

## What are Social Identities?/ List the Big 8 Identities

Social identities are a result of shared constructions and social relations of the people who created it based on societal norms (Johnson, 2006). Dominant and subordinated identities can affect an individual's experience of privilege and oppression. A person's identity is how the person defines who they are. While there are many identities that can describe a person there are some that are more salient than others. The "Big 8" socially constructed identities are: race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, gender identity, ability, religion/spirituality, nationality and socioeconomic status.

- I. Racial identity shapes privileged status for some and undermines the social standing of others. Race identifies a group that is socially defined, but on the basis of physical criteria including skin color and facial features.
- II. Ethnicity identity is defined in terms of culture, language, and country of origin. This relates to a person or to a large group of people who share a national, cultural, and/or linguistic heritage, whether or not they reside in their countries of origin.
- III. Sexual orientation identity is defined as an emotional, romantic, sexual, spiritual, affectional, and/or relational attraction to another person or persons. It can involve fantasy, behavior, and self-identification; a person's general makeup or alignment in terms of partner attraction. Sexual orientation evolves through a multistage developmental process, and may change over time. One's sexual orientation is not necessarily associated with a person's gender identity; and the two can be completely unrelated. Self-labels might include: gay, lesbian, heterosexual, same-gender loving, bisexual, pansexual, queer, straight, etc.
- IV. Gender identity is who a person sees themselves, for example: as a woman, as a man, as a transgender/gender queer person, as a combination, or as none of these categories. A person's gender identity may or may not conform to the conventional expectations for their birth sex. For example, a person may be assigned male at birth and identify as a woman. This can be a person's sense of being masculine, feminine, or other gendered.
- V. Ability identity is the physical or mental capacity to do something or perform successfully. Able-bodied, individuals who do not suffer from developmental, psychological, learning, physical and illiteracy disabilities.
- VI. Religion/Spirituality identity is an institutionalized or personal system of beliefs and practices relating to the divine.
- VII. Nationality identity is the identifier expressed by the individuals' country of origin.
- VIII. Socioeconomic status identity is the social standing based income and/or one's position in society (working poor, working class, middle class and upper class). (Johnson, 2006; Tatum, 2000).