



## Further evidence for the domain specificity of Consideration of Future Consequences in adolescents and University students

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### ABSTRACT

Within the study of temporal psychology, researchers have classified individuals as ‘past’, ‘present’, or ‘future’ depending on how they respond to items in a variety of scales. This labelling implicitly assumes that if an individual is ‘future’, they are equally ‘future’ in all domains of life. However, emerging research has suggested that orientation to the future might be domain-specific. Building on previous research with adolescents only, we used an adolescent ( $N = 243$ ) sample, and a University ( $N = 173$ ) sample to further examine the psychometric validity, internal consistency, and construct validity of the Domain Specific Consideration of Future Consequences (CFC) Scale. Results of Confirmatory Factor Analysis revealed acceptable validity and internal consistency for scale scores. Domain specificity was demonstrated via correlations between Domain Specific CFC scores and scores on other future-orientated constructs. Endorsing self-reported behavior in each domain was also associated with significantly higher scores on Domain Specific CFC factors, in models adjusted for future temporal focus score, subjective life expectancy, and both gender, and sample. With evidence emerging for the domain specificity of CFC scores, it may be time for this literature to examine domain specificity in all constructs.

### 1. Introduction

The psychological construct broadly known as *time perspective*, assesses the extent to which thoughts about, and feelings towards the past, present, and future, influence behavior. A large, and increasing literature, continues to demonstrate the significant association between future-related temporal constructs and a range of outcomes including: academic (e.g., Lens & Vansteenkiste, 2008); health (e.g., McKay, Cole, & Andretta, 2016; Daugherty & Brase, 2010); environmental (e.g., Milfont, Wilson, & Diniz, 2012); and financial (e.g., Joireman, Kees, & Sprott, 2010). Indeed, McKay, Perry, Cole, and Magee (2017), recently demonstrated that adolescents reported a domain-specific relationship with these constructs in the development of a CFC domain-specific scale. In their development of the Zimbardo Time Perspective Inventory (ZTPI), Zimbardo and Boyd (1999) contended that time perspective was “a relatively stable individual-difference process” (p. 1271), and that it was possible for individuals to develop a so-called *temporal bias* towards the past, the present or the future. In this way, individuals might be considered to be ‘futures’, ‘presents’, or ‘pasts’, depending on that bias.

However, others have argued that time perspective is an ‘umbrella-term’ (Shipp, Edwards, & Schurer-Lambert, 2009) for a range of varying and discrete temporal constructs including time attitudes, temporal

depth, and Consideration of Future Consequences (CFC). Therefore, what might be true of time perspective more broadly, may not be true of these narrower constructs. For example, McKay, Perry, Cole, and Worrell (2018), recently reported results of a study using four temporal scales (including a total of 16 factors or dimensions), wherein only one inter-scale correlation reached a moderate threshold ( $r \geq 0.5$ ; using the criteria set out by Ferguson, 2009). It is reasonable to expect that different temporal scales will relate differently to criterion variables, essentially based on the fact that some are comprised of exclusively cognitive items, some of exclusively affective items, and others again by a hybrid of cognitive, affective, and behavioral. Therefore, it seems quite intuitive that someone may feel that it is important to protect the environment, and act accordingly, but simultaneously lack the cognitive understanding for the need to save money for the future.

Across temporal scales, there is evidence that different temporal dimensions relate differently to criterion variables. For example, whereas some researchers (Cole, Andretta, & McKay, 2016; McKay et al., 2016) have reported that ZTPI scores (based on cognitive, affective and behavioral items) are significantly associated with self-reported alcohol-related problems and psychiatric symptomatology, we have also reported a limited relationship between psychiatric symptomatology and both CFC (cognitive and behavioral items) and time

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attitudes (affective only items) scores (McKay, Andretta, & Cole, 2017). Finally McKay, Andretta, et al. (2017) reported that whereas time attitudes scores were significantly and meaningfully related to scores on psychiatric symptomatology, they were not related to scores on problematic alcohol use. Clearly, on this evidence each temporal construct is deserving of unique investigation. Moreover, within the study of individual temporal constructs (e.g., time attitudes, time perspective, CFC), it is possible that a domain specific relationship exists with behaviors (see, for example, Dassen, Houben, & Jansen, 2015), and what is true of one behavior (e.g., recycling to offset future environmental decline), may not be seen in other behaviors (e.g., saving money for future requirements).

Recently, McKay, Perry, et al. (2017) developed the 18-item Domain Specific CFC Scale, which assesses CFC in four domains, Health and Well-being, Global Warming, School, and Finance. Results from two studies revealed support for the multidimensional nature of the scale, as well as support for its psychometric validity and internal consistency (McKay, Perry, et al., 2017). There are a number of important implications for domain specific CFC. Firstly, in theoretical terms, it calls into question both the accuracy and utility of a large literature which has implicitly assumed that to be considerate of the ‘future’ means to be considerate of the future across all domains (where claims are made that person X is a ‘future’; or person X is ‘future oriented’). Secondly, in terms of intervening to make individuals more considerate of the future, it would suggest that such interventions might need to be domain specific.

Building on the only previous study to use the Domain Specific CFC Scale (McKay, Perry, et al., 2017), the present study aimed to extend the use of the scale beyond adolescents, to include a University-based sample. To investigate construct and discriminant validity, the present study also included measures of future temporal focus; Future Positive and Future Negative time attitudes; subjective life expectancy, and single item questions assessing behaviors related to the four domains. Based on the previous study we hypothesised to find (a) support for a four-factor structure for the scale, (b) domain specific associations with scores on other future temporal scales, and (c) a significant relationship between self-reported behaviors and domain-related CFC.

## 2. Methods

### 2.1. Participants

Participants were both adolescents and University students. The adolescents were school children ( $N = 243$ ; 60.9% Female;  $M_{\text{age}} = 14.33$  [SD = 0.71]) recruited from five High schools in the Greater Belfast Area of Northern Ireland. Schools were asked to provide a random selection of pupils for both Year 10 and Year 11. The University students ( $N = 173$ ; 87.3% Female;  $M_{\text{age}} = 19.15$  [SD = 1.19]) were sampled as part of a student project at a University in the North West of England. A form of parental opt-out consent was approved for the school children, and both they and the University students gave informed consent at the time of data collection.

### 2.2. Measures

The Domain Specific CFC Scale (McKay, Perry, et al., 2017) consists of 18 items and assesses CFC in four domains. Six items assess CFC Health and Well-being (e.g., “I think about what I eat as I do not want to develop an illness in later life”); four items assess CFC Global Warming (e.g., “I do what I can to help prevent global warming in the future”); four items assess CFC Finance (e.g., “I try to save money so that I will be able to afford things when I am older”); and four items assess CFC School (e.g., “I try my best at school so that I will get a good job when I am older”). In the present study ‘school’ was replaced with school/University to accommodate the University participants. Both alpha ( $0.72 \leq \alpha \leq 0.87$ ) and omega ( $0.72 \leq \omega \leq 0.87$ ) estimates were in the acceptable range in the

scale development study. Items are scored on a 5-point Likert scale with verbal and numerical anchors (1 = *Totally Disagree*, 5 = *Totally Agree*).

The five Future Negative and five Future Positive items from the Adolescent and Adult Time Inventory – Time Attitudes Scale (AATI-TA; Mello & Worrell, 2007) were used. AATI-TA items are scored on a 5-point Likert scale with verbal and numerical anchors (1 = *Totally Disagree*, 5 = *Totally Agree*). AATI-TA scores have been shown to be psychometrically valid and internally consistent in adults and adolescents (e.g., Mello et al., 2016; Worrell, McKay, & Andretta, 2018).

The four Future items from the Temporal Focus Scale (TFS; Shipp et al., 2009) were administered. The TFS is 12-item scale assessing cognitive engagement with the past, present and future. The scale consists of four Past, Current and Future items. Cronbach's alphas for TFS scores ranged from 0.74 to 0.89 (Shipp et al., 2009). Convergent validity evidence for the three TFS subscale scores was demonstrated through correlations with other pre-existing measures of time perspective, including the ZTPI (Shipp et al., 2009).

Subjective life expectancy was assessed using two questions concerning participants' subjective probability of expecting to live to both age 35 (SLE35), and age 75 (SLE75). Participants were asked, “On a scale of 0 to 100, where 0 equals no chance, and 100 equals definitely, how likely do you think that it is that you will live to be 35/75 years old?” Integer options of “5s” (0, 5, 10, 15, 20, etc.) were available between 0 and 100. This approach to assessing subjective life expectancy has been used elsewhere e.g., (Adams & Nettle, 2009; McKay, 2014).

Finally, participants were asked to indicate yes/no to the following four questions directly assessing behaviors: Do you always complete your homework/coursework on time? Do you have a Savings Account? Do you recycle your old things (clothes, paper, etc.)? Do you belong to a Sports Club (Soccer, Gaelic Games, Rugby, Hockey etc.)?

### 2.3. Statistical analyses

Preliminary analyses examined missing data, outliers, and internal consistency of each scale. We next examined the factor structure of each scale within the sample using confirmatory factor analyses. Model fit was examined with reference to incremental fit indices of the comparative fit index (CFI) and Tucker-Lewis index (TLI) and absolute fit indices of standardized root-mean-square residual (SRMR) and root-mean square error of approximation (RMSEA). Hu and Bentler's (1999) recommendations for CFI and TLI > 0.95, SRMR < 0.08, and RMSEA < 0.06 were used as a broad guideline for assessing model fit. Noting the recommendations of Perry, Nicholls, Clough, and Crust (2015) however, we did not stringently adhere to cut-off values for such indices. Standardized parameter estimates were interpreted using Comrey and Lee's (1992) recommendation of 0.32 (poor), 0.45 (fair), 0.55 (good), 0.63 (very good), and 0.71 (excellent).

For the main analyses, we examined differences between the two samples using and independent-samples *t*-tests. Pearson's bivariate correlations were used to examine relationships between temporal measures, and a further *t*-test was used to examine differences in domain-specific CFC for participants responding positively or negatively to questions on completing homework, having a savings account, recycling behavior, and membership of a sports club. For each of these analyses, we interpreted effect size with reference to Ferguson's (2009) recommendations for minimum practical effect ( $d \geq 0.41$ ,  $r \geq 0.20$ ).

To further examine the discriminant validity of each Domain Specific CFC factor, we performed four binary logistic regressions. In each case the response to the four behavioral questions was entered as the dependent variable. To determine the effect of the Domain Specific CFC factor over and above other variables, a hierarchical model was assessed, firstly determining the predictive effects of gender, sample (adolescent/university), future temporal focus, and subjective life expectancy, and then entering Domain Specific CFC in block two.

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