USING SELF-SENTIMENTS TO PREDICT IDENTITY AND BEHAVIOR

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The current studies are aligned with previous work that utilizes understandings of the self to study behavior, emotion, and mental health. Study 1 tests the affect control theory of self (MacKinnon and Heise 2010), a mathematical theory that demonstrates a core social psychological principle: individuals strive for a stable and coherent self through identity selection and behavior. In the affect control theory of self, the self is conceptualized as *self-sentiments,* which are measured on three dimensions: evaluation (good/bad), potency (powerful/powerless), and activity (fast/slow). In a longitudinal sample of college men and women, I find the self-sentiment predicts how individuals describe themselves on a range of terms, including primary emotions, both stigmatized and esteemed traits related to mental illness and self-esteem, and various productive and deviant behaviors. While Study 1 uses streamlined calculations to examine a vast array of identity-related concepts and behaviors, Study 2 offers a potential integration of the affect control theory of self and Stryker's (1980) identity theory in order to understand the processes involved in specific identities: the college student, the partier, and the overweight person. This study, which is also longitudinal, links cognitive and socioemotional commitment to individuals' self-sentiments, self-meanings, and identity-relevant behavior and outcomes. The current studies demonstrate the theoretical precision of ACT-Self and the usefulness of structural symbolic interactionism for understanding human behavior and identifying individuals at risk for deviance and deleterious consequences.