

Making A Difference, Eventually: The Relation Between Future Time Perspective and Volunteerism

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Introduction

- Pro-social behavior research often focuses on personal attributes tied to the behavior itself, such as altruistic personality and dispositional empathy. Its relation to more general orientations has received less attention.
- One broad psychological construct that may influence pro-social behavior is time perspective (Zimbardo & Boyd, 1999).
- 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 may be especially relevant to the pro-social behavior of volunteerism, a planned, long-term behavior that often requires a substantial time commitment and does not always deliver an immediate impact.
- Due to its long-term nature, people higher in future TP may be more satisfied with their experience as volunteers, which may then translate into greater levels of motivation to volunteer and intentions to volunteer in the future, as well as greater identification with their role as a volunteer.
- Hypothesis 1: Future TP will be the strongest predictor of volunteer motivation, volunteer role identity, and intentions to continue volunteering.
- Hypothesis 2: Satisfaction with volunteering will mediate the relationship between Future TP and the three relevant constructs: volunteer motivation, volunteer role identity, and volunteer intentions.

Methods

- This longitudinal study sampled volunteers (N=116) from the U.S.-based program AmeriCorps, a national, yearlong service program in which volunteers assist local communities.
- Volunteers were surveyed at the beginning, middle, and end of service.
- Volunteers came from one of six AmeriCorps programs based in Minnesota, U.S.A.

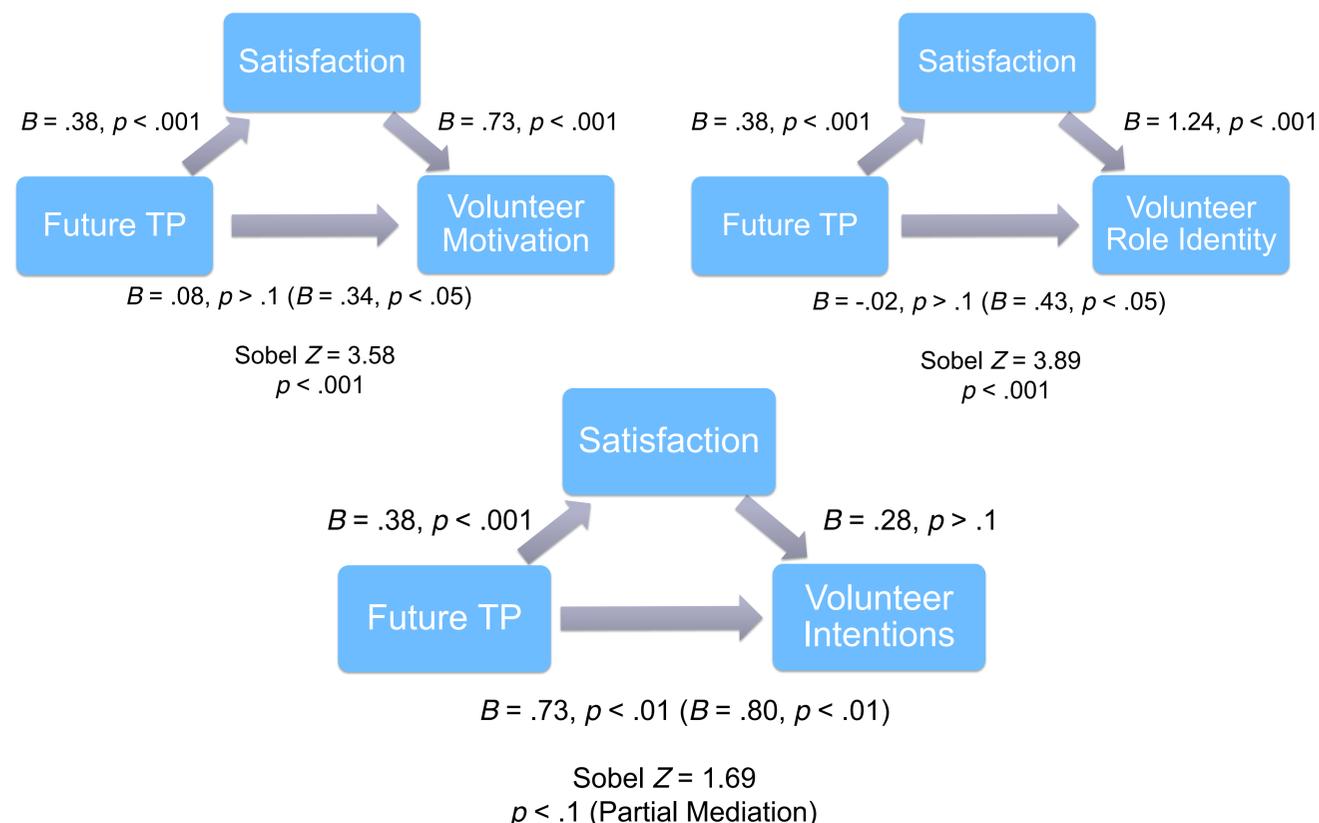
Results

- Hypothesis 1: Regression analyses, with each TP controlling for the other TPs as predictors, indicate that Future TP, not Present TPs, predicts volunteer motivation ($p < .01$), volunteer identification ($p < .05$), and intentions to continue volunteering ($p < .01$).

Volunteerism Construct/ Time Perspective	Future	Present-Fatalistic	Present-Hedonistic
Volunteer Motivation	$B = .40^{**}$	$B = .20$	$B = .01$
Volunteer Identification	$B = .44^*$	$B = .03$	$B = .01$
Volunteer Intentions	$B = .85^{**}$	$B = .04$	$B = .25$
	* = $p < .05$	** = $p < .01$	

Mediational Models

- Hypothesis 2: Analyses indicate that Future TP predicts volunteer satisfaction, and volunteer satisfaction mediates the relationship between Future TP and volunteer motivation, volunteer role identity, and volunteer intentions.



Conclusion

- Future TP was found to be the best predictor of volunteer motivation, volunteer role identity, and volunteer intentions, over and above other time perspectives.
- People with a Future TP tended to be more satisfied with their volunteer position, and this satisfaction led to higher volunteer motivation, higher identification as a volunteer, and higher intentions to volunteer in the future.
- Future research should examine if it is possible to influence people's orientation toward the future, and determine if inducing thoughts and concerns toward the future may lead to volunteer behavior maintenance.

References

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