

Time perspective, perceived stress, self-control and relationship satisfaction in heterosexual dating relationships

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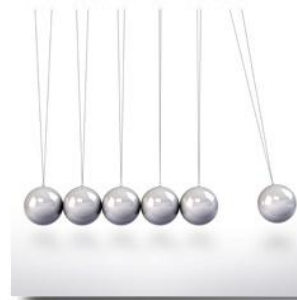
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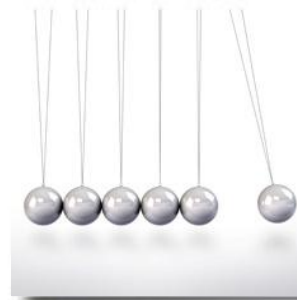


Stress and relationships



- Stress seems to lower our relationship satisfaction
 - when the relationship itself is the source of stress
 - when it spills over from external stressors (*Randall & Bodenmann, 2009; Neff & Karney, 2009*)
- It does that by:
 - cutting into time for relationship maintenance
 - impairing our ability to engage in self-regulatory processes effectively
(*Karney & Neff, 2013*)
- data almost completely on married couples
- limited research on dating couples points to similar processes
 - e.g. higher relationship self-efficacy beliefs buffer against the negative effects of external stressors (*Bahun & Huic, in print*)

Stress as perception



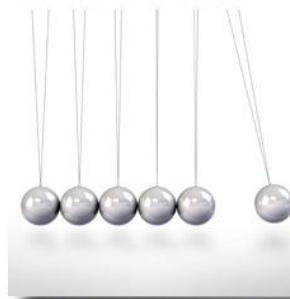
- however, it is our perception of stress that shapes our reactions
- stress occurs when we perceive that the demands of a situation are beyond our abilities to cope with effectively (*Lazarus & Folkman, 2004*)
- some people are more vulnerable to effects of stress, and some more resilient



what shapes our perception of stress?

Time perspectives (TP)

Zimbardo & Boyd, 1999



past
negative



past
positive



present
hedonism



present
fatalism



future

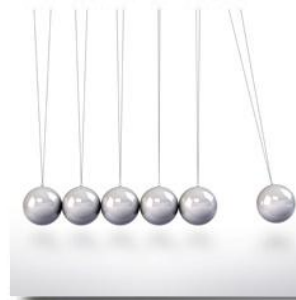


TP and stress



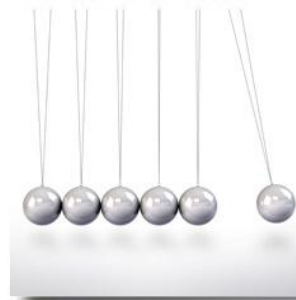
- past negative and present fatalism are considered less adaptive dimensions
 - tied with numerous psychiatric symptoms (*van Beek, Berghuis, Kerkhof, & Beekman, 2011*)
 - higher instances of past negative and fatalistic TPs are associated with more perceived stress (*Papastamatelou, Unger, Giotakos, & Athanasiadou, 2015*)
 - individuals with past negative TP show higher levels of psychological distress two years after a traumatic event (*Holman, 2015*)

Aim



- investigate whether time perspectives are the first link in the chain of negative effects of stress on relationship satisfaction
- Hypotheses
 - present fatalism and past negative TPs will be associated with more perceived stress
 - perceived stress and self-control will mediate the association between TPs and relationship satisfaction

Method



- on-line study
- couples recruited and briefed on the study face to face
 - inclusion criteria
 - personal codes to guarantee their anonymity
 - directed to fill out the web questionnaire alone
 - purpose of the study and their rights as participants

Sample



- N=360 (180 women and 180 men)
- 18-31 y; $M=22$; $SD=2.81$
- in serious, dating relationships; heterosexual
- relationship duration 1 month – 8.5 years; $M=2.5$; $SD=22.44$
- 13.1% living with their partner
- only around half come from Zagreb, and others from smaller towns and villages

Instruments

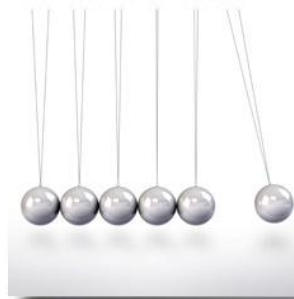


- **Zimbardo Time Perspective Inventory (ZTPI)**, *Zimbardo & Boyd, 1999*

- 5 dimensions; 1-5 answering format; agreement

		No. items	α
past negative	Painful past experiences keep being replayed in my mind.	10	.84
past positive	I get nostalgic about my childhood.	9	.72
present hedonism	Taking risks keeps my life from becoming boring.	15	.83
present fatalism	It doesn't make sense to worry about the future, since there is nothing that I can do about it anyway.	9	.76
future	I am able to resist temptations when I know that there is work to be done.	13	.82

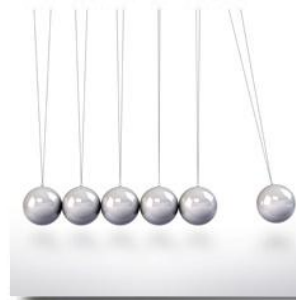
Instruments



Cohen Perceived Stress Scale (PSS-14), *Cohen, Kamarck, & Mermelstein, 1983*

- participants indicate how often they have found their lives unpredictable, uncontrollable, and overloaded in the last month - 0 (*never*) – 4 (*all the time*)
- e.g. *“In the last month, how often have you felt that you were unable to control the important things in your life?”*
- higher result indicates more stress
- $\alpha = .83$

Instruments



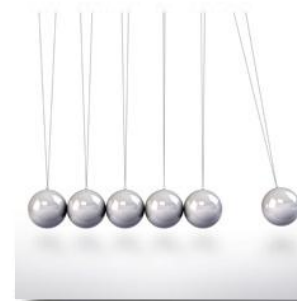
Brief Self-Control Scale, Tangney, Baumeister & Boone, 2004

- 13 items; 1 (*does not reflect how I typically am*) – 5 (*very much reflects how I typically am*)
- e.g. “*I am good at resisting temptation.*”; “*I say inappropriate things*”
- higher result indicates better self-control
- $\alpha = .84$

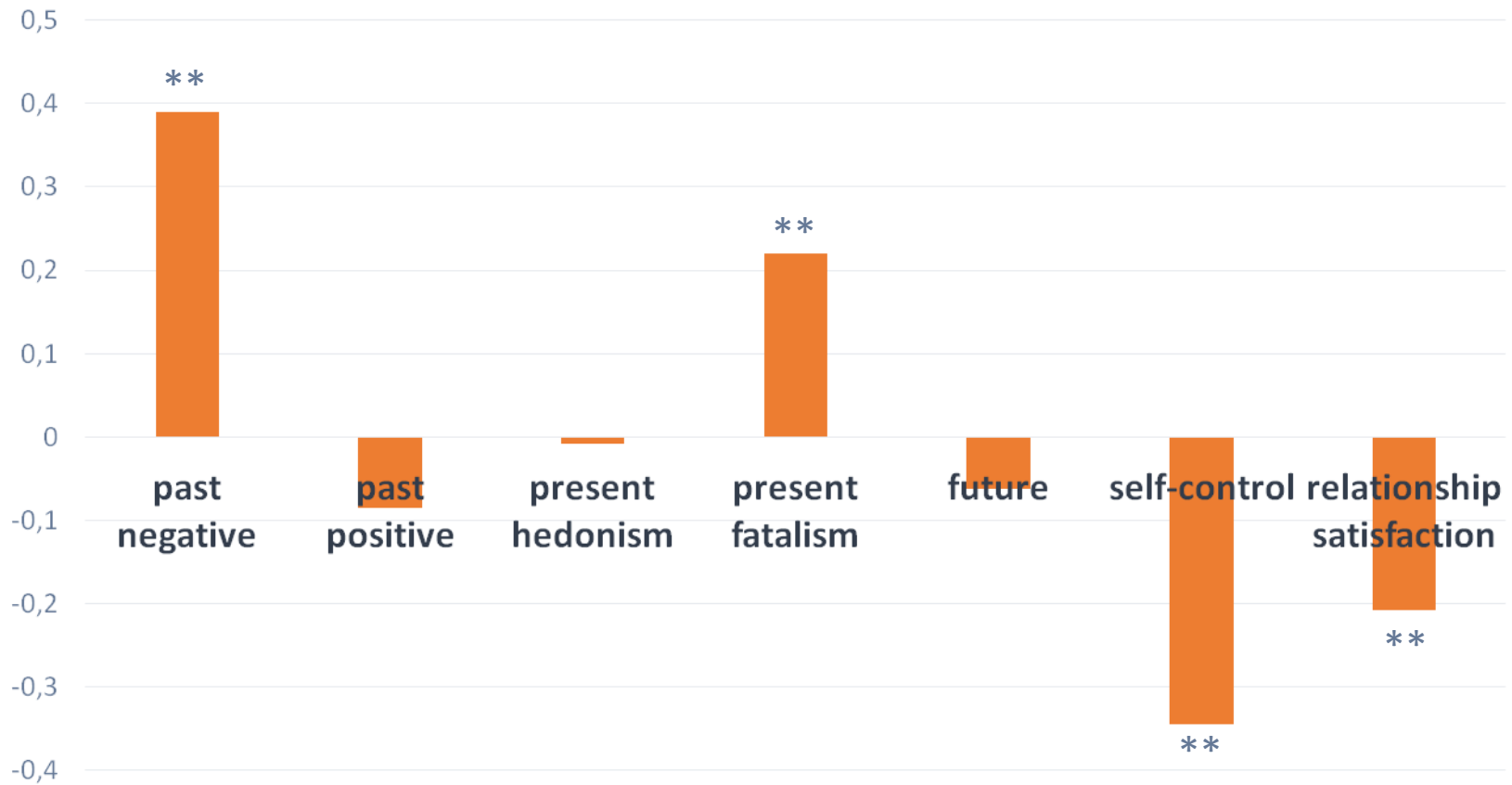
Relationship Satisfaction Scale, Rusbult, Martz & Agnew, 1998

- 5 items, 1-7 (*agreement*)
- $\alpha = .92$

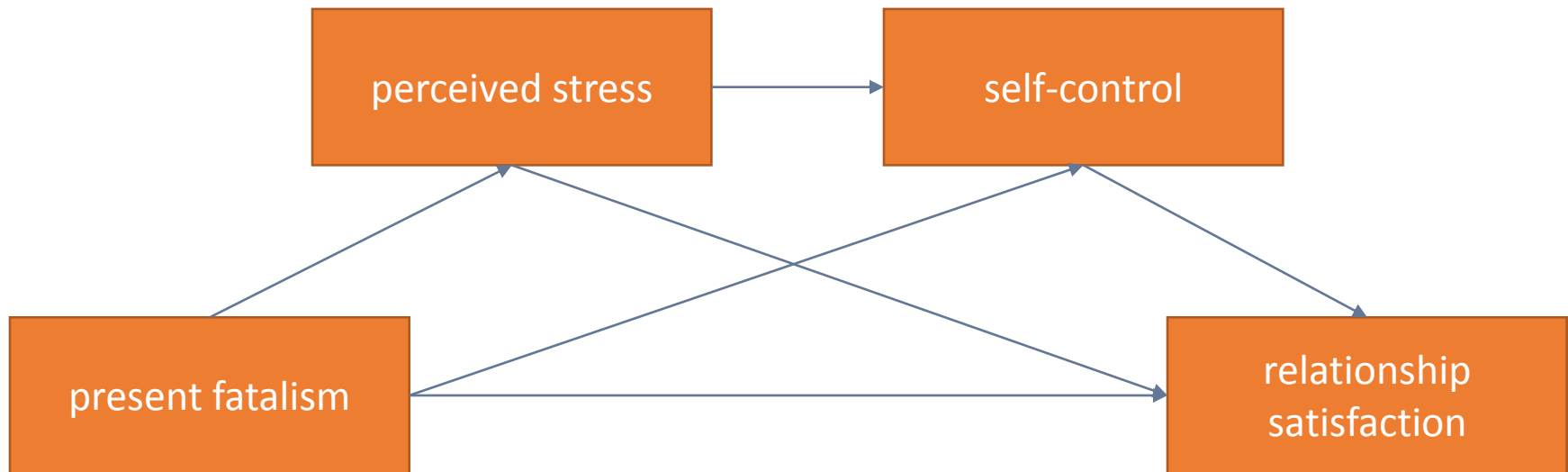
Results



perceived stress

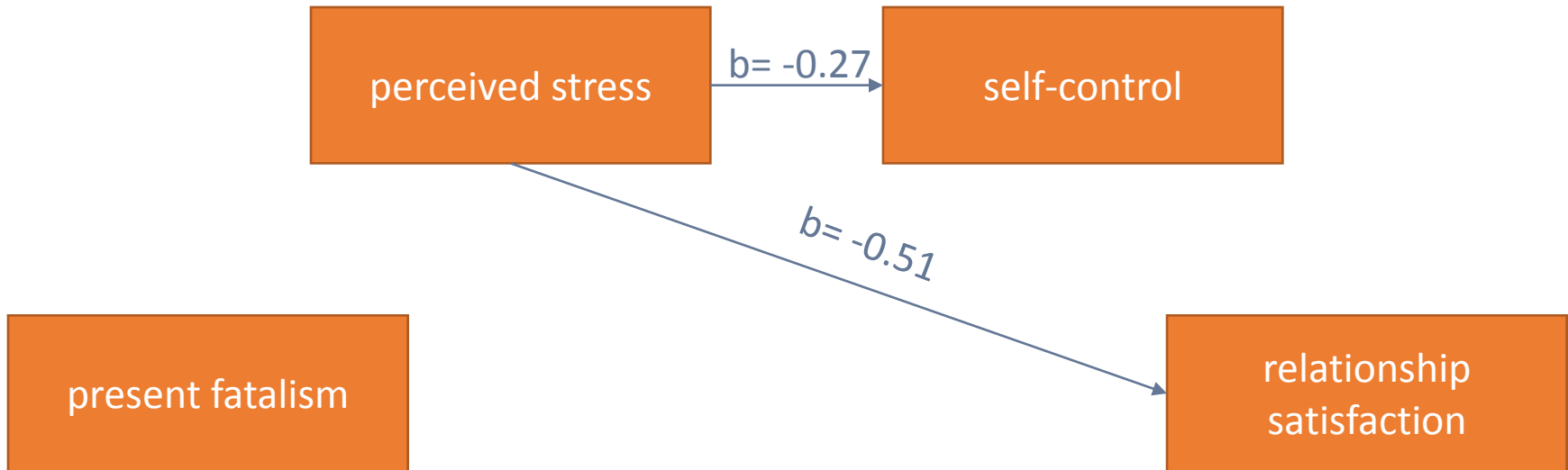
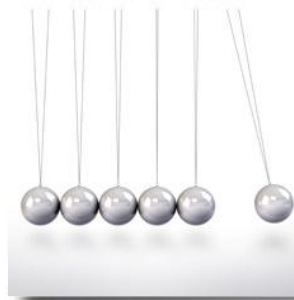


The model – present fatalism

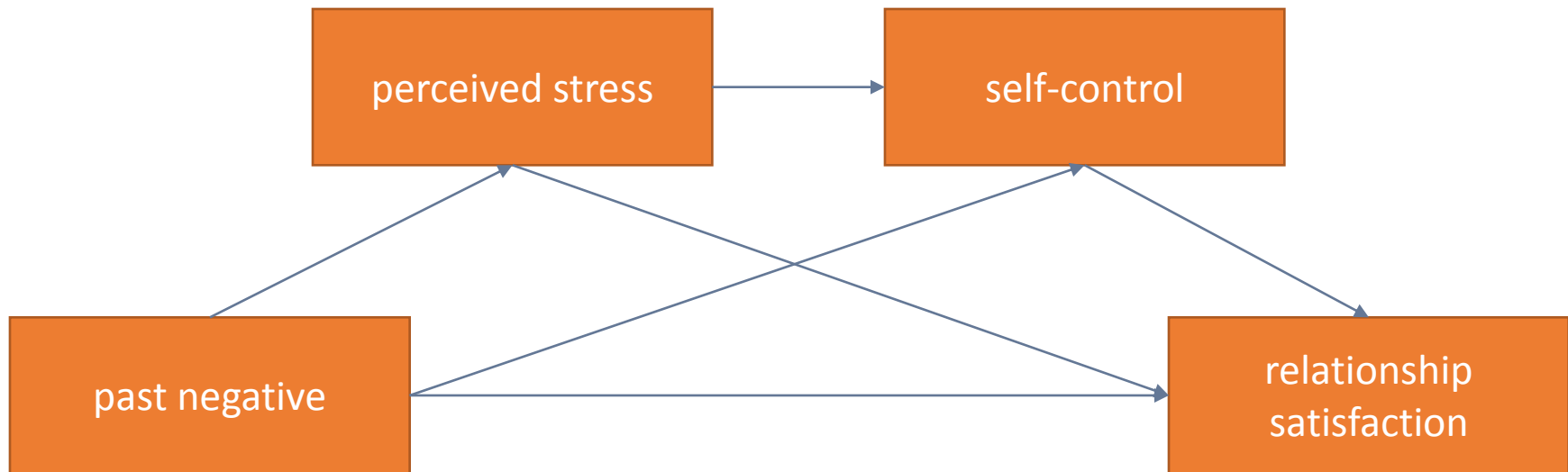
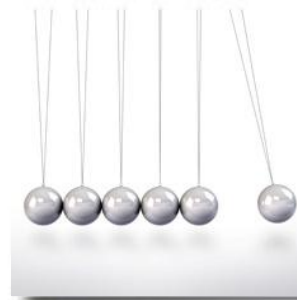


controlling for other TP dimensions and gender!

Results

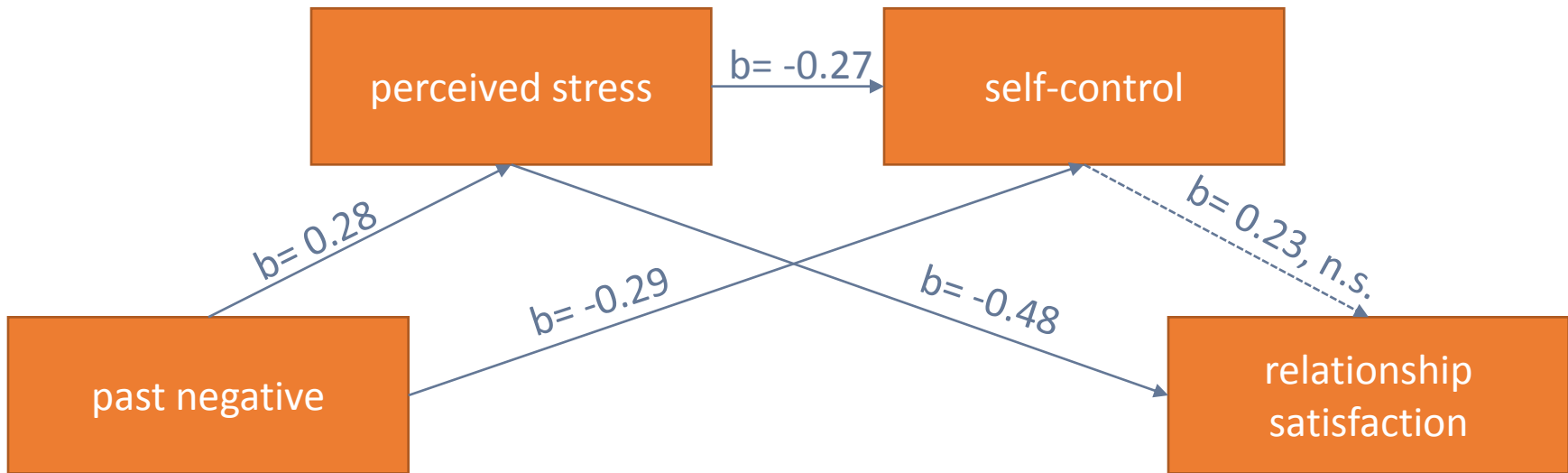
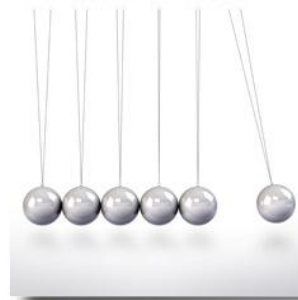


The model – past negative



controlling for other TP dimensions and gender!

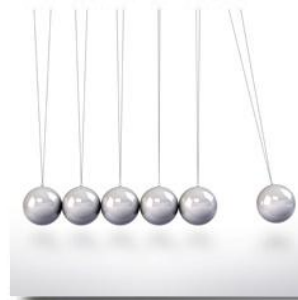
The model



indirect effect 1 = -0.1344; *LLCI* = -0.2501; *ULCI* = -0.0478
past negative → stress → satisfaction

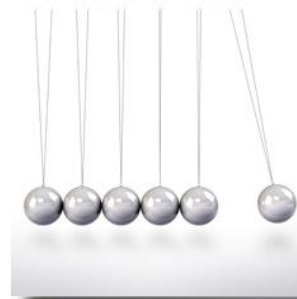
indirect effect 2 = -0.0175; *LLCI* = -0.0550; *ULCI* = -0.0008
past negative → stress → self-control → satisfaction

Discussion



- even in the case of dating relationships in emerging adulthood those under stress report lower relationship satisfaction
- although higher instances of perceived stress lower our feelings of self-control (in accordance with previous studies) it is not clear whether self-control is the mechanism behind the stress-satisfaction link
 - a simpler mediation model does show a significant buffering role of self-control in the association between stress and satisfaction
- future studies
 - impulsivity instead of self-control
 - diary studies and daily stressful experiences – investigation of self-regulatory processes instead of traits

Discussion



- being oriented towards the negative experiences in one's past leads to more perceived stress
 - in accordance with previous studies
- past negative TP seems to be the first link in the negative association between stress and relationship satisfaction
 - the tendency to be oriented towards the negative experiences in one's past seems to be a factor of vulnerability extending to close relationships
 - working to improve one's self-control under stress might be a buffering factor for the negative effect of past negative TP (at least in women!)
- present fatalism did not play a role
 - future studies that will include more contextualized designs and experimentally manipulate this TP

Discussion



- time perspective dimensions and close relationships
 - so far have been tied to the quantity and quality of social networks (*Holman & Zimbardo, 2009*)
 - seems to be a promising construct in the context of close relationships processes too
 - future studies:
 - what is the role of partner's TPs for the individual's perception and behavior?
 - gender specific patterns – gender or gender roles?



Thank you for your attention!



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