Social Identity Mapping involves the psychology of focusing on attitudes and how individual attitudes are constructed through conformity, social perception, and prejudice. As we experience new things, our attitude forming processes develop the construction of “social identities” for which we view these attitudes. The goal of this study is to develop a methodology for representing and collecting these social identities for comparison within and between individuals. The data collected from these mappings of social identities can be used to further our understanding of social identities and their relationship to one another. By furthering our understanding of social identities and their relationship to one another, we can efficiently and effectively group these identities and compare them based on their similarities and differences.

The process of developing software for the purpose of mapping identities is rather complex and involves critical thinking in the design layout as well as the layering of the identities. The user needs to be primed of what social identities are without giving away specific examples that could lead the user to select specific identities based on the priming of what social identity mapping is. A good way to do this is to define social identities and tell the user what they are going to be doing without providing specific examples. Providing the user with a mapping of circles that are unlabeled lets the user know what to expect without leading them into a direction that might hinder their mapping. The next stage of the software is to let the user simply name their identities into up to five circles and randomly place these circles onto a canvas with random size. The user must then rearrange and resize these circles based on their opinion of where each identity belongs on the map. It is important to randomize this process and provide a perfectly square canvas to ensure the user is not led to believe there is a certain way their social identities should be mapped. A square canvas also denies the chance for the user to believe there is a certain orientation and layout they must follow. After the initial mapping stage, the user is then taken to a final mapping stage that allows them to color their identities as well as any possible intersections of their social identities from red to purple to blue based on their feeling of this social identity. The user can also dot the outline of their identities if they feel the need to do this in order to properly depict their social identities.

After the user has finished mapping their identities they will be provided with a survey to “rate” each identity based on their feeling towards each one. This allows for more accurate data collection and a better understanding of what the user was thinking when they mapped each identity. By asking the user to now explain the identities, it allows the data collectors to understand why they mapped the identities the way they did and possibly infer why others users with similar mappings did this as well. Following a survey of the user’s mappings, we need to ask the user for their demographics to help draw connections between users and group them for similarities and differences between other groups. This is very important in the data collection process as it allows us to better understand how groups of people think.

It is important to note that at any point during data collection, the user has the option to abort from the survey and all previously collected data will be disregarded. The confidentiality of each user is important and if they feel uncomfortable during the survey it will affect their results. A large portion of the software behind this survey lies within the mapping itself and ensuring that all possible cases are tested and allowed for the user. The layering of the circles in relation to their intersections and identities is important in making sure the user can actually see their canvas as it should be displayed. Detail in the mapping stages of this survey are most time consuming and are most susceptible to errors.

Further construction of the software involves fine tuning the mapping process to remove any bugs in the software and launching this software to be able to begin collecting data. The overall goal is for this survey to be used outside of the university so larger data samples can be used to gather more accurate data about social identities and their mapping.