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## Selected Factors of Future Time Perspectives for Women and Men in Later Adulthood

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**Streszczenie:** Wybrane uwarunkowania przyszłościowej perspektywy czasowej kobiet i mężczyzn w późnej dorosłości

Celem badań było określenie związków między formalnymi aspektami przyszłościowej perspektywy czasowej kobiet i mężczyzn, a wiekiem oraz wybranymi aspektami samooceny takimi jak: satysfakcja z życia, optymizm, autonomia, samokontrola, samodoskonalenie, samodzielność, introspektywność oraz dążenie do wartości.

W badaniach wzięło udział 227 kobiet i 117 mężczyzn, powyżej sześćdziesiątego roku życia. Wykorzystano kwestionariusz przyszłościowej perspektywy czasowej, skalę satysfakcji z życia, test orientacji życiowej, skalę introspektywności.

Aspekty własnego obrazu siebie, które mają znaczenie u kobiet, nie zaznaczają się u mężczyzn. Najwięcej różnic pojawia się przy skupieniu na sprawach bieżących oraz długiej perspektywie czasowej. U kobiet wybrane aspekty przyszłościowej perspektywy czasowej najczęściej wiążą się z dążeniem do wartości, samodzielnością. U mężczyzn z satysfakcją z życia, wiekiem i różnym nasileniem introspektywności.

**Słowa kluczowe:** przyszłościowa perspektywa czasowa, satysfakcja z życia, optymizm, autonomia, samokontrola, samodoskonalenie, samodzielność, introspektywność oraz dążenie do wartości

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**Abstract:** Selected factors of future time perspectives for women and men in later adulthood

The article presents research aimed at defining relations between formal aspects of future time perspectives of women, men, and aging, as well as selected aspects

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of individuals' self-assessments, such as: life satisfaction, optimism, autonomy, self-control, self-improvement, independence, introspection, and pursuit of values.

Research subjects included 227 women and 177 men above the age of sixty. The future time perspective questionnaire, the satisfaction with life scale, the life orientation test, and the introspection scale were all used.

Those aspects of self-image, which were important in the case of women, did not necessarily matter with men. The greatest number of differences between men and women appear in focus on current matters and in long time perspectives. In women the selected aspects of future time perspectives most often relate to pursuit of values and independence, while in men to life satisfaction, age and different intensities of introspection.

Key words: future time perspectives, life satisfaction, optimism, autonomy, self-control, self-improvement, independence, introspection, and pursuit of values

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## **Introduction**

Later adulthood is one of the most diverse stages of human life. Its diversity is due to varying conditions of life, different levels of material impoverishment, disparate psychophysical conditions, levels of vitality and wisdom, numerous individual experiences, a varying sense of solitude and satisfaction with life, as well as the changing self-image of the elderly (Bee, 2004). None of the earlier periods of development are influenced by that many factors modifying an individual's functions, because the final phase of life means taking stock, adapting to limitations and redefining, often completely anew, one's identity. Supposedly, the longer people live, the more complex become the contexts in which a person functions and the more individualized the image of one's development.

The research concerning this period of life is often inconsistent, and the theories attempting to explain the changes taking place during this period seem unsatisfactory. The considerable diversity can presumably be attributed to the internal and external phases through which older people pass. E. Erikson, when describing integrity as the positive solution for the last crisis a human can face, aptly presents the relation of man and his surroundings: "... an individual life is the accidental coincidence of but one life cycle with but one segment of history and ... all human integrity stands or falls with the one style of integrity of which it partakes" (2004, p. 94).

Nowadays, there is growing interest in the issues of old age, due to the fact that societies are ageing faster and faster, in particular in the most highly developed countries (Stas-Romanowska, 2000). Research and works in various disciplines dedicated to this field may not only make it easier to support the elderly,

but can also contribute to changing stereotypes about old age and to finding new roles for older adults.

## **Our research**

Our research attempted to define the connections between the formal aspects of future time perspectives of women and men and their age, as well as with selected aspects of individual self-assessment such as: satisfaction with life, optimism, autonomy, self-management, self-improvement, self-reliance, introspectiveness and pursuit of values. Assuming that the future time perspective of an individual will be a time-space filled with near and distant aims and realizations which are themselves in different time-relations to each other, we can examine them by concentrating on their contents, that is, on the essence of the aspirations and the formal aspect -- in other words the time dimension (Nuttin, 1984, 1985). In our research, we have focussed on an adult's future time perspective and its time span by giving attention to the very near future and to planning long-term goal realizations, in other words by paying attention to how strategies are developed for achieving set aims. Our basic assumption is that the construction of one's near and more distant future goals will be connected with the individual's inner life, more precisely with how an individual assesses his/her independence, insight, the ability to be manage oneself, take action in order to achieve a desired state, undertake self-improvement, self-reliance, to be self-satisfied, and also to feel positive about life.

In this research, the inner life corresponds to selected aspects of the psychological life and concerns, in fact, how the individual assesses his/her own performance in certain areas of life. And so we relate introspection in older people to their tendency to analyze their own lives, to reflect on themselves, their experience, aspirations, expectations, and also on their relation to the world and other people. Some researchers emphasize that old people are more oriented to their inner life (Neugarten, 1977). This may, however, be a result of the changes in their environment. The number of friends and relatives decreases and the world answers rather to the needs of young people (Stuart-Hamilton, 2006). This is probably why older people manifest a different kind of reflection and insight. This pursuit of values we attribute to a deepening spiritual life, an orientation to higher causes, establishing a hierarchical importance of different goals, a search for the sense of life, and reflections on one's own quality of existence. Autonomy in the life of the elderly means for us the ability to solve problems by appealing to their own opinions, assessments, aims and values - and also their experience of satisfaction through a programme of action and adherence to their beliefs. Self-management, for us, is connected with an inner discipline to control one's desires and impulses. We understand self-improvement

as the effort invested in one's own development, or in other words in the pursuit of one's own ideal of oneself. Self-reliance in old people represents for us the ability to manage their own conduct, that is, to determine their aims and choose the means for their realization, to take decisions for themselves, and to display self-confidence. Satisfaction with life is connected with a comparison of what we have achieved in life with the standards we have set ourselves. If this assessment turns out to be favourable, we feel satisfied with our existence (Diener, 1984). Optimism, on the other hand, is a predisposition which manifests itself by a generalized expectation of positive results and events (Scheier and Carver, 1992).

Assuming that connections exist between future time-perspective and age, as well as the individual's self-assessment concerning certain aspects of performance, seems legitimate from the point of view of a person's successful adaptation to old age. Such success can be understood as the ability to deal with critical situations in old age thanks to the selective optimization of psychological competences, the taking of compensatory action, and the preservation of optimism regardless of costs incurred in getting old (Baltes, Baltes, 1990).

### **Research questions and hypotheses**

The main research question is: To what extent do older women's and men's time spans and forms of their future time perspectives coincide with their age, and with selected aspects of individual self-assessment?

Main hypothesis: The form of future time perspectives coincide with older person's ages and with selected aspects of their self-assessment; in other words, the more developed the near and distant future time perspectives are, the higher will the subjects assess their satisfaction with life, optimism, self-reliance, autonomy, self-management, self-improvement, introspection, and pursuit of values.

Also the following specific questions were formulated:

To what extent does the preoccupation with current matters of women and men correlate with their age, satisfaction with life, optimism, autonomy, self-management, self-improvement, self-reliance, introspection and pursuit of values?

To what extent does the length of future time perspectives of women and men correlate with their age, satisfaction with life, optimism, autonomy, self-management, self-improvement, self-reliance, introspectiveness and pursuit of values?

To what extent does the planning of long-term goals of women and men correlate with their age, satisfaction with life, optimism, autonomy, self-management, self-improvement, self-reliance, introspectiveness and pursuit of values?

## **Method**

The research was carried out with 344 people participating, of whom 227 were women and 117 men. The subjects were divided into three age groups: sixty-year-olds – 108 people, seventy-year-olds – 172, eighty-year-olds – 64.

The research was carried out by means of:

1) A modified version of the questionnaire on future time perspective by W. Lens (1986), concerning the temporal dimension and structure of FTP<sup>2</sup>. The method makes it possible to research three factors of FTP: long time perspective, focus (concentration) on current matters, and planning of long-term goal realization. The questionnaire was translated and analysed in the context of the work of A. Cycoń and Z. Zaleski (1998).

2) A satisfaction with life scale (SWLS) (Diener and colleagues, 1985), which serves to research the psychological well-being understood as the result of comparing one's own situation with the standard established by oneself. A positive result of such juxtaposition is the basis for feeling satisfied. Detailed data about the test are contained in the manual by Z. Juczyński (2001).

3) The life orientation test LOT-R by Scheier and Carter (1985, 1992), which examines generalized expectations with regard to the future – in this case, the predisposition toward optimism. The psychometric features of the test are presented in the manual (Juczyński, 2001).

4) An introspectiveness scale – an experimental version, developed for the research, intended to measure selected aspects of one's inner life, such as autonomy, self-management, self-improvement, self-reliance, insight, and pursuit of values. The scale contains 28 statements, to which the subjects take their stance on a five-point Likert scale (1-yes, 2-rather yes, 3-hard to say, 4-rather not, 5-not). The coefficient of internal consistency for the whole scale (Cronbach's alpha) of a sample of 351 individuals is 0.89. Internal consistency for subscales are autonomy 0.27, self-management 0.70, self-improvement 0.82, self-reliance 0.67, insight 0.79 and pursuit of values 0.65.

## **Results**

Correlation analyses and multiple regression analyses were carried out in order to answer the above-mentioned research questions and hypotheses. In view of the volume of the work, only regression analyses are presented. Tables 1 and 2 present

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<sup>2</sup> FTP – future time perspective

the research results for the first research question. For a better illustration of the obtained results, an organizational chart was drawn up for every question.

**Table 1.** Multiple regression results for women for the dependent variable of concentration on current matters, and for independent variables: satisfaction with life, optimism, autonomy, self-management, self-improvement, self-reliance, introspection, pursuit of values, and age – selection of variables by the backward stepwise method.

N=227	R= 0.311 <sup>5</sup> R <sup>2</sup> = 0.097 Corr. R <sup>2</sup> = 0.085 F(3.223)=7.969 p<0.000 Std. error of estimate: 7.862					
	BETA	Std. err. BETA	B	Std. err. B	t(223)	p
Absolute term			54.31	2.20	24.69	0.000
Autonomy	-0.19	0.07	-0.68	0.25	-2.68	0,007
Self-reliance	-0.21	0.08	-0.70	0.26	-2.67	0.008
Pursuit of values	0.15	0.07	0.51	0.24	2.07	0.039

Signs of the subscales of an introspection scale, such as autonomy, self-control, self-improvement, independence, introspective, and pursuit of value, must be interpreted conversely, due to the measuring scales applied in the method which are contrary to the scales used in other tools.

For women concentration on the present and immediate future is to a lesser extent explained by the chosen factors, as indicated by the quantity R<sup>2</sup>. The model included three variables, such as autonomy, self-reliance and pursuit of values. Concentration on current matters is relatively most strongly connected with the conviction of one's own self-reliance.

**Table 2.** Multiple regression results for men for the dependent variable of concentration on current matters, and for independent variables: satisfaction with life, optimism, autonomy, self-management, self-improvement, self-reliance, introspection, pursuit of values, and age – selection of variables by the backward stepwise method.

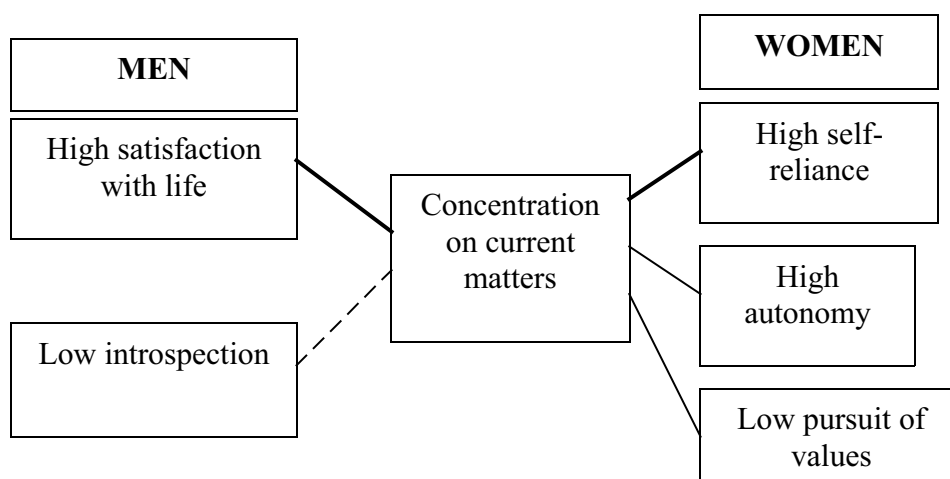
N=117	R= 0.329 R <sup>2</sup> = 0.108 Corr. R <sup>2</sup> = 0.093 F(2.114)=6.943 p<0.001 Std. error of estimate: 8.913					
	BETA	Std. err. BETA	B	Std. err. B	t(114)	p
Absolute term			32.56	3.62	8.99	0.000

N=117	R= 0.329 R <sup>2</sup> = 0.108 Corr. R <sup>2</sup> = 0.093 F(2.114)=6.943 p<0.001 Std. error of estimate: 8.913					
	BETA	Std. err. BETA	B	Std. err. B	t(114)	p
Satisfaction with life	0.26	0.09	0.41	0.14	2.94	0.004
Introspection	0.17	0.09	0.29	0.15	1.88	0.062

Signs of the subscales of an introspectiveness scale, such as autonomy, self-control, self-improvement, independence, introspective, and pursuit of value must be interpreted conversely, due to the measuring scales applied in the method which are contrary to the scales used in other tools.

For men, the proportion of explained variation also is not high, about 9% ; and the model included one variable. It appeared that concentration on the present is mostly connected with a male's satisfaction with life. Introspection is a variable which did not cross the threshold of statistical gravity, but we can speak of a tendency for such a relation. At the same time, for men concentration on the here and now is connected with a lesser insight into themselves. Chart 1 presents a comparison of women and men.

**Chart 1.** Summary of essential dependencies between concentration on current matters and the independent variables included in the model, for men and women.



The two following multiple regression analyses were carried out for a dependent variable – the length of future time perspective (in accordance with the second research question). The results are shown in Tables 3 and 4 as well as in Chart 2.

**Table 3.** Multiple regression results for women for the dependent variable length of time perspective, and for independent variables: satisfaction with life, optimism, autonomy, self-management, self-improvement, self-reliance, introspection, pursuit of values, and age – selection of variables by the backward stepwise method.

N=227	R= 0.584 R <sup>2</sup> = 0.341 Corr. R <sup>2</sup> = 0.332 F(3.223)=38.458 p<0.000 Std. error of estimate: 6.986					
	BETA	Std. err. BETA	B	Std. err. B	t(223)	p
Absolute term			50.50	3.15	16.05	0.000
Satisfaction with life	0.16	0.06	0.23	0.09	2.59	0.010
Self-reliance	-0.18	0.06	-0.61	0.22	-2.77	0.006
Pursuit of values	-0.39	0.06	-1.37	0.22	-6.22	0.000

Signs of the subscales for the introspection scale, such as autonomy, self-control, self-improvement, independence, introspective, and the pursuit of value, must be interpreted conversely, due to the measuring scales applied in the method which are contrary to the scales used in other tools.

The length -- in other words the time span -- of future time perspective is, in juxtaposition with the concentration on the present, much better explained by selected independent variables. And so it appeared that for women the proportion of explained variation amounts to about 33%, and the models which were included in the model were satisfaction with life, self-reliance and pursuit of values. Setting long-term goals best agrees with a strong pursuit of values and slightly less with an assessment of one's own self-sufficiency and satisfaction with one's life.

**Table 4.** Multiple regression results for men for the dependent variable length of time perspective, and for independent variables: satisfaction with life, optimism, autonomy, self-management, self-improvement, self-reliance, introspection, pursuit of values, and age – selection of variables by the backward stepwise method.

N=117	R= 0.580 R <sup>2</sup> = 0.336 Corr. R <sup>2</sup> = 0.313 F(4.112)=14.202 p<0.0000 Std. error of estimate: 7.106					
	BETA	Std. err. BETA	B	Std. err. B	t(112)	p
Absolute term			43.87	8.08	5.43	0.000
Age	-0.27	0.08	-0.37	0.11	-3.38	0.001
Satisfaction with life	0.19	0.08	0.27	0.12	2.22	0.028

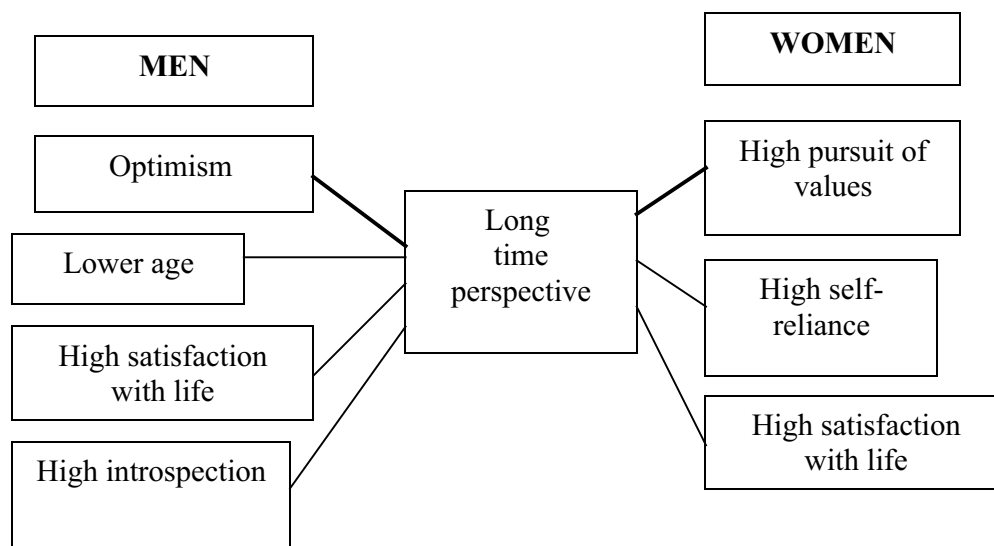


N=117	R= 0.580 R <sup>2</sup> = 0.336 Corr. R <sup>2</sup> = 0.313 F(4.112)=14.202 p<0.0000 Std. error of estimate: 7.106					
	BETA	Std. err. BETA	B	Std. err. B	t(112)	p
Optimism	0.43	0.09	1.09	0.22	4.99	0.000
Introspection	-0.14	0.08	-0.23	0.13	-1.82	0.071

Signs of the subscales for the introspection scale, such as autonomy, self-control, self-improvement, independence, introspection, and pursuit of value must be interpreted conversely, due to the measuring scales applied in the method which are contrary to the scales used in other tools.

Regression analysis of the male groups revealed that the time span of the future is about 31% in selected variables. Optimism turned out to be most closely connected with the length of future time perspective, which means that a positive approach to what is going to happen goes hand in hand with the setting of long-term goals. Also, age turned out to be essential, as younger men think further into the future, as well as indicating satisfaction with their existence and insight into themselves.

**Chart 2.** Summary of essential dependencies between long time perspective and the independent variables included in the model, for women and men.



Both for women and men, apart from satisfaction with life, different independent variables coincide with the examined time span of future time perspectives. Forming distant goals is also connected with planning their realization and there-

fore with establishing of partial goals, their order, conditions, and time of their realization. We wanted to know how planning for long-term goal realization is connected with the selected independent variables (third research question). The results are presented in Tables 5 and 6 as well as in Chart 3.

**Table 5.** Multiple regression results for women for the dependent variable planning of long-term goal realization, and for independent variables: satisfaction with life, optimism, autonomy, self-management, self-improvement, self-reliance, introspection, pursuit of values, and age – selection of variables by the backward stepwise method.

N=227	R= 0.620 R <sup>2</sup> = 0.385 Corr. R <sup>2</sup> = 0.376 F(3.223)=46.505 p<0.000 Std. error of estimate: 6.022					
	BETA	Std. err. BETA	B	Std. err. B	t(223)	p
Absolute term			61.93	1.64	37.76	0.000
Self-reliance	-0.17	0.06	-0.53	0.19	-2.79	0.006
Introspection	-0.15	0.06	-0.23	0.10	-2.43	0.016
Pursuit of values	-0.43	0.06	-1.33	0.20	-6.78	0.000

Signs of the subscales for the introspection scale, such as autonomy, self-control, self-improvement, independence, introspection, and the pursuit of value must be interpreted conversely, due to the measuring scales applied in the method which are contrary to the scales used in other tools.

Variation for this dependent variable amounts to about 38%, which means that it is connected with certain aspects of a woman's inner life. The planning of long-term goal realization is best explained by pursuit of values. Less significant, but also essential are self-sufficiency and insight into oneself.

**Table 6.** Multiple regression results for men for the dependent variable planning of long-term goal realization, and for independent variables: satisfaction with life, optimism, autonomy, self-management, self-improvement, self-reliance, introspection, pursuit of values, and age – selection of variables by the backward stepwise method.

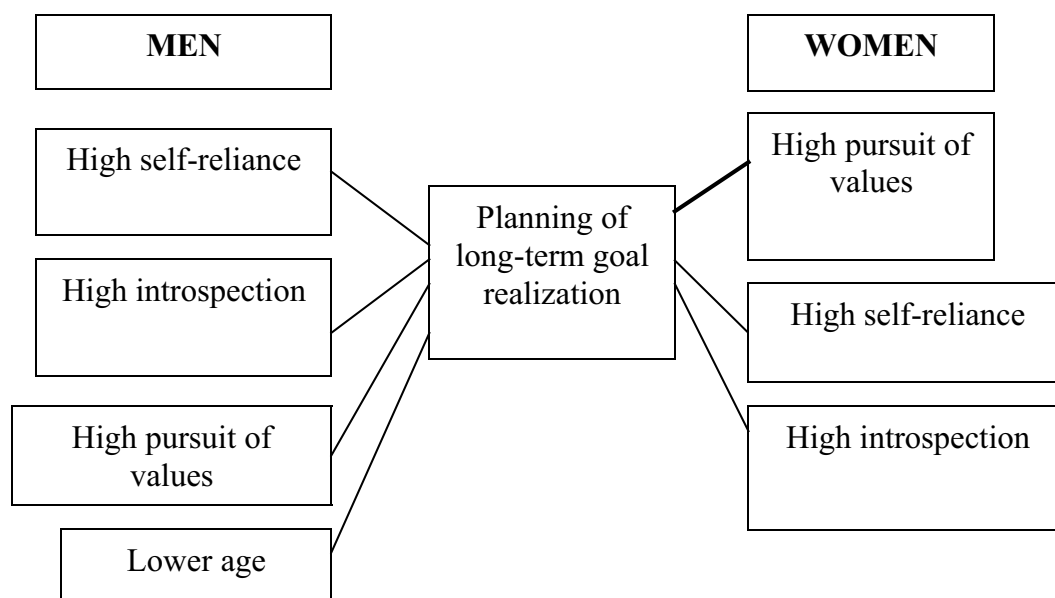
N=117	R= 0.574 R <sup>2</sup> = 0.330 Corr. R <sup>2</sup> = 0.306 F(4.112)=13.785 p<0.000 Std. error of estimate: 6.507					
	BETA	Std. err. BETA	B	Std. err. B	t(112)	p
Absolute term			76.69	7.04	10.89	0.000
Age	-0.18	0.08	-0.23	0.10	-2.31	0.023

N=117	R= 0.574 R <sup>2</sup> = 0.330 Corr. R <sup>2</sup> = 0.306 F(4.112)=13.785 p<0.000 Std. error of estimate: 6.507					
	BETA	Std. err. BETA	B	Std. err. B	t(112)	p
Self-reliance	-0.26	0.08	-0.78	0.25	-3.14	0.002
Introspection	-0.21	0.08	-0.30	0.12	-2.50	0.014
Pursuit of values	-0.20	0.08	-0.54	0.22	-2.40	0.018

Signs of the subscales for the introspection scale, such as autonomy, self-control, self-improvement, independence, introspection, and pursuit of value must be interpreted conversely, due to the measuring scales applied in the method which are contrary to the scales used in other tools.

The results for the male groups show that planning long-term goals is explained by the selected independent variables to be about 31%. The model included, as for women, the following variables: self-reliance, insight into oneself and pursuit of values. In addition, developmental strategies for achieving distant aims in men is connected with a lower age.

**Chart 3.** Summary of essential dependencies between planning of long-term goal realization and independent variables included in the model, for men and women



In the case of planning for long-term goal accomplishments as an aspect of future time perspectives, the research group of women and men showed very similar dependencies.

When relating the results to our hypothesis, we find that it was partially positively verified. For women, the selected aspects of future time perspectives are most frequently connected with pursuit of values and self-reliance, whereas for men they are connected with satisfaction with life, age, and the varying intensity of introspectiveness.

### **Discussion of results**

The results enable us to answer the proposed research questions and to indicate interesting connections. These results can be interpreted from several angles. Firstly – how is the time span of future time perspectives connected with selected self-assessments of the elderly? The short future perspective -- concentration on the here and now -- is connected with autonomy, self-reliance, satisfaction with life and a lesser pursuit of values. Future time perspective is not a static aspect of personality. It changes with age (Fingerman and Perlmutter 1995), just as older people's living conditions and their self-images do. Temporal orientation analyses carried out by Nosal and Bajcar (2004) indicate that older people concentrate less on the past and future and more on the present than younger people. As one measure of social approval is the level of self-management in life as well as self-sufficiency, then older people who are independent and manage their own lives and are at the same time not extremely bothered about realizing values – they can derive pleasure from everyday life. This contributes simultaneously to their existential satisfaction. As for distant time perspective, positive perception of one's own self-reliance and a highly satisfying life are still essential, but pursuit of values, optimism, younger age, and insight into oneself become more significant. We can assume that as far as independence is concerned, constructing a more distant future will be promoted by gradually adapting to its loss while adapting to one's possibilities (Baltes, 1996).

The second point of view, in accordance with the research question is, How are the selected characteristics of future time perspectives of women and men connected with the selected aspects of their inner life? And this is where quite distinct diversities emerge. Those aspects of self-image which are significant for women do not necessarily have meaning for men. Most differences concentrate on current matters and in long time perspectives, and at least where the forming of plans for carrying out distant goals is concerned. Women who concentrate on the present appreciate at the same time more strongly their own self-reliance and autonomy, whereas for them pursuing their own values is of less importance. Men who focus on the here and now, on the other hand, are above all more satisfied with their own lives and think less about their own emotions and their beliefs concerning

themselves, others, and the world. Stereotypical roles fulfilled by people in later adulthood are probably of significance here. Women more often take care of people who are older and younger than themselves, and run a household. Men are less involved in assisting their family and friends, but more in their professional work. Therefore, if they – after going into retirement – find a satisfying occupation, they will enjoy the present more.

For women, thinking further into the future is above all connected with the wish to pursue their values, but also important are self-reliance and satisfaction with life. For men, the distant horizon will therefore probably be connected with concrete goals which are important to them and which they still want to achieve. The achievement of these pursuits is presumably conditioned by independence, and represents a positive life balance. For men, a positive look toward the future is of greater importance, in particular for subjects who are not too advanced in years. In men, distant time horizons are also connected with greater satisfaction with life and greater insight. In other words, the more they reflect on what is happening with them cognitively and emotionally and the more positively they assess their own existence, the more they set distant goals for themselves.

Only planning long-term goals connects the female and male subjects. And although the strength of the connections varies, in both groups goal realization strategies are promoted by pursuit of values, self-reliance and reflectiveness. The only difference concerns age, which in the case of men becomes essential.

The third angle from which one may consider our research results are two overlapping kinds of stereotypes – age and gender. Kite, Deauz and Miele (1993) observed that stereotypes about old age are stronger than gender stereotypes. However, stronger does not mean that they are irrelevant; both are important, and what is interesting is when they overlap. Gałdowa (2000) emphasizes the lack of a “social role” for the elderly. Since they are no longer “productive” and “useful”, there is, in fact, no area left in which they can function. In Western societies, old age is associated with passivity and dependence, loss of efficiency and withdrawal from life, and consequently all tributes are given to youth (Stuart-Hamilton, 2006). This vision of old age has a feedback character; this means that the younger society’s expectations are secondarily confirmed by the way old people function. Older people “fall into their own traps” by consolidating stereotypes about old age early on. So, when they reach a venerable age themselves, their self-esteem suffers. Gender stereotypes point to the differences in personality predispositions, social roles, and skills of women and men (Wojcieszke, 2002). What is most archetypal in womanhood and manhood stereotypes is that, with age, one becomes subjected to extreme degradation. Consequently, the more our beliefs about ourselves and

others are shaped by stereotypical judgements, the more we feel the losses that accompany the passing years. Depending on gender, the environment and therefore the individual itself have different demands and expectations with regard to old age. This can also be observed in our<sup>3</sup> research.

The human being is a dynamic system whose changes always occur in the context of other changes taking place in the world and on different levels of its organization (Trempała 2000). Not only does age play a role in the ageing process but gender also does; and moreover so do all the experiences, which affect individuals, their life-style, their attitude to their own life situation, and their approach to tasks they still set themselves. One's entire journey through life and, in this context a person's self-image, will have an influence on how that person looks toward the future.

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<sup>3</sup> General literature

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