

Women in Macroeconomics

Social identity and the individual

John B Davis

Meet Alicia

She is an individual who has these – **categorical – social identities:**

Woman

Father of African descent

Single parent

Employed as skilled lab technician

Good income and savings

How do these identities 'intersect' in Alicia's life?

Alicia also has multiple **relational social identities**, which link some of her categorical social identities with categorical social identities others have in **social roles** (e.g., her being a 'parent' to her 'child')

Social roles are the **micro sites** of power relationships which can be antagonistic or amicable, exploitive or fair

Consider three social role **scenarios** Alicia might encounter

Scenario #1

Asked to be on a committee at work, she hears the firm checked up on her economic and family status but wants her on the committee to show affirmative action toward women and blacks (no, yes: what she wants to matter)

Alicia's social identities	Scenario #1
Woman	No
Father of African descent	No
Single parent	No
Skilled lab technician	Yes
Good income and savings	No

Scenario #2

Looking at an apartment, she's turned down, hears they're discriminating against single parents, women, and people of color

Alicia's social identities	Scenario #2
Woman	No
Father of African descent	No
Single parent	No
Skilled lab technician	Yes
Good income and savings	Yes

Scenario #3

Visits her child's school's library, see many books focus on hard working, white, traditional families

Alicia's social identities	Scenario #3
Woman	Yes
Father of African descent	Yes
Single parent	Yes
Skilled lab technician	No
Good income and savings	No

Who is Alicia?

	Scenario #1	Scenario #2	Scenario #3
Woman	No	No	Yes
Father of African descent	No	No	Yes
Single parent	Yes	Yes	No
Skilled lab technician	No	Yes	No
Good income and savings	No	No	Yes

Who is Alicia?

She is **all** her categorical social identities, but **as she would organize and prioritize them**, according to how she sees her life

Alicia's **personal identity** would then be how she constructs her identity out of her 'multiple selves' across her categorical social identities in her role-based settings

Who she is is how she is different – a **relational personal identity**

But ... she often cannot organize her social identities as she wishes because of **discrimination and stigmatization** of social identities

What happens then?

Societies stratified by social group identity

work to construct a person's personal identity, **fragmenting** her as a person and thereby limiting her **capabilities**

Social stratification produces the **macro axes** for constructing social roles, the micro sites where we live

The limitation of people's capabilities in micro social roles reinforces and in turn is reinforced by macro social group inequalities that also limit capabilities

The social economy operates by a **complex**, two-way, bottom-up/top-down, micro-macro social economic **dynamic**

A democratic macroeconomics

Stratification economics, a political economy for our time, investigates and interrogates the interconnected micro-macro perpetuation of social group inequality

Its normative foundation is the goal of a just **democratic society**

Individuals are socially embedded collections of capabilities (not atomistic bundles of preferences)

We measure social progress by how successful we are in eliminating **capability shortfalls** across social groups and across individuals (not by looking for 'welfare' efficiency gains)