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SELVES AS SOLUTIONS TO SOCIAL INEQUALITIES

*Why Engaging the Full Complexity
of Social Identities Is Critical to
Addressing Disparities*

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Selves as Solutions to Social Inequalities

Why Engaging the Full Complexity of Social Identities Is Critical to Addressing Disparities

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Abstract: Social disparities tied to social group membership(s) are prevalent and persistent within mainstream institutions (e.g., schools/workplaces). Accordingly, psychological science has harnessed *selves* – which are malleable and meaningfully shaped by social group membership(s) – as *solutions* to inequality. We propose and review evidence that theoretical and applied impacts of leveraging “selves as solutions” can be furthered through the use of a ***stigma and strengths framework***. Specifically, this framework conceptualizes selves in their fuller complexity, allowing the same social group membership to be associated with stigma, risk, and devaluation *as well as* strengths, resilience, and pride. We provide evidence that by enacting policies and practices that (a) reduce/minimize ***stigma*** and (b) recognize/include ***strengths***, mainstream institutions can more fully mitigate social disparities tied to inclusion, achievement, and well-being. Using social groups that vary in status/power, we examine implications of this framework including the potential to foster positive, recursive, and intergroup impacts on social inequalities.

Keywords: diversity, mainstream institutions, power/status, social disparities, social identity, stigma, strengths

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