

## My social Identity

My understanding of what a Social identity is that its is an innate characteristic given to a person that is mostly not by choice. Some examples are gender, sex, race. At a mere glance these seems like a simple way to characterize people into groups. The problem is that as Johnson points out in chapter 1 of his book Privilege, Power and Difference, we are society that attaches privilege to to a variety of characteristics. How a person looks can have a profound impact on all sorts of aspects of a persons life. Johnson continues to explain that as a society we attach privilege to some groups sharing common characteristic at the expense of others.

If I were to introduce myself using only my social identity it may lead you the viewer to automatically form an opinion of the kind of life I have had and challenges and privileges I had. You would probably be right....My social identity is as follows. I m a white cis gender male, heterosexual of European origin, able-bodied, and English speaking, non-religious I m also part of the middle class and educated. In addition I m also Canadian. My social identity is one of privilege. Johnson points out in chapter one of his book, Privilege, Power and Difference that many people of privilege are unaware of the benefits they are given, based solely on social identity. I would have to agree with Johnson, and I was no exception to this. I had assumed that the opportunities I had were given to most people. On a broad spectrum I have not had opportunities drift out of my grasp because of this privilege. Growing up and, viewing my potential future, the perceived obstacles always had to do with myself, my ambition, financial stability rather than what competition I would face, or would I be employable. In Summary my social identity is one of privilege and Until recently I was unaware of the impacts my social identity had on my life, I was unaware of the privilege and ample opportunities I had because I was a male, white, heterosexual, able-bodied, english speaker.

## How My social Identity Impacts my Professional life.

My social Identity has influenced my life as a professional in a multitude of ways. When I was younger the type of work or career I was looking at going into was influenced by my social identity as a male. There was a time, I had wanted to be a waiter to earn some extra money. I quickly dismissed this as not being a viable option as it would be very difficult for me to get hired being a male. I instead took advantage of the privilege that I subconsciously identified that came with being a male and did, construction jobs, and physical labour jobs that I knew I could easily get hired. Rather than fight the paradigm I believe I have been using it to my advantage. At the time I did realize many of my opportunities were because of privilege due to my social identity as a white male. In his book Privilege, Power, and Difference, Johnson discusses how even subconscious discrimination can impact hiring decisions. I believe this is part of the reason I have been able to get every job I have interviewed for. When I have applied for jobs with a resume, I often did not get call backs, but when I would walk into a place and give my resume I would be awarded interviews.

I was raised to believe that I could be anything I wanted to be if I work hard. In the article the myth of meritocracy, Alverado goes in depth on my thoughts and also dispels the myth of meritocracy. Although someone such as myself likely could do anything if I worked hard enough, it's attainable because of my privilege gifted to me by my social identity. The north American dream of anyone can do anything doesn't apply to everyone. Alverado points out that for many people the opportunity just does not exist due to discrimination and oppression. This realization for me was a lot to handle, but was based off ignorance and although my success has been partially gifted I also do not want to undermine my own hard work and ability. The Previous thoughts have been examples of social identity working in my favour. My social Identity as a young person is an area in which my social identity has influenced my professional life in a negative way. I worked for 6 years for a company in Sales. When my manager retired, I believe I was the most qualified and had the most experience and knowledge. However, due to my relatively young age, was passed up for an external hire with minimal experience. All the other managers in the company were 45 years or older.

## How My social Identity Influences my Life as a student

My life as a student is impacted by my social identity through the ideals of meritocracy and an identity full of privilege. When I was in high school being able bodied, a male, and middle class gave me opportunity to play lots of sports and get decent grades. The trajectory after spending a few years in the workforce as a labourer was that to further myself I need to get a degree. University life as a student as a student was fairly smooth for me. I cannot say how much my social identity played on my student experience but I imagine it made it better. I was not ever singled out, I was able to make friends which helped with transition and stress. I imagine had I been a minority or female, there could have been incidences in which micro aggression could have made it uncomfortable to attend classes. As Johnson points out “ of all human needs, few are as powerful as the need to be seen, included and accepted by people. “ I feel that the ability to be seen included and accepted is one of the greatest benefits my social identify has given me as a student. Even as a shy person at times, I always felt that I was accepted.....This preceding section was my experience when I did my degree in kinesiology from 2010-2014. I have found a slightly different experience in the month of my Master of Education. Although all my social identities are the same, I m met with a different experience. Being a White, Male in particular has made me among the minority in my classes. From this I have at times not felt the acceptance of being noticed. I sometimes feel that I have to stand out and do more, get noticed more to keep the same level of respect that everyone else gets. Even being proactive in group work, people would prefer to work with others.I feel that being aware of the difference in interaction makes it easier to understand, so that I don't feel the negativity and get caught up in the emotion of it, but rather look at as an opportunity to learn and grow in a different setting. At the very least it may give me a momentary feeling of rejection and exclusion so that I may be more empathetic to those who may be facing such issues in the future. In summary, my social identity has influenced my life as a student in two major ways. Having privilege has not only given me the opportunity to achieve higher education, but also given me the opportunity to be accepted and respected while attending.

## How my social identity has influenced my self-as-citizen

As a citizen I believe that my social identity has given me confidence and the ability to be introspective and choose my life path. This confidence and feeling of choice is linked to meritocracy, as previously mentioned, the idea that any one can be anything based on merit and hard work. In his article Alvarez discussed how meritocracy is a myth and not everyone has a fair chance. However, having a social identity that has given me ample privilege, I still believe few opportunities are not available to me if I try. Up until the start of this course I probably would have believed naively that everyone did have an equal chance at success. I would have believed that those who didn't have success was only because they didn't work hard or smart enough. I have always believed that it's not all about hard work, but also working hard on the right stuff. However, I have been blind to the myth of meritocracy, failing to see the common social identities of privilege that existed in most of the people I was surrounded by. All my teachers were white, parents friends, Even the church group I grew up in was all white people. I was fully aware that racism existed, and was taught that everyone is equal, didn't matter the colour of one's skin, or religion or able bodied or not. However; it also seemed to be ingrained in me that they had all the same privileges and opportunity that I did. It has been an eye opener to say the least to uncover the reality of oppression in North America. A key concept of social Identity not discussed yet is Intersectionality. Gobaldis in Intersectionality 101 describes Intersectionality as resulting impact of where two or more social identities merge. I believe the intersection of my social identities has given me a buffer that allows me to feel accepted and not alienated in situations that may affect others. For example, I have a hard to pronounce name and rarely is it ever pronounced correctly. I do not mind in slightest the mispronunciation. Were my intersections less privileged, or my background more linked to my identity I may feel unheard or rejected when care is not given to my name. In Summary, my social identity which has given me privilege has influenced my self as a citizen by projecting an image of what I need to do to be successful. It worked, however, I have been operating under the paradigm that everyone has the same rules.