

Immediate Good for Others or Eventual Good for Self: Time Perspective and Volunteerism

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Introduction

• Time perspective (TP) involves how individuals view their use of time, and has been shown to influence numerous behavioral outcomes (Zimbardo & Boyd, 1999; Boniwell & Zimbardo, 2004).

• TP has received little attention in the pro-social area, and examining how it relates to volunteerism, defined as a long-term, planned form of helping, may provide useful insight into how individual differences influence pro-social action.

• Social psychological research on volunteerism has focused on two types of motivations to volunteer: motivations concerned with helping and understanding others, and motivations aimed at improving the volunteer's own life (Clary et al., 1998).

• Past research indicates that other-oriented motivations tend to be related to immediate levels of volunteer involvement, whereas self-oriented motivations predict volunteering over long periods of time (Omoto & Snyder, 1995). Thus, a person's orientation toward time may have important implications for their reasons for getting involved in volunteerism and their experience of volunteer service.

• It may be that people focused on the short-term and the immediate impact of volunteering respond differently to the volunteer experience, as compared to people concerned with the long-term impacts of volunteering.

• Hypothesis 1: Compared to Present TPs, Future TP will be the strongest predictor of interest to volunteer in the future

• Hypothesis 2: Participants with a high level of Future TP and satisfied with self-oriented motivations will have the greatest interest in volunteering in the future

• Hypothesis 3: Participants with a low level of Future TP and satisfied with other-oriented motivations will have the greatest interest in volunteering in the future

Methods

• This study sample included AmeriCorps volunteers (N=110) halfway through their year-long service term

• AmeriCorps is a nation-wide service program, often regarded as a form of volunteerism because it involves sustained, voluntary helping

• A survey was administered to volunteers in one of six distinct AmeriCorps programs, all based out of Minnesota

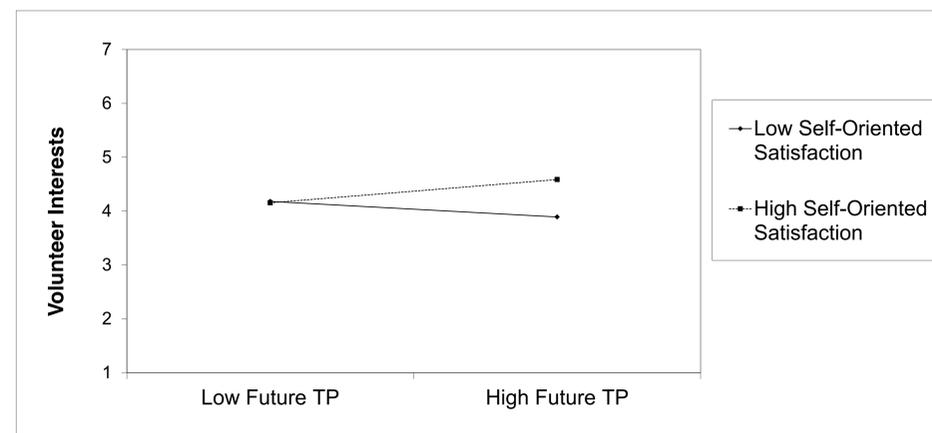
Results

• Hypothesis 1: Regression analyses revealed that Future TP, over and above Present-Hedonistic and Present-Fatalistic TPs, predicts greater interest in volunteering in the future among current AmeriCorps volunteers ($p < .01$)

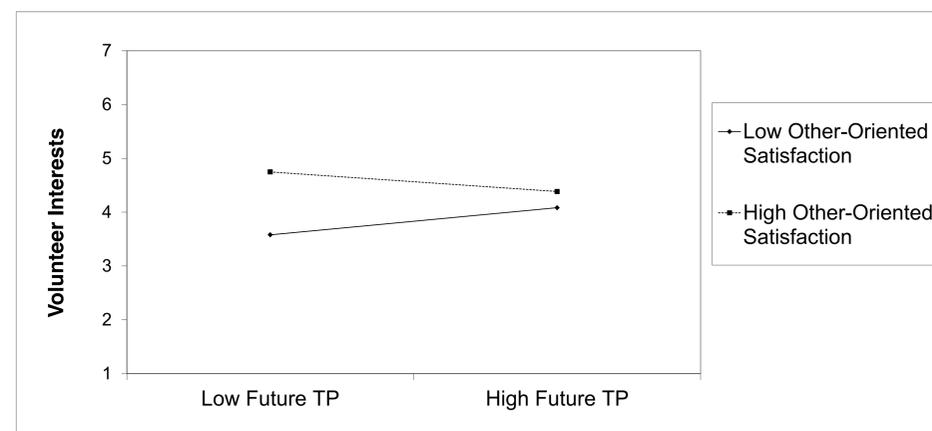
• Satisfaction with other- and self-oriented volunteer motivations (both $p < .01$) also predicted greater interest in volunteering in the future

• These main effects were qualified by two-way interactions between Future TP and satisfaction of both self- and other-oriented motivations

• Hypothesis 2: Results indicate that for those high in Future TP, higher levels of satisfaction with self-oriented motivations for volunteering predicted greater interests in volunteering in the future ($p = .055$)



• Hypothesis 3: Alternatively, for those low in Future TP, higher levels of satisfaction with other-oriented motivations predicted greater levels of future volunteer interests ($p < .05$)



Conclusion

• Future TP was found to be the best predictor of interest to volunteer in the future, over and above other time perspectives

• Furthermore, these findings suggest that Future TP may serve to regulate the influence of volunteers' motivational agendas on their intentions to serve

• Whereas individuals high in Future TP need to feel like they are working toward a better future for themselves, volunteers low in Future TP need to feel as though they are making an immediate impact

• Though further research must be done, it may be that volunteers that vary in way they orient toward the future may resonate to different types of volunteer experiences and feedback

References

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