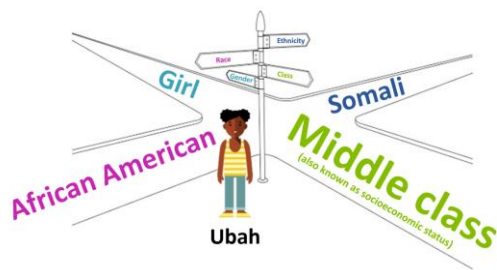


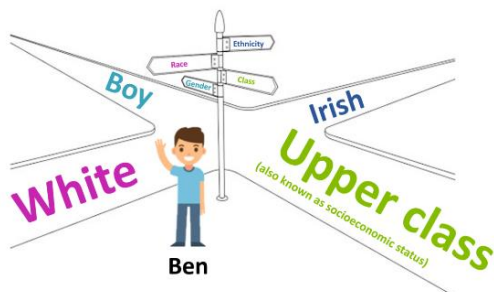
What is Intersectionality?

Our identities have overlapping parts (think traffic intersection), which are unique to each of us. This overlap is known as “Intersectionality.” The word is used to describe the privileges and disadvantages you face because of that combination.

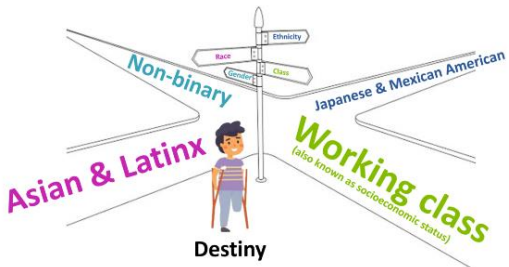
To fully understand each other, we have to consider all of our unique identities and experiences together. Learn about the three classmates below and notice what’s unique about each of their identities.



Ubah identifies as an African American girl. She was born in the US and her family immigrated here, as refugees, from Somalia. Kids at school treat Ubah differently at times because of the color of her skin, and because she and her family are Somali. Like other girls at school, Ubah sometimes gets treated differently just for being a girl. Even though her family is middle class, they still have trouble paying for things like the family home and other bills from time to time. Since Ubah’s parents are originally from Somalia, her family also faces challenges navigating things like the education and healthcare systems in the US.



Ben identifies as a White boy with Irish heritage. His family is considered upper class, which means his parents make enough money to cover what the family needs, and more. Ben experiences privilege because of these identities. Ben does not experience racism or discrimination based on the color of his skin, and he doesn’t have concern for how his parents pay the bills. He does not experience unfair treatment as often as or for the same reasons as his peers. This doesn’t mean that Ben doesn’t face other struggles or negative experiences; it’s just that the struggles are not related to his racial, gender, or class identities.



Destiny identifies as a Japanese and Mexican American person. Destiny identifies as non-binary and uses they/them pronouns. Their family is working class, and their parents often struggle to pay for things like food and rent and bills—Destiny even works a job to help their family. Destiny also has a disability, which makes it hard for them to participate in activities in the same way as their peers. They often face challenges with having more than one racial identity—like being asked “what are you” and feeling like they don’t belong. Destiny does not feel comfortable sharing their gender identity as a non-binary person because they want people to understand and to not make fun of them. Destiny keeps this to their self and goes by the pronouns people assume of them—this is uncomfortable and stressful for them.

Reflection

Use these questions to reflect on the classmates you read about and your own identities and experiences. You can answer these questions for yourself or discuss them with others.

1. How are each of the classmates’ identities unique?

2. Do any of their stories reflect your own identities or experiences? In what ways?



3. Do any of their stories seem very different from your own identities or experiences? In what ways? How does that make you feel?

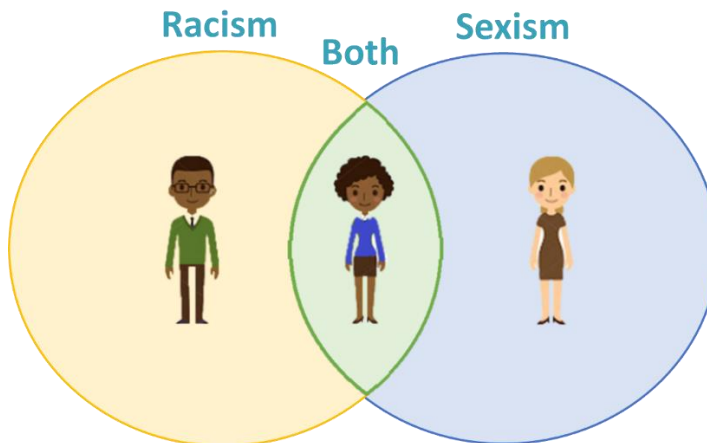
Intersectionality & Overcoming Adversity

Another way to understand intersectionality is to learn from those who have overcome adversity brought on by their overlapping identities. One example is the story of Dr. Mae Jemison.

Mae Jemison was the first woman of color to go into space. Dr. Jemison is a scientist, medical professional and astronaut. Throughout history and into the present, Black persons and women have been oppressed. Since she worked in jobs that are normally held by white men, many of Dr. Jemison's white male colleagues questioned her abilities and talents. She was treated differently because of her race and gender and often faced discrimination.



Dr. Jemison experienced unfair treatment not only because she is a *woman* but **also** because she is *Black*. The overlapping, or intersection, of these two identities led her to experience double unfair treatment. The intersection of these disadvantages is referred to as “intersectionality.” Had she been a *white* woman she would have only faced discrimination based on her sex. Had she been a Black *man* she only would have been experiencing discrimination based on her race.



Nevertheless, Dr. Jemison has become a pioneer in her field. Today, she is an [advocate for diversity in STEMM](#) (Science, Technology, Engineering, Mathematics and Medicine).

How Intersectionality Relates to Stress & Identity

You are more than just one aspect of your identity. Your race, gender and socioeconomic status, for example, are parts of who you are. But they're not all you are. Intersectionality means your unique combination of identities affects your experiences in life and how the world treats you. This includes your experiences with stress and anxiety.

Reflection

Use these questions to reflect more on intersectionality. You can answer these questions for yourself or discuss them with others.

1. What have you learned about intersectionality?

2. How do your identities overlap? How does that affect your experiences with stress and anxiety?

3. How will you use what you've learned from these stories when you interact with those who share your identities? What about those who don't share your identities?

Reflecting on your identities, and the privileges or disadvantages you face because of them, can help you locate where some of your stress comes from. Reflecting can also help you empathize with others, whether or not they share your identities. Read more about [Stress & Identity](#) from Change to Chill and find [resources](#) to help cope with identity-related stress.