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Donate Today Or Give Tomorrow? Adding a Time Delay Increases Donation Amount But Not Willingness to Donate

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We show, in four studies ($N > 3,000$), how and why adding a delay period between pledging to donate and paying for a donation can increase the amounts of money donated, but, contrary to previous studies, why it does not impact the share of people willing to donate.

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Giving Seconds and Cents: The Psychological Consequences of Time and Money on Prosocial Behavior and Consumer Well-being

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Paper #1: My Money is Yours, but My Time is Still Mine: Inseparability of Consumption from the Self Increases Control and Giving

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Paper #2: Donate Today or Give Tomorrow? Adding a Time Delay Increases Donation Amount but not Willingness to Donate

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Paper #3: When Does Being Paid an Hourly Wage Make it Difficult to Be a Happy Volunteer?

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Paper #4: Communicating Limited Financial Resources Increases Perceived Trustworthiness and Interpersonal Connection

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SESSION OVERVIEW

Time and money are two of life's most precious resources. Despite the ubiquity and importance of these resources, many essential questions about time and money are just coming under the lens of consumer research. This symposium will present cutting-edge research on the psychological consequences of time and money, with an emphasis on how these consequences influence prosocial behaviors and consumer well-being. These papers address the question of how understanding the psychology of these resources can be leveraged to improve outcomes in charitable giving and consumer well-being.

First, Costello and Malkoc introduce an unexamined difference between time and money: inseparability of the self from consumption. Across 6 studies, they demonstrate that this difference presents itself when time/money is given (e.g., helping/donating) and shows the implications of this asymmetry on perceived control and subsequently on donation behavior. This asymmetry has important implications—consumers can use donations of time as a way to restore control and their findings provide an understanding of why consumers might make non-traditional donations (e.g., goods).

Our second paper will present work that demonstrates how time can be used to leverage monetary donations. Powell and colleagues study the impact of introducing a time delay to donation pledges. They find that when consumers are asked to make a pledge to donate in the future, the donation amount is higher than immediate pledges. Interestingly, this time delay does not have an effect on the proportion of consumers who are willing to donate. Ironically, when asked to choose timing of donation, participants prefer the immediate option. The authors examine the roots of this paradox.

While our first two papers discuss how time can be harnessed to increase charitable giving, our next paper focuses on how the emotional experience of time spent volunteering is affected by quantifying the value of time in terms of money. Using data from the American Time Use Survey, DeVoe examines how hourly workers—who have a salient heuristic for the monetary value of their time—enjoy engaging in uncompensated volunteer activities when the opportunity costs of their time are especially high; whereas, non-hourly workers enjoy the activities regardless of the opportunity costs.

Rounding out the symposium, Donnelly and colleagues evaluate a common challenge consumers face—how to best communicate their time/money constraints when requested of these resources. Across 4 studies, they find that communicating a money constraint can increase trustworthiness and interpersonal connection because money is seen as outside of one's control. This is not the case for time constraints, where time scarcity is not associated with trustworthiness. Importantly, consumers who communicate time scarcity do not predict the asymmetry in how their message will be received.

Together, these papers identify important and previously unexamined asymmetries in giving time and money (Papers 1 & 4), uncover paradoxes in donation behaviors (Paper 2), and examine when consumers enjoy giving (Paper 3) and how to communicate scarcity in resources when they cannot donate (Paper 4). Combined, these papers present a cohesive view of how, why, and when people give their time/money.

My Money is Yours, but My Time is Still Mine: Inseparability of Consumption from the Self Increases Control and Giving

EXTENDED ABSTRACT

Although time and money are seen in some respects as comparable and interchangeable, there is evidence that these resources are psychologically distinct in a number of ways (e.g., Mogilner and Aaker 2009; Zauberan and Lynch 2005). In this research, we introduce a previously unexamined difference: inseparability of the self from consumption. We contend that this difference presents itself mainly when time or money is given (e.g., helping, donating).

When spending their own money or time, consumers are present and take an active role in how their money/time is being spent. Put differently, they exert similar levels of control over spending of both resources. Conversely, when giving time/money, an asymmetry occurs. When consumers give their money, they are separated from its consumption. The control over the resource (money) no longer lies with the consumer, but the receiver. When consumers give their time however, they are not (and cannot be) separated from its consumption. That is, although conceptually, the resource is given to someone else, the control of the resource (time) still—at least in part—belongs to the consumer.

In 6 studies, we first demonstrate the inseparability of the self from consumption for time and the consequent time/money asymmetry in perceived control. Next, we examine the implications of this asymmetry for decisions to give (i.e., charitable giving).

We first tested the presence of the inseparability asymmetry for time/money. In Study 1a, ($N=250$) imagined planning a party. Half the participants imagined spending their own time/money to plan the party, while the other half considered giving a friend time/money to help plan. Participants answered three questions to measure perceived control over the resource (e.g., “I have the ability to shape how my time/money will be utilized”), combined into an index ($\alpha = .91$). We found the expected interaction ($p = .036$). When considering spending their own money/time, participants’ perceived control over the resource was not different ($M_{\text{Time}} = 5.03$, $M_{\text{Money}} = 5.15$). When giving the resource, an asymmetry emerged such that participants perceived significantly more control over time than money ($M_{\text{Time}} = 4.96$, $M_{\text{Money}} = 4.46$, $p = .016$).

In Study 1b ($N=222$), participants imagined eight situations where they either had control over the resource (e.g., decided how to spend time/money) or lacked control (e.g., a friend decides how to spend time/money). Averaging across scenarios ($\alpha = .86$), we find that decision-makers felt high levels of control for both resources ($M_{\text{Time}} = 5.00$, $M_{\text{Money}} = 5.13$). When they had given up control, however, those considering time ($M = 3.86$) felt significantly more control over the resource compared to money ($M = 3.19$, $p = .0005$). These results suggest that since consumption of time is tied to the self, a certain level of control remains, even if the time is given.

Next, we examined the consequences of this asymmetry for giving behavior. Respondents ($N=212$) participated in two seemingly unrelated tasks. We first induced low or high control (vs. baseline), using an ease of retrieval task. Next, participants considered making a time or money donation to Feed the Children. They indicated their preference for donating time versus money on a 100-point slider scale and the number of dollars/hours they would donate. Consistent with compensatory control theories, we expected and found that participants feeling low control seek situations that restore control and thus will be more willing to donate time. Low control participants ($M = 68.37$) significantly preferred giving time to money as compared to the other two conditions ($M_{\text{Baseline}} = 58.27$; $M_{\text{HighControl}} = 56.38$, $p = .02$), which were not significantly different from one another. As expected, we observed the same significant pattern in donated hours but no differences across conditions in dollars.

In Study 3 ($N=185$), we tried to boost money donations. If inseparability of time consumption from the self (and thus maintaining control) drives time/money asymmetry in donations, then infusing money conditions with control should alleviate the difference. Participants imagined that their college’s alumni association approached them about a time or money donation program. Half the participants were told that they can choose one of five charities for their donation, while the other half were told that their donation would be assigned based on need. Participants indicated interest in donating and perceived control over the resource. As expected, a significant interaction emerged ($p = .048$). Participants were significantly more interested in donating time ($M_{\text{Time}} = 3.93$ vs. $M_{\text{Money}} = 3.18$) in the baseline condition. When given control over how the resource will be spent, however, this difference disappeared ($M_{\text{Money}} = 4.54$ vs. $M_{\text{Time}} = 4.23$). A moderated mediation analysis confirmed the role of perceived control.

In Studies 4a and 4b ($N=181$; 205) we test the role of perceived control over the resource, by adding a third form of donation—goods/vouchers. While purchased with money, goods/vouchers are similar to time because they allow donors to better influence how their donation will be utilized. Thus, we expected the goods/vouchers to behave like time, despite being more interchangeable with money. Participants considered donating time, money, or food (4a; gift certificates to a grocery store, in 4b; to a hunger charity) and

answered the same questions as Study 3. Compared to participants who considered donations of money ($M = 3.77$), those considering donations of time and food ($M_{\text{Time}} = 4.37$, $M_{\text{Food}} = 4.81$) were significantly more interested in donating, which were not different from each other. The same pattern emerged in Study 4b ($M_{\text{Money}} = 3.91$, $M_{\text{Time}} = 4.47$, $M_{\text{Voucher}} = 4.57$). Once again, a mediation analysis confirmed the role of perceived control.

Taken together, we demonstrate a previously unstudied time/money asymmetry in perceived control, stemming from inseparability of the self from time consumption. We further show that this asymmetry has consequences for donation behavior. Consumers who lack control are more likely to donate time. Situations that allow consumers to influence how the resource is used (imitating the sense of control experienced when the resource and the self are inseparable) increase donations of money. This asymmetry has implications for non-traditional forms of donations like vouchers and material items.

Donate Today or Give Tomorrow? Adding a Time Delay Increases Donation Amount but not Willingness to Donate

EXTENDED ABSTRACT

Charitable giving makes people feel good (Dunn, Aknin, and Norton 2008; Andreoni 1989), but comes, quite literally, at a cost. Accordingly, introducing a time delay between committing to a donation and the payment of the donation could increase willingness to donate. This temporal separation might allow donors to highlight the positive aspects of giving while minimizing the impact of future costs.

Indeed, Breman (2011) has shown that current donors are more likely to increase their monthly donation amount if asked to commit to an increase in the future rather than for the next month. Breman suggests that committing to donating more in the future frees people from the immediate temptation of not giving in the present. Andreoni and Serra-Garcia (2016), on the other hand, show that when given the option to donate a fixed amount (\$5), more people choose to donate in the future (in one week) than to donate today. The authors suggest that people feel obliged to donate and committing to giving later provides an opportunity to fulfill that obligation without necessarily having to follow through (i.e., these people plan on renegeing).

These studies demonstrate that adding a time delay can increase donation amounts when the decision to donate is held constant (Breman 2011) and can increase the proportion of donors when the amount donated is held constant (Andreoni and Serra-Garcia 2016). In the present work, we test how and why time delays impact *both* willingness to donate and the amount donated simultaneously. We demonstrate that time delays consistently impact the amount people are willing to donate but not their decision to donate, a finding that cannot be explained by the previously proposed mechanisms.

In Study 1 ($N=601$), participants asked to make a hypothetical donation today donated substantially less ($M = \$26.80$) than those pledging to donate in three ($M = \$47.14$), six ($M = \52.23), or twelve months ($M = \$76.26$), $F(3, 379) = 16.99$, $p < 0.001$. However, there were no differences in the proportion agreeing to donate today (62.7%), in three (69.8%), six (60.9%) or twelve months (62.3%, $\chi^2(3) = 3.1$, $p = 0.37$). Thus, time delays appear to impact the amount donated, but not the choice to donate.

Study 2 tested the time-delay effect with real monetary stakes. Participants ($N=601$) were recruited to a two-stage study taking place three weeks apart. In both stages, participants were paid a 45-cent bonus. Participants were asked whether they would be willing to donate a portion of one of their bonuses to charity. Participants were

randomly assigned to donate today or to commit today but pay in the future. That is, they donated either from the bonus they received today for completing stage 1 or from the bonus they would receive in three weeks for completing stage 2. We again found that those donating in three weeks ($M=9.91$ cents) donated more than those donating today ($M=7.45$ cents), $F(1, 596)=5.38$, $p=0.021$. In contrast, the proportion of donors today and in three weeks did not differ ($p>0.1$).

The increase in donation amounts without an accompanying increase in the proportion of donors is consistent with the idea that separating the benefits from the cost of giving increases willingness to donate. The findings are, however, incompatible with Andreoni and Serra-Garcia's (2016) explanation that a time delay allows donors to minimize feelings of social pressure by committing to insincere pledges. According to the latter, time delays should increase the proportion of donors, rather than the amounts donated.

To test whether time-delay facilitates self-control (as proposed by Breman 2011), in Study 3 ($N=1,342$) participants could choose whether, how much, and when to donate. Study 3 was similar to Study 2 except that participants could choose to donate from either their stage 1 or stage 2 bonus (or not at all). The vast majority of participants (76%) chose not to donate. More importantly, of those who did donate, 69% chose to donate today (only 31% chose to donate in the future). Further, those choosing to donate today ($M=22.92$ cents) gave the same amount as those choosing to donate in the future ($M=20.76$ cents), $F(1, 310)=1.49$, $p=0.223$. These findings are contrary to Breman's (2011) self-control explanation, which predicts that the majority of participants would choose to donate later rather than now. Likewise, alternative accounts focusing on time discounting (Frederick et al. 2002) or resource slack (Zauberman and Lynch 2005) would have predicted more people donating in the future, inconsistent to the observed findings.

Next, we test the conjecture that time delay increases donation amounts by decreasing the cost associated with paying for the donation (i.e., the pain of payment; Prelec and Loewenstein 1998). People are typically more willing to spend windfall gains than earned money, as the former involves lesser pain of payment (Arkes et al. 1994). Hence, if the increase in donation amounts is driven by lower pain of payment, the effect of time delay should be attenuated when windfall gains rather than earned money is donated. To test this hypothesis, Study 4 ($N=484$) employed a 2(delay: now vs. six months) \times 2(source: windfall vs. earned money) between-subjects experiment. The interaction was not significant, $F_{Interaction}(1, 479)=1.42$, $p=0.233$. Donations were higher in the future regardless of whether the donation came from a windfall gain ($M_{Today}=\$113.32$ vs. $M_{Six\ months}=\$157.68$) or from earned money ($M_{Today}=\141.82 vs. $M_{Six\ months}=\$223.0$), $F_{Timing}(1, 479)=16.46$, $p<0.001$. This pattern of results suggests that time delays do not increase donations by reducing the pain of paying.

In sum, we find in four studies ($N>3,000$) that a time delay increases donation amounts but not the proportion of donors. However, when given the choice of when to donate, the vast majority prefer to donate today rather than in the future. These results are counter to all previously offered explanations; they cannot be explained by self-control (Breman 2011), avoiding social pressure (Andreoni and Serra-Garcia 2016), time discounting (Frederick et al. 2002), resource slack (Zauberman and Lynch 2005), or reducing the pain of payment (Prelec and Loewenstein 1998). One possibility is that donations today signal greater generosity than future donations and donors make up for this deficit by increasing donation amounts in the future.

When Does Being Paid an Hourly Wage Make it Difficult to Be a Happy Volunteer?

EXTENDED ABSTRACT

One of the key questions emerging from the study of happiness is whether we spend our time on the right activities (Aaker, Rudd and Mogilner 2011). In this regard, spending time helping others appears to be a good bet as it is associated with greater self-efficacy and subjective well-being (Mogilner, Chance and Norton 2012; Musick and Wilson 2003). When such freely undertaken uses of time are directed through labor absent any financial remuneration, it enters into the domain of volunteer work (Tilly and Tilly 1994).

Although volunteer work has a persistent positive association with eudemonic and social well-being regardless of the amount of time spent, the positive effects on hedonic well-being (e.g., happiness) is more fleeting and limited to the experience of the activity itself (Son and Wilson 2012). While there are many powerful social motivations for undertaking volunteer work in addition to the subject well-being returns (Clary and Snyder 1999), this type of activity can be especially difficult to justify when viewed through a market-pricing lens for time as it violates the logic of proportionality that one's temporal efforts for work should receive comparable monetary rewards (Fiske 1992; Heyman and Arieli 2004).

Research shows that job practices that make the monetary value of time salient (i.e., billable hours and hourly payment) are associated with a diminished willingness to volunteer and decreased likelihood of actually volunteering (DeVoe and Pfeffer 2007; 2010). Interestingly these effects on the propensity to do volunteer work were observed at both high and low levels of income and hours worked, suggesting that an activity providing zero remuneration is equally difficult to justify irrespective of the monetary opportunity costs of time. While there is experimental evidence that prompting people to consider their hourly wage rate for time decreases the happiness experienced during an unexpected and uncompensated break (DeVoe and House 2012), there has been no externally valid test for the experience of chosen discretionary activities. Boyce et al. (2013) recently showed that income losses decrease subjective well-being approximately twice as much as similar gains increase it. Here we theorize that as potential forgone income (opportunity costs) for volunteering increase, there will be a corresponding decrease in the experience of happiness while volunteering only when people were naturally exposed to payment regimes that made the opportunity costs of time chronically salient.

In this research, we examine the happiness people report experiencing when they do choose to engage in volunteer work. Specifically, we test whether the subjective experience of happiness while volunteering is influenced by how people are paid and the opportunity costs of their time spent volunteering as measured by how much they would be earning in their paid job and the duration of the activity (Freeman 1997; Menchik and Weisbrod 1987). Since people tend not to consider opportunity costs unless externally prompted (Frederick et al. 2009; Greenberg and Spiller 2016), we did not expect the opportunity costs of time to influence how non-hourly workers experienced volunteering. Among hourly paid workers who have a salient heuristic for the monetary opportunity costs of their time (i.e., hourly wage rate), we predicted that the experience of happiness volunteering would be diminished as the opportunity costs of time for the activity increased.

We used time-diary data from the American Time Use Survey for the years when the Well-Being Module (<https://www.bls.gov/tus/wbdatafiles.htm>) was administered (2010, 2012, and 2013). Each respondent reported his/her activities for the day prior to the interview

and three activities of five minutes or more were randomly selected. To capture the experience of allocating time to volunteer work we examined “volunteering” and “travel-related to volunteering.” Among other experiential questions as well as with whom they were interacting, respondents rated how happy they felt during each activity using a scale from 0 (the feeling was not experienced at all) to 6 (the feeling was very strong). To analyze the 1 to 3 volunteer activities nested within each individual ($M=1.2$), we employed multilevel analyses with robust standard errors (Raudenbush and Bryk 2002). We modeled the log of respondent’s income earned per week and the number of minutes spent volunteering ($M_{minutes}=65.5$, $SD=85.0$) as an indicator of the opportunity costs of each respondent’s time. A total 454 respondents employed in the labor force with complete responses on all variables who recorded at least one volunteer activity were included in our analyses. We dummy coded (“0”) for non-hourly wage earners ($N=250$, observations=297) and (“1”) for hourly wage earners ($N=204$, observations=254) enabling us meet the >250 observations for obtaining stable estimates within each category (Lindsay, 2015).

In order to explore whether the subjective experience of happiness while volunteering is influenced jointly by hourly payment and the opportunity cost of time as indicated the forgone earnings (income) and the time spent on volunteering (duration), we tested a three-way interaction. Specifically, we fitted a multilevel linear model with hourly status, logged income, and duration on happiness. We found a significant three-way interaction among hourly status, income, and duration, $z=-2.40$, $p=.016$, 95% CI [-0.01, -.001].

Simple slope tests reveal that high income hourly workers felt less happy the more minutes spent volunteering, $z=-2.34$, $p=.019$, 95% CI [-0.009, -.001]. There was no association between duration of volunteering and happiness for high income non-hourly counterpart for whom there is not a salient heuristic for the opportunity costs of their time. Additionally, there was no association between duration of volunteering and happiness for low income hourly counterpart whose opportunity cost was salient but low in terms of forgone income. Given we were only comparing respondents who are engaged in volunteering, it is perhaps not surprising that many of the job and demographic characteristics controlled for in prior research on hourly status (DeVoe and Pfeffer 2007; Whillans and Dunn 2015) did not emerge as significant predictors of experienced happiness when included in the model. Importantly, the significance of all interactions reported here were robust to a broad set of covariates. In sum, these findings suggest that when opportunity costs are salient and high, volunteers experience less happiness during their prosocial act.

Communicating Limited Financial Resources Increases Perceived Trustworthiness and Interpersonal Connection

EXTENDED ABSTRACT

Consumers regularly engage in a variety of prosocial actions: often giving their money or time to help non-profit organizations, work colleagues, and friends. Giving time and money to others is associated with enhanced psychological well-being (e.g., Dunn et al. 2008), and increased interpersonal connection (Mogilner 2010). However, consumers have limited resources to give—and need to manage their time and money efficiently (Claessens et al. 2007). Therefore, consumers regularly have to withhold giving money and time to others in order to have these resources for other activities. By withholding resources, consumers may need to turn down requests for help and invitations for shared consumption which may negatively impact interpersonal connection and well-being (Baumeister and Leary 1995). In this work we evaluate how communication about

limited money (e.g., “I don’t have money”) vs communication about limited time (“I don’t have time”) influence perceptions of trustworthiness and interpersonal connection.

Money activates a self-sufficient mindset—one less interested in others (Vohs et al. 2006), and in turn, increases the tendency to deceive others (Aquino et al. 2009) and behave dishonestly (Gino and Mogilner 2013). Time, on the other hand, has been found to be more reflective of the self (Mogilner 2010), and is more associated with emotional meaning (e.g. Carstensen et al. 1999). We hypothesize that communication about limited time (in response to a request for help or shared consumption) will be perceived as more interpersonally threatening—resulting in lower perceived interpersonal connection. Further, money is received through an external source—typically through wages from work—and is often distributed unequally (Norton and Ariely 2011), whereas time is distributed equally and not from an external source, therefore, we hypothesize that communication about limited money may be perceived as more trustworthy because access to money is outside of one’s personal control.

In study 1, we scraped a dataset of direct message tweets from the first week of 2018, that contained the phrase “I don’t have money,” or “I don’t have time” resulting in 2,032 tweets. We scraped information about whether the tweet was ‘liked’ by the user who was tagged in the direct message (a signal for endorsement and fondness for the content; see John et al. 2017). We evaluate the tendency to ‘like’ a tweet as a function of message content. A chi-square test comparing scarcity content was significant: users were 105.26% less likely to ‘like’ a tweet that communicated time scarcity than a tweet that communicated money scarcity (24.7% of users liked a tweet in the time scarcity condition and 50.7% of users liked a tweet in the money scarcity condition; $\chi^2 = 129.09$, $p < .001$).

In our second study, lab participants ($N=270$) were asked to reflect on a recent experience in which someone told them they couldn’t do something because they didn’t have money (or time). Participants wrote a few sentences about the circumstance and reported how close they felt to the person before and after hearing this content. Participants also rated the extent to which they felt the communication was trustworthy and honest, and within one’s control. A repeated-measures ANOVA using perceived closeness (before vs. after) as a within-subjects factor and communication content (money vs. time) as a between-subjects factor, revealed a significant main effect for perceived closeness ($p < .001$), which was qualified by a significant interaction ($p < .001$). Prior to the communication event, participants felt equally close to their communication partners, but after the excuse was communicated, participants felt significantly closer to those who communicated scarce money (compared to time). Increased closeness observed in the post-money excuse condition (vs post-time) was mediated by perceived controllability and trustworthiness.

In our third study ($N=407$) we test the moderating role of controllability. We manipulated whether the lack of resource (money or time) was because of a needed (low controllability) versus wanted (high controllability) reason. Participants were asked to imagine that they invited a friend for a fun night out—grabbing drinks, a nice meal and attending a comedy club. Their friend responds, “*Sorry, I can’t go. I don’t have money [time]. I need [want] to spend money [time] buying [reading] books for school.*” Participants rated their perceived closeness, and perceived trustworthiness and controllability of the content. Participants felt closer to their friend when learning of their limited money ($p=.003$), but there was no main effect for controllability ($p = .74$). However, there was a significant interaction in that participants felt equally close when hearing a money or time excuse for a needed reason but felt significantly closer when hear-

ing a money excuse for a wanted reason ($p=.001$). Trustworthiness significantly mediated the difference in perceived closeness for a wanted (CI: .06, .48), but not a needed reason (CI: -.18, .16).

In our final study ($N=408$; 204 dyads), we sought to understand if perceptions of trustworthiness vary as a function of giving or receiving scarcity communication. Half of participants were asked to generate a response to the prompt, "I would give more to charity if..." and were randomly assigned to write about how they would give more if they had more money (or time). Participants rated this self-generated content in regards to how trustworthy they felt it was. The other half of participants were assigned to read the content of the message and rate how trustworthy they thought it was. A repeated-measures ANOVA found a significant main effect for role ($p<.001$), and a main effect for content type ($p=.002$), and a significant interaction ($p=.02$). Authors found their content to be more trustworthy than readers, and overall money excuses were perceived to be more trustworthy. However, authors found money and time excuses to be equally trustworthy, while readers found money excuses to be significantly more trustworthy.

Overall, we find that communication about limited time (vs money) results in lower perceptions of trustworthiness and interpersonal closeness because consumers believe people have more control over how they manage their time than how they manage their money. While consumers believe their constraints are equally trustworthy, they are perceived differently, impacting interpersonal relationships.

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