REVIEW ARTICLE

Identity-reframing interventions: How to effectively highlight individuals' background-specific strengths

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Abstract

Many low-status groups are portrayed as deficient. Countering such stigmatizing narratives, identity-reframing interventions reframe low-status group members as strong and resourceful agents. This approach can help members of low-status groups successfully pursue major life goals. In one test, an identity-reframing intervention increased engagement in an online-university among refugees by 23% over 1 year. In another, it increased the degree to which people with experiences of depression successfully completed a meaningful self-chosen goal over 2 weeks. The present review describes how identity-reframing interventions work on a practical and theoretical level, where they might not work, how they contribute to theory and practice, how they can be adapted to new populations and contexts, and what novel questions they direct us to.

KEYWORDS
background-specific strengths, equality, goal pursuit, interventions, social identity, stigma

1 | INTRODUCTION

Many low-status group members are commonly framed as being deficient, lacking in strengths or potential to successfully pursue meaningful goals in their lives (Valencia, 2012). Low-SES students may, for example, be seen as generally lacking in important skills or habitus necessary to succeed in academic contexts (McKay & Devlin, 2016).

Similarly, refugees may be seen, at default, as being weak, passive victims that lack the strength to successfully pursue challenging goals (Bauer et al., 2021; Bauer & Walton, 2023; Shapiro & MacDonald, 2017). Such stigmatizing narratives may impair individuals' confidence and hinder them in successfully pursuing their goals (Thomas et al., 2020). Countering these narratives, colleagues (Hernandez et al., 2021) and authors (Bauer et al., 2021) have in parallel developed an intervention approach that re-frames low-status group members' identity as strong, resourceful agents. Identity-reframing interventions specifically highlight (i) that individuals have developed and shown important strengths through their background-specific experiences (e.g., refugees having shown perseverance and the ability to cope with negative experiences through their experiences) and (ii) how these strengths can help them successfully pursue their goals in life. Tested with members from three low-status groups—refugee students (Bauer et al., 2021), low-SES students (Bauer, Job, et al., 2023), and individuals with experiences of depression (Bauer, Walton, et al., 2023)–this intervention has helped individuals successfully pursue their goals in life.

The present article describes underlying theory, key implementation features, effects, boundary conditions and future directions of identity-reframing interventions. In doing so, the review aims to provide insights into how we can effectively highlight individuals' *background-specific strengths* (Hernandez et al., 2021) to support individuals' successful goal pursuit. While social-psychological interventions are generally designed to improve meaningful outcomes over time (Walton, 2014), we also describe experiments testing short-term effects of the identity-reframing approach to help us better understand underlying processes.

2 | UNDERLYING THEORY

In the following, we describe the theory underlying the identity-reframing approach—the deficit-focused narratives the intervention aims to counter and how it aims to do so.

2.1 | The problem addressed: Deficit-focused narratives

Dominant narratives about low-status group members portray low-status group members as being deficient based on their background, with background-specific deficiencies hindering them in successfully pursuing their goals in life.

Diverse forms of such deficit-focused-narratives are perpetuated broadly in society (Silverman et al., 2015; Silverman, Hernandez, et al., 2023; Valencia, 2012). Some of these narratives imply an openly hostile attitude towards individuals, blaming low-status groups for unequal outcomes. Ethnic minorities may, for example, be portrayed as being inherently dumb based on genetic differences, or having a fixed culture of laziness (Valencia, 2012). Other narratives portray low-status group members as being victims that lack strength and agency based on adverse background-specific experiences. A study on aid programs in Africa, for example, found that 97% of the 30 largest programs portrayed recipients as weak victims, emphasizing individuals' "vulnerabilities," "struggles," and their need to be "protected" by others (Thomas et al., 2020). Similarly, an archival study on the representation of refugees in the 2015/16 refugee movement to Europe found that British media articles were six times as likely to represent refugees as being weak (e.g., "desperate," "vulnerable," "trauma") than strong (Bauer & Walton, 2023).

Such deficit-focused narratives can impair individuals' confidence in their abilities, their motivation, and success in pursuing their goals in life. For example, when financial aid recipients in Kenya received aid accompanied by a message that framed them as weak victims rather than strong agents, they showed less confidence in their abilities and were less likely to engage in an opportunity to build their business skills (Thomas et al., 2020).

2.2 | Intervention goal: Re-framing social identities as strong and compatible with success

Identity-reframing interventions seek to re-frame low-status group members as strong, resourceful agents who can use their strengths to successfully pursue important goals (see Table 1). This strength is represented as not despite or

TABLE 1 Key differences between common deficit-focused narratives and the strong-agent narrative used in the intervention.

	The problem: Deficit-focused narratives	The identify-reframing intervention: Strength-focused narrative
Representation of low-status groups	Deficient (e.g., weak victims)	Strong, resourceful agents
Source of deficits/strengths	Background-specific experiences, culture, or genes	Background-specific experiences
Relationship between background and successful goal pursuit	Negative: Background hinders successful goal pursuit, a deficit that must be overcome	Positive: Background promotes successful goal pursuit, a strength to be used

in addition to their background but *because of* it. Identity-reframing interventions thus directly reverse stigmatizing narratives that frame individuals as being deficient based on their background.

By doing so, the interventions aim to increase the perceived compatibility between individuals' background and successful goal pursuit: While deficit-focused narratives imply an incompatibility between individuals' background and successful goal pursuit, identity-reframing aims to create a positive association between individuals' social identity (e.g., being a refugee) and their successful goal pursuit (e.g., studying successfully at university).

3 | IMPLEMENTATION: IMPORTANT PRACTICAL AND THEORETICAL CONSIDERATIONS

How are identity-reframing interventions implemented? What do interventions look like, how are they delivered, and adapted to novel contexts? In the following, we answer these questions to give more insight into how the intervention works on a practical and theoretical level.

3.1 | Intervention components

Identity-reframing interventions convey a basic idea: (i) that individuals have gained important strengths through their background-specific experiences and (ii) that these background-specific strengths can help them successfully pursue their goals in the given context (e.g., at university). They convey this idea to participants in three steps, following a basic grammar established in previous intervention work (Walton & Cohen, 2011):

1. A brief introductory text
2. Exemplary quotations
3. Reflection exercises ("saying-is-believing" tasks)

We outline these steps in the following. To illustrate, we also provide examples from the first identity-reframing intervention conducted in 2016 with refugees studying at an online-university (Bauer et al., 2021).

The introduction briefly highlights the intervention message, often framed as learned through previous research. For example, the message tailored to refugee students reads:

> "*In previous surveys, many [university name] students have said that their experiences as a refugee were often difficult. But many also said that they have learned a lot of useful things as a refugee. For example, some said that they have learned to be independent and not give up. Others said that their experiences as a refugee have made them stronger… In previous surveys, many [university name] students also said that the things they have learned as a refugee have helped them to succeed at [university name]…*"

Next, ostensible quotations from members of the relevant group illustrate this idea. Each describes specific strengths individuals gained through their background-specific experiences, and how these strengths have helped them succeed in the given context. Each also acknowledges the difficulty of these background-specific experiences. One quote from the refugee intervention reads:

> "*Being a refugee is difficult sometimes. I have seen a lot of violence in my country. One of my cousins died. And even now, in Sweden, life as a refugee is difficult sometimes. But all those experiences have made me stronger. I have learned to deal with negative events. When I found out that my cousin died, I thought this was the end of the world - I just didn't want to live without him...But I learned that life does go on and I want to make the most of it. I have learned to appreciate every day that I can be here and it's my duty not to waste my time. [university name] has an important part in this. It offers some great opportunities that I take very seriously. And even if some things are difficult sometimes, I know that this is normal and you just have to continue and not give up. Two years ago, I was very blind and weak - I took everything for granted and I gave up easily. My experiences as a refugee have made me into the strong person I am now - and I think my cousin would be proud of me.*"

These stories help illustrate how the abstract intervention message can be embodied in very different ways for different people. They thus provide participants with a range of ways to relate to the intervention message that participants can draw on when considering their own experiences.

Last, saying-is-believing exercises give people the opportunity to reflect on the intervention message actively and more deeply (Higgins, 1999), and apply it to their own context. To put participants in the role of strong helpers rather than weak receivers of help, these exercises are framed as opportunities to help others. For example:

> [framing of task as helping opportunity:] "*We would like to help [future students] understand how their experiences as a refugee can help them to succeed at [university name]. For this purpose, we would like to learn from your thoughts.*"
> [question 1:] "*What have you learned through your experiences as a refugee?*" and
> [question 2:] "*How could you use the things, which you have learned as a refugee, to succeed at [university name]?*"

3.2 | Intervention delivery

In delivering the intervention, three key considerations guided the intervention implementation in our previous work: who, how and when.

3.2.1 | Who: (Perceived) sender of the intervention

The intervention message is commonly delivered and presented as being co-authored by a relevant institution in the given context. The intervention with refugee students was, for example, implemented on the onboarding platform of the university and framed as being co-developed with the university. This approach implies that the given institution endorses the view of individuals being strong and agentic and their background being compatible with success.

3.2.2 | How: Modality

In existing studies, the intervention message has been delivered online with students completing intervention material in private settings (e.g., when studying at home). Other delivery modalities may be effective, too. Most simply,

the intervention could be delivered in person. Previous research tends to find a tradeoff between small-scale implementations delivered in person, which can achieve stronger engagement and large effects (Walton & Cohen, 2011), as compared to online, which can reach large samples at low cost but with lower engagement and impact (Walton et al., 2019; Yeager et al., 2016).

3.2.3 | When: Timing

Following previous intervention work (Walton & Cohen, 2011; Yeager et al., 2016), we aimed to deliver the intervention at the beginning of individuals' goal pursuit process, such as when students enter a university or begin a class. Implementing interventions at this time may be most effective for two reasons (Walton & Wilson, 2018). First, at this time, when individuals start making sense of their new environment (e.g., how I see the role of my social identity at my new university), their views may be more malleable than later. Second, interventions aim to achieve long-term effects by changing trajectories. At baseline, individuals may often be caught in self-reinforcing down-ward spirals of stigmatizing views on individuals' social identity, impaired confidence, and performance. Interventions aim to change this, by initiating a more positive trajectory, creating a virtuous cycle of more positive views on individuals' social identity, enhanced confidence, and performance (Cohen & Sherman, 2014). Intervening earlier in this self-reinforcing trajectory may hence be more powerful.

3.3 | Adaptation to novel groups and contexts

We have so far successfully adapted the identity-reframing material we initially developed for refugees (Bauer et al., 2021) to low-SES students (Bauer, Job, et al., 2023) and individuals with experiences of depression (Bauer, Walton, et al., 2023). Each of these versions consists of the three outlined core components highlighting how people have gained important strengths through their background-specific experiences that can help them successfully pursue important goals. Yet, the specific background-specific experiences, strengths, and ways these strengths can help individuals pursue their respective goals differ between groups and contexts. To "fill in" the overall intervention structure with such content that authentically represents the lived experiences of each group, we took three steps:

1. Identify key content for adaptation: background-specific experiences, strengths, and ways strengths can help individuals succeed in given context
2. Select examples of content to be incorporated
3. Implement initial adaptations
4. Get feedback through pilot studies or interviews

The most important part for adaptations is the quotations part. While other parts focus on the generic intervention message, quotations aim to give concrete examples reflecting individuals' lived experiences. They thus need to be adapted the most.

To identify key content for respective groups (step 1), we relied on previous literature and, even more importantly, exploratory interviews. In these interviews, we asked members of low-status groups about the strengths they think to have developed and shown through their background-specific experiences and how these strengths can help them succeed (see Supporting Information S1 for a template of interview questions).

Since the range of background-specific experiences and strengths is limitless, some key examples have to be selected for the intervention material (step 2). We aimed to select examples to speak to diverse members of low-status groups. We thus, for example, tried to incorporate a range of more and less extremely adverse experiences as examples (e.g., a low-SES student working multiple jobs, supporting a parent who could not afford medical

treatment; a student having to be careful with money). Further, we generally tried to prioritize experiences and strengths that seemed relevant for a wide range of individuals.

Finally, after implementing adaptations (step 3), we got feedback on drafts of our material through pilot studies and/or interviews (step 4), presenting participants step by step with parts of material drafts and asking them to what extent materials resonated with them and why.

Overall, we used an iterative process, for example, going back to identifying more relevant content (step 1), when the feedback we got in step 3 indicated we needed more information. When adequate, we also combined step (1) and step (3) in interviews, starting with open questions learning about individuals' background-specific experiences and strengths and then getting feedback on drafts of our intervention material.

4 | IMPORTANT NUANCES: MISCONCEPTIONS ABOUT AND VARIATIONS IN INTERVENTION COMPONENTS

There are important details in how identity-reframing interventions highlight individuals' background-specific strengths. In the following, we highlight (i) details we think are crucial for the intervention to work, but are often misperceived and (ii) possible variations in details that could be tailored to contexts.

4.1 | Misconceptions: What the intervention does and should not do

In the following, we aim to clarify two crucial misconceptions.

4.1.1 | The intervention does not downplay adversity, but reframes its implications

Intervention materials explicitly acknowledge the adversity individuals experience and how difficult these experiences often are (see implementation). Failing to acknowledge this may lead individuals to feel their experiences are not recognized and that the message only applies to people with easier experiences. Rather than downplaying adversity, interventions reframe its implications for individuals—the experience of adversity being a sign of individual strength rather than deficit.

4.1.2 | The intervention does not stereotype groups

Rather than stereotyping groups as having specific strengths ("refugees are all XYZ"; Czopp et al., 2015), the intervention more broadly suggests that individuals may have developed some strengths based on their background (e.g., "*many [refugees] said that they have learned a lot of useful things as a refugee.*"), leaving room for participants to define themselves within this framework. Relatedly, by representing diverse stories in quotations, interventions illustrate that there is not just one, but diverse forms of background-specific strengths.

4.2 | Variations in intervention components

Successful identity-reframing exercises have so far varied in two core components outlined in the following.

4.2.1 | Interventions being presented as co-authored by a relevant institution

Most identity-reframing exercises were presented as being co-authored by a relevant institution (e.g., students' university). This was however not the case for depression intervention studies. Since individuals selected their own

goals in these studies, there was not one clear institution that would be relevant for all individuals' goal pursuit. The intervention was hence not presented as being co-authored by any institution. The fact that the intervention was still able to boost individuals' goal pursuit long-term (Bauer, Walton, et al., 2023) suggests that this intervention component may not always be necessary for the intervention to work. At the same time, the perception that a relevant institution endorses the intervention message may be helpful in many contexts, especially, for example, when goals are strongly interdependent in nature (e.g., studying at an in-person university involving many important interactions with the institution).

4.2.2 | Highlighting the importance of strengths for goal pursuit

While interventions we developed let participants rather narrowly reflect on the way background-specific strengths can help them successfully pursue their goals, in studies by Hernandez and colleagues, this exercise is more broadly defined, asking students how their strengths can help *"[you] in your education, to benefit your school, and/or to benefit society?"* (Hernandez et al., 2021, Supporting Information). Short-term studies show both exercise versions to yield positive effects on individuals' motivation. Long-term studies have only been conducted with the version we developed. From a theoretical perspective, research suggests that one process through which the intervention works is making individuals' background and goal pursuit seem more compatible (Bauer, Walton, et al., 2023). From this perspective, it seems conceivable that tying strengths more narrowly to goal pursuit may yield stronger goal-pursuit effects. Future research comparing intervention versions should test this possibility.

5 | EMPIRICAL EVIDENCE

To date, three intervention studies have shown to boost individuals' successful goal pursuit over time. These interventions were conducted with three different low-status groups—(1) refugees studying at an online-university (Bauer et al., 2021), (2) low-SES students studying at regular universities (Bauer, Job, et al., 2023), and (3) individuals with experiences of depression (Bauer, Walton, et al., 2023)—either in pursuing academic goals (1 and 2) or broader life goals (3). In the following, we report effects of these long-term intervention studies as well as effects of short-term experiments testing potential underlying processes. All studies described were randomized-controlled experiments with active control conditions.

5.1 | Effects on refugees' academic goal pursuit

Two studies—one, a short-term experiment, one, a longitudinal intervention study with 533 refugees entering an online-university–investigated the effect of identity-reframing on the pursuit of educational goals with refugees (Bauer et al., 2021). In both studies, refugees were mostly from Middle Eastern or African countries and mostly lived in a European country.

The short-term experiment yielded three main findings. First, identity-reframing enhanced refugees' academic confidence, and challenge-seeking as crucial predictors for academic achievement (Jansen & Suhre, 2010; Yusuf, 2011): refugees who participated in the identity-reframing (vs. control) condition showed higher confidence in their ability to succeed at university and were more likely to engage in a challenging academic exercise.

Second, there was evidence that individuals expressed their confidence in how they presented themselves to others: The responses refugees produced in the identity-reframing (vs. control) condition, reflecting on the way background-specific strengths (vs. study tips) could help them succeed—responses, they thought might later be read by peers—, were rated as more motivated, agentic, and empowering by two student coders. Based on responses,

student coders also perceived refugees in the identity-reframing condition as being more likely to succeed. Given that others' (e.g., teachers') perceptions of oneself can fuel self-fulfilling prophecies (Anderson et al., 2012; Rosenthal & Jacobson, 1968), such changes could be consequential for individuals' goal pursuit.

Third, exploratory analyses shed light on the role of individuals' identification as a refugee. There were two results: First, identity-reframing increased refugees' identification with their refugee identity–in line with the idea that identity-reframing reduces the stigma that is connected to refugees' social identity. Second, identification moderated effects, suggesting identity-reframing may only be effective when individuals also self-identify with the respective social identity.

Complementing short-term results, an intervention study with 533 refugee students-yielded two main findings: First, the intervention boosted refugees' behavioral learning-engagement tracked by the university by 23% over 1 year. That is, over 1 year, refugees randomly assigned to participate in the intervention versus control engaged 23% more often with the online-learning material. Further, this increased engagement also seemed to pay off in course completions: Over a 7-months-period post-intervention for which we were able to gain data, refugees completed 39% more courses.

5.2 | Effects on low-SES students' academic goal pursuit

May identity-reframing also help low-SES students' academic goal pursuit? Two study packages—one developed by Hernandez et al. (2021), and one developed in parallel by us as an adaption of our refugee intervention (Bauer, Job, et al., 2023)—investigate this with US-American middle school (Hernandez et al., 2021) and university student (Bauer, Job, et al., 2023; Hernandez et al., 2021) samples. Overall, the two packages include three short-term experiments and one longitudinal intervention study.

Short-term experiments suggest that identity-reframing helps participants see their low-SES backgrounds more as assets to their schools and society, and increases their motivation to persevere in the face of difficulty (Hernandez et al., 2021). Further, this motivation seems to translate into behavior: Students who completed the identity-reframing versus control material spent more time on a series of academic tasks, and also solved more of these tasks (Bauer, Job, et al., 2023).

Finally, a longitudinal intervention study with 462 low-SES students (Bauer, Job, et al., 2023) assessed effects on academic performance. Results suggest that over one semester, the intervention helped individuals achieve better grades, as compared to controls. In doing so, the intervention closed the SES achievement-gap: While low-SES students in the control condition showed significantly lower grades than high-SES students (all of whom completed no experimental material), this SES gap disappeared in the intervention condition.

5.3 | Individuals with experiences of depression

Would effects of identity-reframing translate beyond academia? That is the main question we tried to answer in three studies—one, a longitudinal intervention study assessing individuals' pursuit of a self-selected goal—with participants who reported to have had experiences of depression (Bauer, Walton, et al., 2023). Results overall suggest: yes. Two short-term experiments showed identity-reframing boosted individuals' general sense of self-efficacy towards their goals in life, confidence in being able to successfully complete a self-selected goal, as well as individuals' commitment to that goal.

In line with the idea that a key process in identity-reframing effects is the perceived compatibility between individuals' background and successful goal pursuit, perceived compatibility mediated effects. While 71% of control participants indicated that they perceived the characteristics required to successfully pursue their goals as incompatible with being someone who has experiences with a depression, identity-reframing reduced this incompatibility to 52%.

Finally, our longitudinal intervention study showed that the identity-reframing intervention helped individuals successfully pursue a self-selected goal: Over two weeks, the intervention boosted the completion of a goal individuals chose as meaningful to them from 43% to 64%.

6 | GENERALIZABILITY AND BOUNDARY CONDITIONS

Identity-reframing interventions have so far shown positive effects for relatively diverse groups of individuals with different forms of stigmatized identities, different ethnic backgrounds, in academic and non-academic contexts. Still, as for all manipulations, there are important boundary conditions.

On an individual level, previous research reported above (Bauer et al., 2021) highlighted the importance of individuals' identification with the respective social identity: If people think that the intervention message (e.g., refugees being strong and resourceful) does not apply to them, because they do not think of themselves as for example, being a refugee, the intervention is not expected to be effective.

On a context-level, it is important that the environment in which the intervention is conducted must afford the intervention message to flourish (Walton & Yeager, 2020). First, the environment has to be one in which the intervention message is seen as legitimate. For example, if a company with an openly hostile climate towards refugees delivers the intervention highlighting refugees' strengths, this may seem inauthentic or even manipulative and may thus carry no effects or even backfire. Second, in order for the intervention to help individuals successfully pursue their goals, the environment must offer adequate opportunities that make it possible for individuals to reach their goals. If these opportunities are lacking (e.g., if a university does not offer course material adequate for individuals' previous knowledge), the intervention cannot substitute.

7 | IMPLICATIONS FOR THEORY AND PRACTICE

Stigmatizing narratives frame low-status group members as deficient, for example, as lacking in strength or potential, with their backgrounds seen as obstacles to success. Research on identity-reframing interventions suggest that such narratives can become self-fulfilling, and impair students' goal pursuit. Yet, as interventions show, these narratives and their consequences are not inevitable. It is possible to re-frame low-status group members' social identity as strong and resourceful and this can enhance individuals' goal pursuit long-term (Bauer et al., 2021; Bauer, Job, et al., 2023; Bauer, Walton, et al., 2023). Identity-reframing interventions do so by highlighting individuals' background-specific strengths (Hernandez et al., 2021) and how they can use these strengths to succeed. This led people to see their backgrounds as more compatible with their goal pursuit (Bauer, Walton, et al., 2023) and gave them the confidence and motivation necessary to successfully pursue goals in life (Bauer et al., 2021; Bauer, Job, et al., 2023; Bauer, Walton, et al., 2023; Hernandez et al., 2021).

In highlighting how individuals have developed and shown strength through the adverse experiences they had to deal with, interventions acknowledge both, the adversity individuals experience as well as the strength individuals show. Previous research suggests that people often overlook low-status groups members' strength and agency when they acknowledge the adversity low-status group members experience (Bauer & Walton, 2023; Reeves et al., 2021). People seem to often only see individuals' adversity *or* strength (Bauer & Walton, 2023). Identity-reframing interventions show that it is possible to acknowledge both (see also, Brannon & Lin, 2021, Brannon, 2023, Silverman, Hernandez, et al., 2023).

One way to see intervention results is as indicators for how deprived our current culture may be from narratives acknowledging low-status group members' strength and agency. The fact that brief 10–15 min interventions that highlight how individuals' backgrounds can be a source of strength and success, not just deficit and failure, can have powerful long-lasting consequences speaks to the extent to which such messages are currently lacking in our culture.

Broad cultural change on multiple levels of the culture cycle may be needed to create contexts that support all individuals equally in pursuing their goals (Markus & Kitayama, 2010). Given that different levels of the culture cycle are linked in mutually reinforcing ways, interventions conducted on one level may carry effects on other levels. Indeed, identity-reframing interventions show that representing individuals as strong and agentic (institution level) supports individuals in better showing their strength and agency (individual level). This may in turn affect how others see (interaction level) and represent them (institution level). Still, any one intervention will likely not suffice and multiple interventions are likely needed to achieve broad cultural change in the way we acknowledge low-status groups' strengths and agency (see, for example, Silverman, Rosario, et al., 2023). Identity-reframing interventions constitute one scalable tool in this endeavor.

8 | FUTURE DIRECTIONS

How can identity-reframing interventions have long-term effects? Social psychological interventions are generally thought to trigger a cascade of effects that can become self-perpetuating. Multiple, overlapping cascades of such processes may exist and contribute to long-term outcomes. One key micro-process in these cascades may be individuals' interaction with others. As mentioned, refugees participating in identity-reframing (vs. control) exercises self-presented in more agentic and confident ways and were perceived as being more likely to succeed (Bauer et al., 2021). Could such a change in self-presentation elicit more positive, empowering responses from interaction partners such as teachers providing students with more challenging and helpful feedback (Jacoby-Senghor et al., 2016; Rosenthal & Jacobson, 1968; Word et al., 1974)? And could such improvements in treatment support long-term boosts in students' confidence, engagement, and performance? Longitudinal field experiments assessing both, student- and teacher-level data, could further investigate such potential micro-processes.

So far, identity-reframing interventions have been used to help refugees, low-SES students, and individuals with experiences of depression successfully pursue their goals. One exciting direction for future research is to consider other target groups and outcomes. Many low-status groups such as individuals with disabilities (Silverman et al., 2015), ethnic minority members (Valencia, 2012), or individuals who had to deal with sexual assault (Walton & Brady, 2020) are stigmatized as deficient and could thus benefit from the intervention. Further, since stigma does not just impair individuals' goal pursuit, but many other important outcomes including mental health and wellbeing, it is exciting to consider if the intervention may also be used to improve these outcomes. One interesting example lies in mental health stigma and its consequences. The stigma that people with mental illnesses experience has been shown to worsen individuals' mental health, for example, by making people feel ashamed, and reluctant to talk about their mental health (Livingston & Boyd, 2010; Quinn & Earnshaw, 2013). Vicious cycles can occur, with mental health problems reinforcing stigma, related shame, and identity concealment, which in turn can feed further into mental health problems (Camacho et al., 2020; Mickelson, 2003; Newheiser & Barreto, 2014). Could an intervention highlighting the strengths individuals with mental illnesses such as depression, anxiety, or addiction help individuals break this cycle, feel less ashamed, talk more openly about their experiences, and improve their mental health and wellbeing?

Relatedly, could identity-reframing interventions be used as a prevention strategy in individuals who make severe adverse experiences such as sexual assault or war crimes, that are often connected to mental health problems? Previous research suggests that individuals' sense of strength and control is key for their mental health development after experiencing severe adversity (Foa et al., 1999; Livanou et al., 2002). Common deficit-narratives that portray individuals as weak, passive victims or blame them for their experiences may deprive individuals of that need. They portray individuals, not just situations individuals are in as deficient. Yet, even in situations over which individuals have no control, individuals often show substantial agency and strength in actively dealing with the situations they are confronted with. Common deficit-focused narratives fail to acknowledge this. Could an intervention highlighting the strength and agency of individuals having to deal with adverse experiences implemented before (e.g., a

sexual-assault-focused intervention implemented as part of a sex education course) or shortly after adverse experiences reduce the development of severe mental health problems?

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SUPPORTING INFORMATION

Additional supporting information can be found online in the Supporting Information section at the end of this article.