Possible Selves Citations, Measure, and Coding Instructions for College Age Participants

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Relevant Publications

PUBLICATIONS research from my lab using the open-ended measure (see below)

- Oyserman, D., & Markus, H. (1990). Possible selves and delinquency. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 59*(1), 112-125.
- Oyserman, D. & Saltz, E. (1993). Competence, delinquency, and attempts to attain possible selves. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 65*, 360-374.
- Oyserman, D., Gant, L. & Ager, J. (1995). A socially contextualized model of African American identity: School persistence and possible selves. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 69*(6), 1216-1232.
- Oyserman, D. & Harrison, K. (1998). Implications of ethnic identity: African American identity and possible selves. In J. K. Swim & C. Stangor (Eds.) *Prejudice: The target's perspective.*, Academic Press, Calf.
- Oyserman, D., Terry, K., & Bybee, D, (2002). A possible selves intervention to enhance school involvement. *Journal of Adolescence, 24*, 313-326.
- Oyserman, D., Bybee, D, & Terry, K. (2003). Gendered racial identity and involvement with school. *Self and Identity, 2*, 1-18.
- Oyserman, D., Bybee, D., Terry, K., & Hart-Johnson, T. (2004). Possible selves as roadmaps. *Journal of Research in Personality, 38*, 130-149.
- Oyserman, D., Bybee, D. & Terry, K. (2006). Possible selves and academic outcomes: How and when possible selves impel action. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 91*, 188-204.
- Oyserman, D., Brickman, D., & Rhodes, M. (2007). School success, possible selves and parent school-involvement. *Family Relations, 56*, 279-289.
- Fryberg, S., Markus, H., Oyserman, D., & Stone, J. (2008). Of warrior chiefs and Indian princesses: The psychological consequences of American Indian mascots. *Basic and Applied Social Psychology, 30*, 208-218.
- Lee, S. J. & Oyserman, D. (2009). Expecting to work, fearing homelessness: The possible selves of low-income mothers. *Journal of Applied Social Psychology, 39*, 1334-1355.
- Oyserman, D., Johnson, E. & James, L. (2010). Seeing the destination but not the path: Effects of socioeconomic disadvantage on school-focused possible self content and linked behavioral strategies. *Self and Identity*. doi: 10.1080/15298868.2010.487651
- Elmore, K. & Oyserman, D. (2011). If 'we' succeed, 'I' can too: Identity-based motivation and gender in the classroom. *Contemporary Educational Psychology*. DOI: 10.1016/j.cedpsych.2011.05.003

PUBLICATIONS using close-ended measure (described in the publication)

- Kemmelmeier, M. & Oyserman, D. (2001). Gendered influence of downward social comparisons on current and possible selves. *Journal of Social Issues, 57,* 129-148.
- Oyserman, D. & Fryberg, S. A. (2006). The possible selves of diverse adolescents: Content and function across gender, race and national origin. In J. Kerpelman & C. Dunkel (Eds.), *Possible selves: Theory, research, and applications* (pp. 17-39). Huntington, NY: Nova.

Possible Selves Questionnaire

Each of us has some idea of what we expect to be like in the future. In this section, you will be asked to imagine yourself **next year**. These are the possible selves you expect to be next year.

Before moving on to the next screen, take a moment to visualize what you expect to be like **next year** and what you expect you will be doing **next year**.

→

Now that you have had a moment to think about it, write what you expect you will be like and what you expect to be doing next year in the boxes below.

Next year, I expect to be or become...

[sample] a straight A student

Next year, I expect to be or become...

Next year, I expect to be or become...

Next year, I expect to be or become...

→

In addition to expectations, we all have some idea of what we don't want to be like or things we do not want to be doing **next year**. These are the possible selves you want to avoid next year.

Before moving on to the next screen, take a moment to visualize what you do **not** want to be like next year or things you do **not** want to be doing next year.
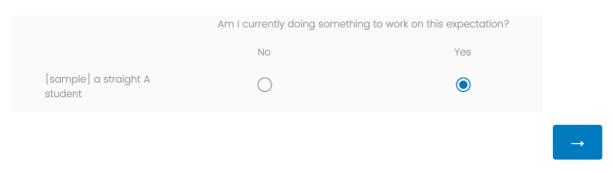
→

Now that you have had a moment to think about it, write what you do **not** want to be like and what you do **not** want to be doing next year in the boxes below.

Next year, I want to avoid being or becoming...

[sample] tardy

Next year, I want to avoid being or becoming...

Next year, I want to avoid being or becoming...

Next year, I want to avoid being or becoming...

→

Now, ask yourself if you are doing something to work on the possible self you expect to be next year.
Click "No" if you are not doing something. Click "Yes" if you are doing something to work on this expectation for next year.

	Am I currently doing something to work on this expectation?	
	No	Yes
[sample] a straight A student	○	◉

→

Now, ask yourself if you are doing something to work on the possible self you want to avoid becoming next year.
Click "No" if you are not doing something. Click "Yes" if you are doing something to avoid this possible self next year

	Am I currently doing something to avoid this?	
	No	Yes
[sample] tardy	○	◉

→

You wrote "[sample] a straight A student". What are you doing now to work on that?

doing readings before class

What are you doing now so that "[sample] tardy" will **not** describe you next year?

setting an alarm

→

Coding Instructions for Next Year Possible Selves

Category	What your code should look like
Achievement - academic - job	*2 types* - ach-acad - ach-job
Interpersonal - general - extracurricular activities	*2 types* - inter - inter-act
Personality	intra
Physical/Health-related	health
Material/Lifestyle	lifestyle
Negative	negative
Off-track	off-track
Misc	misc

CATEGORY LABELS FOR NEXT YEAR EXPECTED POSSIBLE SELVES
There are six main categories of Next Year Expected Possible Selves. Off-track is only a category for next year <u>feared</u> possible selves.

1. Achievement- relates to work and school, school interactions with teachers, and achievement-related activities. This category is fairly broad—really anything that relates to jobs, school, and extracurricular school activities fits into this category
- Achievement is divided into **2 subcategories**
  o Academic
    ▪ Talks about grades, studying harder, being to class on time, etc.
  o Job
    ▪ Talks about getting a job, internship, or other job-related activities

2. Interpersonal Relationships- involves social relationships and interactions, and socially-linked extracurricular activities (except those that are linked to achievement)
- Interpersonal is divided into 2 subcategories
  o General
    ▪ involves family, friends, relationships, and social interactions
  o Extracurricular Activities
    ▪ Sports team, intramural sports, band, fraternity/sorority, etc

3. Personality Traits/Intrapersonal- relates to personality characteristics, self-descriptions of traits

4. Physical/Health-Related- relates to physical health, weight, height

5. Material/Lifestyle- relates to material possessions and living situation, including moving

6. Negative- includes all negatively worded responses
- E.g., possible self = "I want to drop out of school"

CATEGORY LABELS FOR NEXT YEAR FEARED/AVOIDED POSSIBLE SELVES
There are six main categories of Next Year Feared Possible Selves.

Achievement- relates to work and school, school interactions with teachers, and achievement-related activities. This category is fairly broad—really anything that relates to jobs, school, and extracurricular school activities fits into this category
- Achievement has **3 sub-categories**
   o Academic
      ▪ Talks about failing classes, not graduating on time, etc.
   o Job
      ▪ Talks about not finding a job/internship or other job-related activities

Interpersonal Relationships- involves social relationships and interactions, and socially linked extracurricular activities (except those that are linked to achievement)
- Interpersonal is divided into 2 subcategories
   o General
      ▪ Involves family, friends, relationships, and social interactions
   o Extracurricular Activities
      ▪ Sports team, intramural sports, band, fraternity/sorority, etc

Personality Traits- relates to personality characteristics, self-descriptions of traits

Physical/Health-Related- relates to physical health, weight, height

Material/Lifestyle- relates to material possessions and living situation, including moving

Off-track- includes negative and illegal behaviors such as smoking, drinking, involved in fights, gangs, etc

Positive: anything that should be a good thing that they are trying to avoid:
- E.g., possible self = "I want to avoid doing my homework/getting a job"

When to use **Miscellaneous ?**
The miscellaneous category is only to be used when the possible self does not lend itself to categorization in the slightest. Usually this means there is a possible/avoided self that is very ambiguous and does not have any strategies.

<u>NOTE:</u> For sake of organization, rather than leaving possible selves that are not actually possible to obtain/avoid by the next year, code as "notpossiblenextyear"
- E.g., possible self = "Get my Ph.D"
- Just because a possible self sounds implausible, does not mean it is not possible
   o E.g., possible self = "become a famous youtuber"
      ▪ It is implausible that someone will become suddenly famous, but it's not impossible – so this would be coded as "ach-job"

SITUATIONS WHEN THE STRATEGY OVERRIDES THE POSSIBLE SELF CODE

There are 7 situations that the strategy overrides the possible self:

1. The strategy is clearly "achievement academic"—the prototypical example is "being organized" when the strategy is "setting aside time for studying, doing homework, and reading for class"
   a. What looked like "intra" will be instead coded as "ach-acad"
   b. However, this does not apply to ach-job
      i. If possible self = "a senior with a full-time job offer doing work I enjoy"
      ii.
2. The strategy mentions things that would indicate "off-track"—so maybe the person says they want to avoid being mean, but their strategy says "I don't want to hurt people physically"
   a. What looked like "inter" will instead be coded as "off-track"
3. The possible self looks like "inter-act", but at least one strategy or details in the possible self are related to academic or job achievement. So you would code the possible self as "ach-acad" or "ach-job"
4. There are some cases where the strategies are split between things that are relevant to school and other things. Because we count the strategies, the rule is as follows:
   a. if >= 50% of the strategies are about school, then the possible self is coded as ach-acad. Otherwise, keep the initial code
   b. Example: possible self = "more responsible", strategy = "I'm trying to be more organized and do my work"
      i. Original code "intra" becomes "ach-acad" because "do my work" is one of the strategies
      ii. But if the strategy was "I'm trying to be more organized, do more chores at home, and do my work" then you would keep the original "intra" code because 2 out of the 3 strategies are not school-specific
5. There are also cases where the strategies are split between things that are relevant to physical health and mental health. Because we count the strategies, the rule is as follows:
   a. if >= 50% of the strategies are about mental health, then the possible self is coded as intra. Otherwise, the possible self is coded as health
   b. Example: possible self = "healthy", strategy = "working out, eating healthier, going to therapy, journaling, meditating"
      i. Would be coded as intra because 3/5 strategies are about mental health
6. The possible self looks like off-track, but at least one strategy is about school. For this, you would code the possible self as "ach-acad"
   a. E.g., "bad decisions" sounds like off-track, but the strategy = "focus on school and myself. Make good choices for myself and others"
7. The possible self is ambiguous, so you must infer information from the strategy
   a. E.g., possible self = "bad things"
   b. Without a strategy, we would just assume it is off-track. But if there is a strategy, then you have to make a decision
   c. For example: possible self = "bad things" with strategy "be positive" would be coded as "intra"

SUMMARY OF CATEGORY LABELS

Categories of expected and feared possible selves are identical except that the sixth category for expected selves includes ANY negative reference (since the vast majority of expectations are framed positively) and the sixth category for feared possible selves includes behaviors or expectations that are either delinquent or risky behaviors (such as teen pregnancy or smoking). Some categories have subcategories that are listed above. These are useful for analyses, though in our work to date the large sample sizes in our studies have limited us to focusing on main categories only.

CODING WITH CONTEXT IN MIND

1. CONSIDER AGE OF RESPONDENT
   - When coding for possible selves, one must first consider the age of the respondent. For example, when a first-year expects to be a doctor next year, that response is not codable.
     o For sake of organization, rather than leaving possible selves that are not actually possible to obtain/avoid by the next year, code as "notpossiblenextyear"
   - Just because a possible self sounds implausible, does not mean it is not possible
     o E.g., possible self = "become a famous youtuber"
       ▪ It is implausible that someone will become suddenly famous, but it's not impossible – so this would be coded as "ach-job"
   - In a very few instances, age may also determine which category the possible self is placed. For example, when a 19 year old respondent reports that next year he/she would like to stop drinking, this feared possible self is coded as "off-track". For an older person (21 and above), this same feared self would be coded as "health".

2. CONSIDER CONTEXT OF RESPONSE
   - When a possible self is ambiguous because too little has been written, read through the strategy provided for that possible self to see if it provides clues

NOTE: You may sometimes see responses with multiple possible selves in a single response
   - E.g., expected possible self = "getting decent grades and getting into biology which will help me for my future job" with strategy of "studying hard"
   - If this happens, you can follow this strategy:
     o If possible self is about more than one domain, then see what the strategy is really about
       ▪ E.g., "getting good grades and making new friends" with strategy "studying hard"
       ▪ Pick the possible self code that is most relevant to the strategy
       ▪ In this case, it would be coded as ach-acad
     o If the strategies also vary in domain, then use the >= 50% rule
     o If there is no strategy, then apply the >= 50% rule to the possible selves
   - When in doubt, highlight the entry in question and let the lead researcher or supervisor know

Expected Possible Selves Examples

Achievement:

Achievement Academic:
- Doing well in school
  - Trying to do good in school, getting good grades, keep my grades up, not tardy or absent from school, honor roll, being a good student
- Personality and intrapersonal traits related to school:
  - Traits linked to achievement
  - Hardworking, organized, successful (unless about making money or getting a job), smart, attentive, focused, never giving up, a non-quitter
  - Confident (with a school strategy)
  - Responsible (unless strategy is only about money/spending decisions or relationships)
- Anything related to having better work ethic and paying attention in class
  - If possible self = "focus on all of my classes" and the strategy = "not getting distracted by others"
  - Better time management
- Anything related to interacting more with professors/TAs
  - Asking more questions in class, going to office hours
- If the possible self = "learning a new language" or "getting better at art" and the strategy specifically mentions taking a language or art class
  - If no mention of taking a class, then the possible self would be coded as lifestyle because it is a non-interpersonal hobby
- Transferring to a better/new school
- Continuing education after bachelor's
  - Applying to grad school, getting into grad school, taking GRE, applying for master's program or teaching credential
- Being a research assistant, being in a lab, doing research

Achievement Job:
- Get a job/internship
- Work on my resume, network
- Volunteer as a way of getting job experience
- Joining the military

Interpersonal:

General:
- Socially contingent self-descriptions
  - Interesting, outgoing, friendly, shy, funny, nice, kind, respectful
  - Being a leader, not being a follower
  - Having better manners
- Family related
  - Getting along with parents/relatives, helping around the house/doing my chores, more obedient, better person toward my relative, being a good/better son or daughter
  - Doing more things with my family, being closer to my family
- Not being picked on/bullied

- Relationship related
  - Having a steady girlfriend/boyfriend/partner, fighting less with my partner, dating more
  - Getting along better with people, having lots of friends, making new friends, meeting new people, hanging out with my friends more, being a better friend
- Related to social media
  - Going on social media less
    - Unless the strategy makes it clear that the purpose of using less social media is to benefit their grades/time management
- Possible self = "mature" and strategy = "staying out of drama and ignore fake friends"

Extracurricular Activities:
- School clubs, organizations, and extracurricular activities
- Any mention of being on a sports team, in band, or on an intramural team
  - Cheer team, basketball team, playing instrument, school band, playing sports, on a team, a better basketball player
  - If the possible self = "more athletic" and the strategy specifically mentions clubs or teams
- Being "more involved"
- Being in Greek life

Personality:
- Related to maturity
  - More mature, adulting, being more independent
- Attitude
  - More serious person, more open-minded
  - Having positive thoughts/vibes or a positive attitude
  - Being less insecure
- Mental health (without mentioning dying)
  - Happier, less depressed, less anxious
  - Going to therapy, not feeling suicidal, not self-harming
  - Being stressed (without mentioning school)
- Being a good person (unless strategy makes it interpersonal
- Being motivated, feeling challenged (without mentioning school or health)

Physical/Health-related:
- Physical health/appearance
  - Getting in shape, exercising, going to the gym, dieting
  - If possible self = "Able to run the mile in less then 10 minutes" and strategy does not mention being on the track team
  - Be good-looking, wear less makeup, get better at doing my makeup
- Mental health
  - Going to therapy, not killing myself, not self-harming
- Growing up
  - Be taller next year, be one year older, growing old
- Getting enough sleep
- Possible self = "confident" with strategy making it clear the confidence is about confidence in physical appearance/health

Material/Lifestyle:
- Many hobbies fit here
    - Being a better singer, learning a new language, playing games, making music
    - Enjoying nature more, traveling
- Religion/spirituality
    - Going to church, praying more often, "faith"
- Doing service
- Getting a driver's license
- Money related
    - Working for extra money, saving money for school, paying off student loans
- Living situation
    - Moving in with friends next year
    - Being able to move into own apartment after school
- Having a balanced life

Negative:
- Expected possible selves responses that are worded negatively or suggest an expected possible self involving a negative outcome
- E.g., possible self = "next year, I expect to still be involved in fights" should be coded as "negative"
- Other examples
    - I expect to have few friends, I will still be boring, I will be a drop-out

Feared/Avoided Possible Selves Examples

Achievement:

Achievement Academic:
- Doing poorly in school
    - A loser, dropout, flunking my classes, having bad grades, falling behind in class, skipping class, having to repeat a class
    - Being distracted in class, sleeping in class
    - Possible self = "Being a failure" without giving a strategy
    - Getting suspended/expelled/or going on academic probation
    - Not being the class clown
    - Procrastinating, leaving things to the last minute, taking on too much
- Traits linked to achievement
    - Lazy, irresponsible (unless strategy explicitly about something non-academic), unorganized, unsuccessful, stupid, dumb, giving up, unconfident (unless about health), stressed (with school related strategy), unproductive, being late
- Not getting into graduate school

Achievement Job:
- Not finding a job/internship

Interpersonal:

General:
- Socially continent self-descriptions
    - Being less shy as I am, avoid being a recluse, a mean person, rude, stuck up, mistrusted, stingy, a liar, boring, too talkative, a bad role model (unless strategy is about delinquent or illegal behavior)
- Family related
    - Having anything happen to our family, not listening to parents, being smart with parents, mean to sibling/relative, getting into arguments with parent/relative
- Relationship related
    - Not having someone to turn to, being enemies with other people, being disliked by friends, not making friends, breaking up with girlfriend/boyfriend/partner, drama, being used by others, having fake friends
    - Possible self = "overbooking myself" without strategy making it clear they are talking about scheduling classes/work
- Not cussing/using curse words/cursing
- Possible self = "negativity" and strategy = "be nicer"
    - Because the strategy implies negativity is being negative to other people.

Extracurricular Activities:
- School clubs and extracurricular activities
- Any mention of being on a sports team, in band, or on an intramural team
    - Not making the team, being ineligible for sports

Personality:
- Related to maturity
    - Being irresponsible (unless about school or work)

- Attitude
    - Having a bad attitude, being negative, having negative thoughts
    - Having positive thoughts/vibes or a positive attitude
    - Being insecure
- Mental health (without mentioning dying)
    - Unhappy, depressed, anxious, weak mentally, an emotional mess
    - Feeling suicidal, self-harming
    - Feeling lonely
- Being a good person (unless strategy makes it interpersonal)
- Possible self = "Bad habits" without a strategy that makes it clear that it's school related or off-track

Physical/Health-related:
- Appearance
    - Still being short, looking fat
- Health/Illness
    - Getting sick a lot, being so sick I can't attend school, being on medication again
    - Being unfit, being slower physically, getting weaker, overweight
    - Drinking less, smoking less
        - Only if the substance is legal and the respondent is over 21 years old. Otherwise, this would be coded as "off-track"
    - Not getting enough sleep, staying up too late
- Dying/death
    - Includes suicide
    - Unless strategy is related to off-track behaviors, such as drinking or drugs

Material/Lifestyle:
- Still living at home with parents, not having enough money to move out
- Not being able to pay off student loans
- Not having an income
- Hobbies that are not interpersonally contingent
    - E.g., possible self = "getting better at puzzles/drawing/singing" and strategy = "practice" would be coded as lifestyle
        - But possible self = "getting better at acting/singing" and strategy = "take a class" would be coded as inter-act
- Eating out (without a strategy) or explicitly saying it is to save money
    - If they say they want to eat out less to be healthier/lose weight, then it should be coded as "health"

Off-track:
- Delinquent behavior
    - Any mention of substance abuse such as drugs, alcohol, smoking weed/cigarettes, vaping, etc.

- - - - Unless the respondent is over 21, then drinking less or doing less of a legal drug would be coded as "health"
    - Being in a gang, shooting people, dealing drugs, hurting others
    - Doing the "wrong thing" (with no clarifying strategy)
    - Going to jail
- Being around or in a bad crowd or the wrong crowd
    - Being around negative people or bad people
    - Being a bad person
    - Toxic people, toxic environments– with no specific strategy or with an off-track strategy
        - If "toxic friends" or "toxic relationships" without off-track strategy, then code as "inter"
- Peer pressure to do something bad/illegal/you don't want to do
- Getting pregnant, becoming a mother, becoming a father
- Possible self = "getting in trouble" with vague strategy

Positive
- Feared possible selves responses that are worded positively or suggest a feared possible self involving a positive outcome
- E.g., possible self = "next year, I will not do my homework" should be coded as "positive"
- Other examples
    - I expect to get a job, I will put less effort into school

Counting Strategies

A note overall:
- When coding strategies, there are examples of seemingly equivocal strategies: like being positive and happy OR doing work and homework.
- Our rule is as follows…
  - When the respondent seems like they have some special knowledge of a difference between two things (schoolwork and work), then that gets counted as two.
  - If that doesn't seem to be the case, and instead, their language is just redundant, then that gets counted as one. Positive and happy are equivocal. Lying and telling the truth are equivocal.

Example of counting strategies…
- Doing my math homework, English homework, and chem homework = 3 strategies
- Studying every night and on the weekends = 2 strategies
- Reviewing before class so I can do well on tests = 1 strategy
  - What comes after "So…." is most often describing rationale or giving more detail. What comes after "so" is usually not a separate strategy.
- I want to go to class more often and I want to try harder = 2 strategies
  - Want in most cases is another way of saying will/will try, so we treat it like a strategy
- For off-track strategies
  - Many off-track strategies will look like this:
    - Possible self = "avoiding drugs" strategy = "not doing them"
      - This does count as a strategy! Abstaining from drugs is a way to prevent the behavior
  - However, this usually only applies to off-track behaviors
    - E.g., "Not getting bad grades" by "not getting bad grades" is not an actual strategy. It's not that simple. To not get bad grades, action must be taken. So the strategy count would = 0.

Is the strategy redundant or not?
- Possible self = "All A's next year" Strategy = "getting A's <u>now</u>"
  - Yes, that is a valid strategy.
- Possible self = "All A's next year" Strategy = "getting A's"
  - No, that is not a valid strategy.
- Possible self = "All A's next year" Strategy = "I am a straight A student"
  - Yes, that is a valid strategy.

Examples of when they wrote something but you would count the response as 0 strategies:
- "I don't know", "Stuff", "lol"

EXAMPLES OF STRATEGIES

Achievement

Working hard on assignments
Doing all my schoolwork
Paying more attention

Interpersonal

Making new friends
Working with parents
Reaching out to others

Personality

Having a better attitude
Controlling my temper
Trying new things

Physical/Health-related

Lifting weights
Exercising
Eating healthy foods

Material/ Lifestyle

Working to save my money
Talking with parents about moving out

Off-track

Going to less parties so that I drink less
Not giving into peer pressure