investigating Religion & Power

Social Identity Exercise

A researcher is never an objective observer. It is important for each researcher to recognize the ways that their own biases influence every step of their research. Before beginning your research project, the following exercise will help you and your team better understand and influence the ways that your various biases will shape the research you conduct.

The University of Michigan's College of Literature, Science, and Arts has developed a worksheet to help people better understand their own social identities.¹ Please follow this link to access the worksheet. Before filling out the worksheet, read the second page to familiarize yourself with some of the more common social groups.

[Social Identity Wheel PDF](#)

Once you have filled out the worksheet, take time to discuss the five questions in the center of the circle with your research team. Each person can share as much or as little as they wish. No one is required to discuss anything they would rather not discuss.

These additional questions will help you and your research team examine the way your social identities might influence the way you conduct your research.

- 1. What part of your identity do you see having the most effect on your interactions with others?²**
- 2. What part of your identity do you think most influences the way you think about your research topic?**
- 3. Are there parts of your identity that give you a positive bias (e.g. sympathy, trust) toward a social group(s)?**
 - a. How will these biases influence your research?**
 - b. How will you address these influences?**
- 4. Are there parts of your identity that give you a negative bias (e.g. suspicion, dismissive) toward a social group(s)?**
 - a. How will these biases influence your research?**
 - b. How will you address these influences?**

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<https://sites.lsa.umich.edu/inclusive-teaching/wp-content/uploads/sites/853/2021/04/Spectrum-Activity-Questions.pdf>

² This question is taken directly from "Spectrum Activity Questions" worksheet:

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