

Planning for the Future: The Relationship between Conscientiousness, Temporal Focus and Implicit Space-Time Mappings

CAO Yu & LI Heng

Zhongnan University of Economics and Law; Southwest University

caoyu312@vip.163.com

Abstract: In a broad range of cultures, people implicitly associate the past and future with the back and front in their minds. According to the Temporal Focus Hypothesis (TFS), the metaphoric associations between front-back space and time are shaped by their attentional focus on temporal events (de la Fuente et al., 2014). Recent research demonstrates that people's temporal focus and their resulting implicit space-time mappings are malleable and result from a complex of factor (e.g., de la Fuente et al., 2014; Li & Cao 2018). In the current research, we examine conscientiousness as a potential contributor. Conscientiousness is a fundamental personality trait of being goal-oriented which is characterized as regularly thinking about future consequences before making a decision (Zimbardo & Boyd, 2008). In Study 1, we investigated the relationship between self-reported conscientiousness scores and implicit space-time mappings by Time Diagram Task and Temporal Focus Scale. In Study 2 and 3, we examined the role of conscientiousness in affecting students' and non-students' implicit space-time mappings by measuring individuals' punctuality, which is one of the most important behaviors associated with conscientiousness (Duffy, Feist, & McCarthy 2014). Results from these studies showed that participants who conceptualized the future as in front of them evidenced a higher level of conscientiousness trait than those who conceptualized the past as in front of them. These findings shed new light on the TFS by extending the range of individual differences that may influence people's spatial conceptions of time.

Keywords: Space-time mappings; Temporal Focus Hypothesis; Conceptual metaphor; Conscientiousness; Personality

References

- de la Fuente, J., Santiago, J., Román, A., Dumitrache, C., & Casasanto, D. (2014). When you think about it, your past is in front of you: How culture shapes spatial conceptions of Time. *Psychological Science*, 25, 1682–1690.
- Duffy, S. E., Feist, M. I., & McCarthy, S. (2014). Moving through time: The role of personality in three real-life contexts. *Cognitive Science*, 38, 1662-1674.
- Li, H., & Cao, Y. (2018). The hope of the future: The experience of pregnancy influences women's implicit space-time mappings. *The Journal of Social Psychology*, 158(2): 152-155.
- Shipp, A. J., Edwards, J. R., & Lambert, L. S. (2009). Conceptualization and measurement of temporal focus: The subjective experience of the past, present, and future. *Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes*, 110(1), 1-22.
- Zimbardo, P., & Boyd, J. (2008). *The time paradox: The new psychology of time that will change your life*. Simon and Schuster.