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EFFECTS OF DAILY HASSLES ON COUPLES' CONFLICT RESOLUTION  
STYLES

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## ABSTRACT

Past research has shown stress to have harmful effects on marital interactions (Buck & Neff, 2012). This study examined the association between daily hassles and conflict resolution styles in married couples. Additionally, the moderating effect of baseline respiratory sinus arrhythmia was assessed as physiological regulation has been linked to behavior in social interactions (Porges, 2001). Gender differences between husbands and wives' daily hassles and conflict resolution styles were also explored as past research has noted distinctions in stress expression (Neff & Karney, 2004). Cross-spousal effects were also examined to see if spouses' stress levels predicted their partners' conflict resolution styles. It was hypothesized that greater daily hassles would be positively associated with more maladaptive conflict resolution styles and that baseline RSA would moderate those associations. Higher baseline RSA was predicted to be associated with more adaptive conflict resolution styles, whereas, lower baseline RSA was predicted to be associated with more maladaptive conflict resolution styles. Participants were married couples ( $n = 70$ ) with two children between the ages of two and five. Husbands and wives completed questionnaires on components of their marital relationship. Their baseline RSA was also measured when they came into the laboratory. Results indicated that daily hassles were a predictor of husbands' own conflict resolution styles. There was also evidence of cross-spousal effects of daily hassles predicting certain conflict resolution styles. Moderating effects of baseline RSA were mixed. These findings highlighted the importance of stress, particularly husbands' stress, in shaping marital interactions.

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## **Chapter 1**

### **Introduction**

The way couples handle conflicts is a crucial part of preserving intimate relationships over time (Kurdek, 1994). The specific ways in which conflicts are managed can have either a positive or negative impact on relationship functioning by affecting elements such as marital stability and satisfaction (Noller & White, 1990; Heavey, Layne, & Christensen, 1993). Couples, who engage in positive conflict resolution styles, including behaviors such as compromise and negotiation, generally report better marital satisfaction (Boyd & Roach 1977; Kurdek, 1994). In contrast, maladaptive patterns characterized by withdrawal and negative escalation have been linked with lower levels of marital satisfaction (Kurdek, 1994, Heavey, Layne, & Christensen, 1993) and poor relationship well-being (Heavey, Layne, & Christensen, 1993; Noller & White, 1990). Several factors, including stress, can impair one's ability to positively engage with their partner leading to more maladaptive conflict resolution styles during the course of marital conflicts.

Stress can lead to disruptions in relationship functioning by weakening an individual's personal resources, such as self-control, that are necessary to engage positively with one's partner (Neff & Karney, 2009). Both major stressors and minor stressors have been found to impact relationship functioning (Bodenmann & Randall, 2009). Daily hassles, minor strains that occur throughout day-to-day life, can potentially lead to relationship dysfunction (Serido, Almeida, & Wethington, 2004). Therefore, the

examination of the effects of daily hassles on conflict resolution styles is crucial for understanding and preventing contributors to poor relationship outcomes. The current study examines the impact of daily hassles on conflict resolution styles in marital relationships.

### **Conflict Resolution**

Conflict is a normative aspect of any close relationship, but instances of discord tend to be higher in distressed couples than in non-distressed couples. What matters in terms of functioning is how couples deal with the conflict (Birchler, Weiss, & Vincent, 1975). The ways in which couples deal with conflicts or disagreements have been associated with levels of marital satisfaction (Kurdek, 1994) and relationship well-being (Heavey, Layne, & Christensen, 1993). Conflict resolution styles reflect the strategies that couples use to work through the issues or disagreements that arise throughout daily life (Kurdek, 1994; Bowman, 1990). One generally beneficial strategy is positive problem solving when an issue arises, and this has been characterized as a form of effective arguing (Paleari, Regalia, & Fincham, 2010). In this case, a couple would compromise and negotiate with one another until they find an agreeable solution to the problem. For example, the couple might propose a few possible solutions, discuss the possible outcomes, and select the one that they agree would be the best (Heavey, Layne, & Christensen, 1993). Further, when couples are able to engage in problem solving they generally have better marital outcomes such as higher levels of marital satisfaction (Boyd & Roach 1977; Kurdek, 1994; Sierau & Herzberg, 2011), overall marital quality, and perceived happiness in the relationship (Paleari, Regalia, & Fincham, 2010).

Compliance, which occurs when partners give in and do not maintain their own position,

has been noted as a more ambiguous style that does not seem to harm or improve relationship satisfaction (Kurdek, 1994).

In contrast, when partners engage in negative escalation or conflict engagement they are much less likely to resolve their conflict (Kurdek, 1994). Negative escalation is when a series of unfavorable remarks, such as critical, sarcastic, angry, or disrespectful comments, are exchanged between partners and get worse as the conversation continues (Bowman, 1990; Kurdek, 1994; Fincham, 2003). Studies have found that couples who frequently engage in negative escalation during conflicts are more likely to report negative marital outcomes such as distress (Heyman, 2001), lower levels of marital satisfaction (Kurdek, 1994; Fincham, 2003; Sierau & Herzberg, 2011; Overall, Simpson, & Struthers, 2013), and marital happiness (Bowman, 1990). Further, negative escalation has been found to be predictive of divorce (Gottman & Levenson, 2000; Gottman & Driver, 2005).

Another way that some couples deal with conflict is to withdraw. This generally involves disengagement or avoidance such as one or both partners averting attention from the topic, changing the topic, or not acknowledging their partner's attempts to engage them and discuss the issue (Heavey, Layne, & Christensen, 1993). Withdrawal behaviors have been found to contribute to relationship dysfunction if it persists long-term (Gottman & Krokoff, 1989) as they have been linked to unhappy marriages (Bowman, 1990; Noller & White, 1990), poor relationship quality characterized by less communication (Overall, Simpson, & Struthers, 2013), and less relationship satisfaction (Fincham, 2003; Sierau & Herzberg, 2011). And similar to negative escalation, withdrawal behaviors have also been found to be predictive of divorce (Gottman &

Levenson, 2000; Gottman & Driver, 2005). Withdrawal behaviors have also been shown to be positively associated with more stressful days (Repetti, 1989).

### **Stress and Marital Relationships**

Stress is a common part of everyday life (Serido, Almeida, & Wethington, 2004). Several models have been developed to explain how stress might disrupt intimate relationship processes. The stress spillover model provides a conceptual framework for how stressors, such as daily hassles, can affect one's ability to engage in positive marital interaction styles by negatively impacting their mood. Daily hassles are important factors to be examined in relation to how they can influence the marital relationship because some research has found these daily stressors, to be associated with lower marital quality or marital happiness (Harper, Schaaljie, & Sandberg, 2000) and less marital satisfaction (Totenhagen, Butler, & Ridley, 2012; Totenhagen & Curran, 2011). The stress spillover model states that external stress outside of the home experienced by a partner can influence their mood and affect a person's behavior in close relationships. For example, Neff and Karney (2004) found that increases in an individual's stress levels were associated with elevated levels of negative perceptions of problems within their intimate relationship. They measured stress in terms of occurrence of stressful life events such as unexpected expenses. To explain the results, they proposed that stressful instances affect relationships by increasing negative perceptions of their relationship and inhibiting an individual's ability to handle negative perceptions of their partner or circumstances in a positive manner. They also found that wives exhibited greater spillover than husbands. Specifically for wives in the study, increased stress levels were associated with a decreased ability to perceive the relationship positively and engage in relationship

enhancing behaviors. For example, more wives placed blame on their partners after a stressful day as opposed to a less stressful day. According to this model, experiencing multiple daily hassles in one day could interfere with a partner's mood and make it harder to engage in positive conflict resolution. For example, a day full of hassles, such as being stuck in traffic and late to work, could put an individual in a bad mood. The bad mood could continue when the individual comes home and affect their ability to engage positively with their partner.

The conservation of resources model also addresses how stress can affect intimate relationships. Within this model, stressful contexts, such as a day filled with multiple home and work demands, deplete individual resources used to maintain positive relationship interactions by leaving partners with less cognitive resources and energy to engage in positive interactions and handle issues (Buck & Neff, 2012; Neff & Karney, 2009). Resources refer to mechanisms of self-regulation that are used to enact self-control in daily behaviors. A stressful event outside of the intimate relationship may consume cognitive resources, such as self-control, that could otherwise be used for relationship maintenance such as handling conflict. Self-control is needed to cope with stressors, and when spouses experience a higher frequency of stressful events they may have less regulatory resources to respond to relationship issues and interactions. When self-control resources are being divided among several tasks, it may be harder to engage in positive relationship behaviors and easier to resort to negative behaviors (Neff & Karney, 2009). Thus according to these models, when marriages take place in a context that is full of stressors; these circumstances have a negative impact on relationship functioning and conflict resolution styles. Although seemingly trivial, the build-up of

multiple daily hassles can deplete spouses' self-control and, thus, their ability to engage in positive conflict resolution styles (Totenhagen, Serido, Curran, & Butler, 2012).

When individuals in an intimate relationship are coping with multiple life stressors, such as work or financial strains, marriages can suffer (Bolger, DeLongis, Kessler, & Wethington, 1989; Schulz, Cowan, Pape Cowan, & Brennan, 2004; Buck & Neff, 2012). In general, stress seems to have a negative impact on intimate relationship functioning by decreasing positive behaviors such as affection (Neff & Karney, 2004). Studies have shown that stress can affect a couple's ability to effectively communicate and thus have a negative effect on daily interactions (Randall & Bodenmann, 2009; Bodenmann & Shantinath, 2004). Specifically, a stressful day, such as one filled with various hassles including work conflict, has been associated with more withdrawal towards the other partner (Majasko & Feldman, 2006; Repetti, 1989; Neff & Karney, 2004). When a spouse has a day filled with stressors, such as a heavy workload and multiple household chores, they have been shown to be more prone to negative feelings and more reactive to negative experiences in their relationship (Neff & Karney, 2009). These studies provide evidence in support of the stress spillover model, as stress seems to mentally tax an individual, making it harder to engage in positive interactions.

Stress can be conceptualized in multiple ways including in terms of stressful life events (Story & Bradbury, 2004) and daily hassles (Totenhagen, Butler, & Ridley, 2012). Daily hassles are events or circumstances that regularly arise, such as work matters, and can become causes of harm, loss, or challenge interpersonally and individually (Lazarus & Folkman, 1989). Daily hassles also include minor, more unexpected circumstances that interrupt everyday life such a broken appliance, argument with family member, or

unforeseen due dates (Serido, Almeida, & Wethington, 2004). Each individual hassle may not have a large impact on relationship functioning, but when multiple daily hassles combine or coexist they produce enough negativity to put stress on an individual and within relationships. For example, when an individual experiences several looming deadlines, heavy traffic on the way to work, and the failure of an important appliance all in one day, there is evidence to suggest that the accumulation of these stressors can take a toll on an individual (Serido, Almeida, et Wethington, 2004). One study found that a high level of daily hassles was related to a decline in physical health and positive mood (DeLongis, Folkman, & Lazarus, 1988). Research also suggests that the existence of several daily hassles can increase psychological distress such as thinking negative thoughts and being in a bad mood (Serido, Almeida, & Wethington, 2004).

Several studies suggest that daily hassles can affect individuals' marital relationships. For example, higher levels of daily hassles are associated with decreased levels of marital quality (Harper, Schaalje, & Sandberg, 2000). This may be due, in part, because stress might lessen one's ability to respond positively to relationship issues. For instance, Buff & Neff (2012) found that high levels of stress might impair effective communication between partners. Elevated stress levels were also linked to the number of negative relationship behaviors, such as anger or impatience that they reported directing towards their partner. The study also found that greater levels of stress were correlated to less positive marriage appraisals such as less satisfaction with their relationship that day. In contrast, days with less stress were associated with more positive relationship functioning characterized by effective communication and affection. The results suggest that the build-up of daily stress, may impact the strategies that couples use

to resolve conflict impairing partners' ability to engage positively with one another by inhibiting their ability to self-regulate. A negative resolution style such as conflict engagement may be resorted to in times of stress when couples have less energy to negotiate positively. Minor stressors such as daily hassles that occur on a regular basis could play a role in what resolution styles couples engage in the most. Withdrawal behaviors have been shown to be positively associated with more stressful days (Repetti, 1989).

### **Gender Differences in the Association between Stress and Marital Relationships**

Some evidence supports the existence of gender differences in what men and women classify as stressful and how they express the effects of their stress. For example, one study found that the experience of stressful events, in general, was more troubling to women except in the case of financial issues which men found more stressful (Bolger, DeLongis, Kessler, & Schilling, 1989). Consistent with this result, another study found that daily hassles, such as stressors in the home environment, were a more significant predictor of marital quality for wives than for husbands (Harper, Schaalje, & Sandberg, 2000). Further, women were more upset about interpersonal arguments and lack of social support from their husbands. Men were more distressed about work and financial concerns (Almeida & Kessler, 1998). In line with the conservation of resources model, studies have found wives' stress levels to be associated with a worse ability to process their relationship and behave in relationship enhancing way. For example, in times of stress, women were more likely to place blame their spouses (Neff & Karney, 2004). The conservation of resources theory states that high stress levels consume an individual's cognitive resources that are needed to engage in relationship maintenance.

Some gender differences in stress relate to the stress spillover model. In the case of work-related stress, female partners displayed more work-family spillover for both positive and negative emotions. Male partners only showed spillover when they experienced anxiety at work (Matjasko & Feldman, 2006). In daily diary reports, women reported more distressed days than men in general (Almeida & Kessler, 1998). Almeida and Kessler (1998) suggested that perhaps women report high levels of stress because they are exposed to more frequent stressors in their daily roles such as having to balance work and home tasks more than men (Almeida & Kessler, 1998). Women have been found to be more likely to express angry or critical behaviors towards their partner after experiencing a stressful day. In contrast, men were likely to withdraw after a stressful workday and decrease their angry critical behaviors towards their wives (Schulz, Cowan, Cowan, & Brennan, 2004). In another study, wives, but not husbands, noted higher levels of stress and as wives' experience of stress increased, their perception of problems in their relationships also went up (Neff & Karney, 2004). It has also been found that wives are more likely to express anger after a stressful day (Story & Repetti, 2006). Because of these noted differences, gender may be an important variable to consider in this study. Specifically, the link between daily hassles and conflict resolution styles may vary by gender.

### **Physiological Regulation**

Clearly stress can interfere with one's ability to manage marital conflict (Neff & Karney, 2004). One individual factor that may influence the link between an individual's stress and their ability to manage conflict within the relationship is their physiological regulation (Diamond, Hicks, & Otter-Henderson, 2011). According to Porges' Polyvagal

Theory, parasympathetic influence on the heart via the vagus nerve (vagal tone) is considered a marker of physiological regulation because it facilitates rapid and flexible responding to changing environmental demands (Porges, 2007). Within the framework of the Polyvagal theory, the social engagement system, which contains structures related to social and emotional behaviors, is tightly linked to stress reactivity (Porges, 2001; 2003). Increased vagal tone (withdrawal) is related to the capability to use self-regulatory behaviors and be better at adapting to various situations. Decreased vagal tone is linked with the inability to self-regulate and to be adaptive in various scenarios (Thayer & Lane, 2000).

Respiratory sinus arrhythmia (RSA) is an index that occurs at the rate of breathing in and it is an indicator of vagal effects on the heart (Porges, 2001; 2007). Baseline RSA, which is measured when a person is sitting still, has been used to signify a person's potential to self-regulate and to flexibly interact with the environment (Porges, 2001; 2003). Indeed, higher levels of baseline RSA have been connected to a lower chance of asserting negative emotions (Pu, Schmeichel, & Demaree, 2010) and more flexibility in managing stress responses. A small body of research has begun to link the quality of marital interactions to individuals' RSA. For example, high baseline RSA has been linked to more interpersonal warmth (Diamond & Cribbet, 2013). According studies such as this, an individual's RSA may match up with their reported level of daily hassles and conflict resolution styles.

One aim of the study was to examine whether individuals' baseline RSA moderates the association between their daily hassles and conflict resolution styles. Going along with past research, it was hypothesized that if a spouse has a higher level of

baseline RSA that they would be better at handling stress and therefore, better managing their marital conflict. It was predicted that if spouses have lower baseline RSA, they would have poor social and emotional regulation and thus, be worse at handling and managing stress and conflict. Therefore, it was hypothesized that the link between daily hassles and negative resolution styles would be greater in individuals that have low baseline RSA.

### **The Current Study**

The purpose of this study was to add to the body of research examining the association between stress and intimate relationship processes. Specifically, this study examined the relationship between daily hassles and conflict resolution styles. While there are many studies that examine stress in general and its effect on intimate relationships, fewer examine daily hassles in particular. Physiological regulation, as indexed by individuals' respiratory sinus arrhythmia, was explored as a moderating factor in the relationship between daily hassles and conflict resolution styles.

The specific hypotheses were: (1a) greater stress from daily hassles in general will correlate to more maladaptive strategies in spouses' own conflict resolution styles, (1b) greater stress from daily hassles in general will be associated with more maladaptive strategies in partners' conflict resolution styles, (2a) higher levels of baseline RSA will be correlated to more positive strategies in spouses' own conflict resolution styles, (2b) higher levels of baseline RSA will be associated with more positive strategies conflict resolution styles used by the partner, (3) lower baseline RSA levels will interact with reports of daily hassles to correlate with more maladaptive conflict resolution styles, and

(4) there will be gender differences in the link between stress from daily hassles and conflict resolution styles.

## Chapter 2

### Methods

#### Participants

The present study included data from 70 married ( $n = 70$ ) couples and their two biological children between the ages of 2 and 5. Couples were selected through birth announcements, flyers hung at local businesses, and a database of local families who wished to be involved in research. Husbands and wives were mostly Caucasian (husbands: 92.9%, 4.3% Hispanic/Latino, & 2.9% Other; wives: 90% White, 7.1% Hispanic/Latino, 1.4% Asian American, & 1.4% Other). Husbands' modal family income was \$40,000 to \$50,000 (*Range* = less than \$10,000 to \$100,000 - \$150,000) and the majority were employed (94.3%). Wives' modal family income was \$10,000 or less (*Range* = less than \$10,000 to \$100,000 - \$150,000) and about half of them were employed (55.7%). Wives had a mean age of 32 years old ( $SD = 4.15$  years) and husbands had a mean age of 34 years old ( $SD = 4.75$  years). Younger siblings were on average age of 32.6 months ( $SD = 6.99$  months). Older siblings were on average 57.6 months ( $SD = 7.57$  months). Older and younger siblings were on average 25.04 months apart ( $SD = 6.79$  months). The average household size included 5 family members ( $SD = 1.10$ , *Range* = 4 to 8).

#### Procedure

Families completed a 2-½-hour laboratory session, including procedures that are not listed here. After obtaining informed consent, electrodes for recording cardiac

physiology were placed on each family member. Cardiac data were collected during a 5-min *baseline task* where all four family members were instructed to sit quietly together on a couch. Couples completed their questionnaires individually during the session and were directed not to discuss their answers. Unfinished questionnaires were sent home to finish and sent back by mail. The Institutional Review Board approved the project.

### **Measures**

**Daily Hassles.** Husbands and wives completed the Hassles and Uplifts Scale that assesses how much various items are considered hassles and uplifts in their lives (DeLongis, Lazarus, & Folkman, 1988). In the current study, only the 53-item hassles scale was used. Participants rated each item on a 4-point scale according to how much of a hassle each feature was for them that day. The scale ranged from 0 (none or not applicable) to 3 (a great deal). Example items that were rated for how much of a hassle they were included “fellow workers,” “the nature of your work,” “your work load,” “having enough money for necessities,” “the weather,” and “housework” (DeLongis, Lazarus, & Folkman, 1988). Daily hassles were summed so that higher scores indicated greater hassles ( $W \alpha = .93$ ,  $H \alpha = .93$ ).

**Conflict Resolution Styles.** Husbands and wives completed the Conflict Resolution Styles Inventory: Self-Report that assesses how often couples use certain conflict resolution strategies (Kurdek, 1994). Participants rated each of 16 items on a 5-point scale (1 = never to 5 = always) according to how often they use each conflict resolution strategy captured in the statement. The scale assessed four different conflict resolution styles (4 items each), including positive problem solving, conflict engagement, withdrawal, and compliance. The *compliance* subscale assessed if couples resolved

conflict using behaviors such as surrendering and not defending one's position ( $W \alpha = .82$ ,  $H \alpha = .79$ ). Example items include, "not being willing to stick up for myself," and "being too compliant." The *conflict engagement* subscale assessed if couples resolved conflict using behaviors such as personal attack and losing control ( $W \alpha = .79$ ,  $H \alpha = .82$ ). Example items include, "getting carried away and saying things that aren't meant," and "throwing insults and digs." The *positive problem solving* subscale assessed how well couples engage in behaviors such as compromise and negotiation ( $W \alpha = .66$ ,  $H \alpha = .73$ ). Example items include, "focusing at the problem at hand," and "sitting down and discussing differences constructively." The *withdrawal* subscale assessed if couples attempted to resolve conflict by tuning their partner out ( $W \alpha = .71$ ,  $H \alpha = .88$ ). Example items include "remaining silent for long periods of time," and "reaching a limit, shutting down, and refusing to talk any further."

**Respiratory Sinus Arrhythmia (RSA).** To collect spouses' cardiac physiology, seven electrodes were placed on the spouses' torsos (three to acquire ECG; four to acquire impedance data that are not described in this report). Ambulatory electrocardiographs (MindWare Ambulatory Impedance Cardiograph Model 1000a) using the Mindware WiFi ACQ software, Version 3.0.1 (Mindware Technologies, Ltd, Westerville, OH) were used to collect the data. RSA analyses were performed offline. The ECG signal was sampled at a rate of 500 ms and bandpass filtered at 40 and 200 Hz. The Mindware editing program (Mindware HRV Version 3.0.17) was used to identify IBIs and detected physiologically improbable intervals based on the overall distribution using a validated algorithm (Berntson, Quigley, Jang, & Boysen, 1990). Data were detrended using a first order polynomial to remove the mean and any linear trends, cosine

tapered, and submitted to fast Fourier transform (FFT). RSA was defined as the natural log integral of the .12 to .40 Hz power band and calculated in 30s epochs. All data were visually inspected for artifact identification and edited by a team of coders. Inter-rater reliability for baseline RSA editing was calculated on 20% of the cases for each task and coders achieved 93% agreement. Missing RSA data was due to technical problems (wife BL = 5; husband BL = 7), data that was too messy to edit (wife BL = 6; husband BL = 3) and for crying or extremely fussy children during the baseline task (wife = 1, husband = 1). Mean RSA scores for the baseline task were computed by averaging the available number of 30-sec epochs.

**Depression.** Husbands and wives completed the Center of Epidemiological Studies Depression Scale, which measures individual depression levels (Radloff, 1977). Items were rated as being experienced in the past week on a scale from 0 (rarely or none of the time) to 3 (most or all of the time). The measure includes 20 items meant to assess six major dimensions of depression. Example items include, “I felt sad,” and, “I did not feel like eating; my appetite was poor” (Radloff, 1977). The reliability for the depression measures was good (W  $\alpha$  = .92, H  $\alpha$  = .86).

## Chapter 3

### Results

Preliminary analyses including missing data and correlations are presented first. Then the analyses that examine daily hassles and baseline RSA predicting conflict resolution styles are presented.

**Missing data.** The percentage of missing data ranged from 1.4% to 18.6% (wives: daily hassles 8.6%, baseline RSA 18.6%, conflict resolution styles 1.4%; husbands: daily hassles 10%, baseline RSA 15.7%, conflict resolution styles 1.4%). Little's MCAR test ( $\chi^2(2849) = 242.43, p = 1.0$ ) was not significant suggesting the data were missing completely at random. List wise deletion biases parameter estimates and limits power; therefore, we imputed the missing data in SPSS 20 using the expectation-maximization (EM) algorithm (Howell, 2007). All reported analyses are based on the imputed data.

**Descriptive Statistics.** Descriptive statistics (Table 1) and correlations (Table 2) are reported separately for husbands and wives. For wives, there was no significant association between daily hassles and any conflict resolution style. There was also no association between baseline RSA and any conflict resolution style. For wives, withdrawal was positively associated with compliance and conflict engagement. Wives' positive problem solving was negatively correlated with conflict engagement and withdrawal.

For husbands, daily hassles were positively correlated with compliance, conflict engagement, and withdrawal and negatively correlated with positive problem solving. Husbands' compliance was marginally positively correlated with their conflict engagement and positively correlated with withdrawal. Also for husbands, conflict engagement was positively correlated with withdrawal and negatively correlated with their positive problem solving, but only marginally.

The cross-spouse correlations indicated that husbands' daily hassles were positively correlated with wives daily hassles. In terms of their conflict resolution strategies, husbands' conflict engagement was positively correlated with wives' conflict engagement. Husbands' and wives' positive problem solving were also positively correlated.

### **Actor-Partner Independence Models Predicting Conflict Resolution Styles**

To address the main research questions, path analysis using structural equation modeling was conducted to test an actor-partner interdependence model for distinguishable dyads (APIM; Kenny, Kashy, & Cook, 2006). The APIM model accounts for the dependency between husbands' and wives' daily hassles, baseline RSA, and their conflict resolution strategies. In addition, the model captures how one's own daily hassles and baseline RSA (actor effects) and one's partners' daily hassles and baseline RSA (partner effects) influence the actors' conflict resolution strategies. Consistent with previous studies, husbands' and wives' depression was included as a covariate predicting their daily hassles in each model. Due to the sample size and the need to limit the number variables in each model a separate model was tested predicting each conflict resolution strategy. Continuous predictor variables were grand mean centered. To test

whether the association between stress from daily hassles and baseline RSA interacted to predict conflict resolution strategies, interaction terms were created by multiplying husbands' and wives' daily hassles with their baseline RSA (Aiken & West, 1991). Significant interactions were plotted and simple slopes were calculated at  $\pm 1$  SD from the mean (Aiken & West, 1991). Wald tests were conducted to determine whether the paths for husbands and wives were equal. A significant Wald test indicates that there were gender differences in the association between daily hassles and conflict resolution strategies and baseline RSA and conflict resolution strategies.

The first aim was to examine whether husbands and wives' daily hassles were associated with their conflict resolution styles. For the model predicting compliance, wives' daily hassles were not associated with their compliance (actor effect). There was a significant actor effect for husbands, such that husbands' daily hassles were positively associated with their compliance. Specifically, when husbands reported greater daily hassles they also reported greater use of compliance during conflict. There was also a significant partner effect, such that husbands' daily hassles were positively associated with wives' compliance. Specifically, when husbands report greater daily hassles, wives reported greater use of compliance during conflict. In contrast, wives' daily hassles did not significantly predict husbands' compliance.

For the model predicting conflict engagement, there was no significant actor effect for wives' daily hassles. There was a significant actor effect for husbands, such that husbands' daily hassles were positively associated with husbands' conflict engagement. Specifically, when husbands reported greater daily hassles, they were more likely to use conflict engagement during conflict. There was a significant partner effect, such that

husbands' daily hassles were positively associated with wives' conflict engagement. Specifically, when husbands experienced greater daily hassles, wives reported greater use of conflict engagement during conflict. There was no significant partner effect when husbands reported conflict engagement during conflict. Wives' daily hassles did not significantly predict husbands' conflict engagement (partner effect).

For the model predicting positive problem solving, there were no significant actor effects for wives daily hassles. There was a significant actor effect for husbands, such that husbands' daily hassles were negatively associated with husbands' positive problem solving during conflict. Specifically, when husbands experienced less daily hassles, they reported greater use of positive problem solving during conflict. No significant partner effects emerged for daily hassles and positive problem solving.

For the model predicting withdrawal, there were no significant actor effects for wives' daily hassles. There was an actor effect for husbands that approached significance, such that husbands' daily hassles were associated with husbands' withdrawal. Specifically, when husbands experienced greater daily hassles they reported greater use of withdrawal during conflict. There were no significant partner effects for daily hassles and withdrawal.

The second research aim was to examine whether baseline RSA was associated with husbands and wives' conflict resolution strategies. For the model predicting compliance, there were no significant actor effects of baseline RSA. There was a partner effect for husbands that approached significance, such that husbands' baseline RSA was associated with wives' compliance. Specifically, when husbands had higher baseline

RSA, wives reported greater use of compliance during conflict. There were no significant partner effects predicting husbands reported compliance during conflict.

For the model predicting conflict engagement, there were no significant actor or partner effects of baseline RSA.

For the model predicting positive problem solving, there were no significant actor effects of baseline RSA. In addition, no significant partner effect of husbands' baseline RSA emerged predicting wives positive problem solving during conflict. There was a significant partner effect for wives baseline RSA that approached significance, such that wives baseline RSA was associated with husbands' problem solving. Specifically, when wives had higher baseline RSA, husbands reported lower levels of positive problem solving during conflict.

For the model predicting withdrawal, there were no significant actor or partner effects of baseline RSA.

The third research aim was to explore whether baseline RSA moderates the association between daily hassles and conflict resolution strategies. For both husbands and wives, there were no significant interactions between daily hassles and baseline RSA predicting compliance during conflict. For wives, the interaction between daily hassles and baseline RSA was negatively associated with conflict engagement. Specifically, when wives reported higher daily hassles and lower baseline RSA, they reported using more conflict engagement during conflict. For husbands, there was no significant interaction between daily hassles and baseline RSA predicting conflict engagement during conflict. For wives, the interaction between daily hassles and baseline RSA was positively associated with wives positive problem solving. Specifically, when wives

reported higher daily hassles and baseline RSA, they reported using more positive problem solving during conflict. For husbands, there was no significant interaction between daily hassles and baseline RSA predicting positive problem solving during conflict. For either husbands or wives, there were no significant interactions between daily hassles and baseline RSA predicting withdrawal during conflict.

The final research question investigated whether there were gender differences in the actor effects predicting husbands and wives' conflict resolution strategies. The results indicated that in the conflict and problem solving models the Wald test approached significance suggesting that the association between daily hassles with conflict (Wald = 2.90,  $df = 1$ ,  $p = .089$ ) and problem solving (Wald = 2.73,  $df = 1$ ,  $p = .098$ ) potentially differed by gender. No other gender differences in the actor effects emerged.

For each model, the correlations between the predictor variables were also estimated as well as the correlations between husbands and wives' conflict resolution strategies. These results indicated that there was no significant association between husbands and wives' reports of compliance, conflict engagement, positive problem solving, and withdrawal. The within-person correlations indicated that there were no significant associations between daily hassles and baseline RSA for either husbands or wives. There was no significant association between wives baseline RSA and the interaction between wives daily hassles and baseline RSA. Husbands' baseline RSA was negatively associated with the interaction between husbands' daily hassles and baseline RSA.

## **Chapter 4**

### **Discussion**

Conflict resolution styles, which are the ways that couples resolve conflict, are a crucial element to a healthy relationship (Kurdek, 1994). Stress has been found to have negative effects on marital interactions and specifically on conflict resolution styles (Neff & Karney, 2004). A specific form of stress known as daily hassles has been found to build up and affect an individual's behaviors in intimate relationships (Serido, Almeida, & Wethington, 2004; Buck & Neck, 2012). The current study explored the association between husbands' and wives' daily hassles and conflict resolution styles. In addition, we examined whether husbands' and wives' baseline RSA was associated with conflict resolution strategies and whether baseline RSA moderated the association between daily hassles and conflict resolution strategies. We focused on four different conflict resolution styles including compliance, conflict engagement, positive problem solving, and withdrawal. We focused on these resolution styles because they are strategies that couples commonly use during conflict and disagreements (Kurdek, 1994). There were a few general conclusions based on the results of this study. Husbands' daily hassles were predictive of their compliance, conflict engagement, positive problem solving, and withdrawal. Husbands' daily hassles were also predictive of their wives' reports of compliance and conflict engagement. Baseline RSA served as a moderator for wives'

daily hassles in relation to their positive problem solving and conflict engagement. These results and other findings are explored in detail below.

The first aim was to explore the association between spouses' own daily hassles and conflict resolution styles. We predicted that a higher frequency of daily hassles in general would correlate to more maladaptive strategies in spouses' own conflict resolution styles. This prediction was supported for husbands' conflict engagement and withdrawal. When husbands reported greater daily hassles, they also had higher levels of conflict engagement. It appears that when husbands experience more daily hassles (e.g. getting stuck in traffic, having a dispute with a coworker, etc.), they are more likely use conflict engagement (e.g. criticism) to resolve conflict with their wives, for instance getting carried away and saying things that aren't meant or throwing insults. Conflict engagement, which often involves personal attacks and losing control during conflict, has been documented as a maladaptive resolution style associated with relationship dissatisfaction (Kurdek, 1994). This result is consistent with the stress spillover model which states that stressful experiences outside of the home can affect a partner's mood and affect their mood and behavior in the home (Neff & Karney, 2004). For example, a husband may have a day filled with hassles (e.g. getting stuck in traffic, having unexpected projects at work, etc.) and in effect be in a bad mood. Later when the husband returns home, he might still be a bad mood and take it out on his partner when an issue comes up by launching personal attacks or being critical (conflict engagement). However, Neff and Karney (2004) also found stress spillover to be more common in women. The study suggested that stress spillover might occur more in some women because women experience stress differently. For example, men might be able to separate their work and

home stress better than women can separate the two. Women have reported feeling more pressure to maintain family life in addition to their jobs outside the home (Neff & Karney, 2004). Perhaps this was not the case in the current study because the daily hassles score was calculated based on things such as finances in addition to job stress and housework.

A similar pattern was also found for the use of withdrawal during conflicts (though it only approached significance). When husbands reported greater daily hassles, they also had higher levels of withdrawal. For example, when husbands experience a day filled with multiple hassles, they are more likely to withdraw (e.g. change the topic when conflict arises, disengage from conversation, etc.) from their partner in the home (Heavey, Layne, & Christensen, 1993). This is consistent with research that has also found withdrawal to be associated with lower relationship satisfaction (Kurdek, 1994). This result can be explained using the conservation of resources model. The conservation of resources model states that stress makes it harder for spouses to engage positively with their partners as it conserves a spouse's energy and cognitive resources. Perhaps in this study, husbands feel so physically and emotionally drained from their daily hassles, they choose to withdraw from their wives instead of trying to positively engage with them when conflicts arise (Buck & Neff, 2012; Neff & Karney, 2009). Past studies have found that husbands are more likely to withdrawal during conflict, particularly when the demand-withdrawal pattern occurs (Heavy, Layne, & Christensen, 1993; Fincham, 2003).

A similar pattern was also found for compliance. When husbands reported higher levels of daily hassles, they also reported higher levels of compliance. Research has been mixed about whether or not compliance is a positive or negative resolution style. It has

been found in the past to have no effect on relationship satisfaction (Kurdek, 1994). However, the finding in the current study suggests that compromise could be a negative resolution style as it has the same pattern as conflict engagement and withdrawal. Perhaps similar to withdrawal, this effect can be explained using the conservation of resources model. When husbands experience a day consumed with various hassles, their cognitive resources that are needed to engage in positive conflict resolution may be consumed by stress, so instead of trying to work through the conflict fully, husbands may just comply instead. For example, a day full of hassles may consume the energy that they would use to actively work and reason through conflict. This technique may initially be viewed positively, but overtime it may be more negative, because the issue is never actually resolved.

As predicted, the reverse pattern was found for positive problem solving so when husbands reported lower levels of daily hassles, they reported using positive problem solving more often. Positive problem solving involves actively compromising and negotiating through an issue specifically by doing things such as, focusing at the problem at hand and sitting down and discussing differences constructively (Kurdek, 1994). Positive problem solving has been found to be associated with positive marital outcomes including better marital quality or perceived happiness in the relationship (Paleari, Regalia, & Fincham, 2010). This result could be explained using the stress spillover model. For example, when husbands have a day where they experience fewer hassles their mood is not negatively affected and their mood is still positive when they arrive home allowing them to engage in positive problem solving if disagreements or conflict with their spouse occur.

Another aim of the study was to explore the cross-spousal effects of daily hassles. Marital relationships are dyadic and it is important to understand whether one's daily hassles are associated with their spouses' conflict resolution strategies. It was hypothesized that spouses' reports of daily hassles would affect the resolution style that their partner used. In particular, higher frequency of daily hassles would predict maladaptive conflict resolution styles in their partners. There were some results that supported the prediction that spouses' daily hassles would predict their partners' conflict resolution styles. When husbands reported having high levels of daily hassles, wives reported using conflict engagement more frequently. Husbands' own conflict engagement was higher when they had higher daily hassles so perhaps the increase in wives' conflict engagement can be explained as reciprocating their husbands' behavior after a stressful day. Similarly, when husbands reported having high levels of daily hassles, wives reported using compliance more frequently as a resolution style. In line with the previous explanation, perhaps some wives choose to comply with their husbands' ideas during conflict instead of matching them with a negative conflict resolution style such as conflict engagement or withdrawal. Perhaps wives do not want to get into a bad fight with their spouse, thinking that it will hurt their relationship more than not saying anything, so they choose to keep their true opinions and feelings to themselves. However, there were no significant results for withdrawal and positive problem solving. Further, wives' daily hassles did not significantly predict any of their husbands' conflict resolution styles.

The second aim of the study was to explore the effect of baseline RSA on conflict resolution styles. Physiological regulation is important to consider because increased baseline RSA is related to the capability to use self-regulatory behaviors and to have

better adaptation in environmental stressors or situations. Decreased baseline RSA has been linked with the inability to self-regulate and be adaptive in social interactions (Thayer & Lane, 2000; Pu, Schmeichel, & Demaree, 2010). We hypothesized that greater baseline RSA would be associated with more positive conflict resolution styles and lower levels of baseline RSA would be associated with more maladaptive conflict resolution styles. Contrary to our expectations, there were no significant results for either conflict engagement or withdrawal. Husband's baseline RSA was a significant predictor (approached significance) of their wives' compliance. When husbands had lower levels of baseline RSA, their wives reported greater use of compliance as a resolution strategy. Based on the other results that were associated with compliance, perhaps husbands lower baseline RSA has a similar effect that greater daily hassles does, contributing to the appearance of compliance as a maladaptive resolution style in this study. In particular, perhaps low baseline RSA inhibits husbands' ability to be adaptive during conflict with their spouses so their wives choose to just comply instead of getting into a major argument. There were no significant actor effects for positive problem solving and baseline RSA. There was a marginally significant effect for wives' baseline RSA and their husbands' use of positive problem solving. When wives had lower baseline RSA, their husbands reported using more positive problem solving. This result is somewhat puzzling, as lower baseline RSA has generally been found to be associated with more maladaptive behaviors in past studies, such as poor emotion regulation and increased display of negative emotions (Pu, Schmeichel, & Demaree, 2010; Fabes & Eisenberg, 1997). More research should be done to explore baseline RSA and positive conflict resolution styles. Further, perhaps RSA reactivity would highlight the interaction more

clearly. RSA reactivity, another measure of physiological regulation, is indexed as either an increase in RSA (augmentation) or a decrease in RSA (withdrawal) from a baseline to a challenge task (Porges, 2007). An increase in RSA from baseline to a challenge task (augmentation) has been associated with active attempts at emotion regulation (Butler, Wilhelm, & Gross, 2006). Having RSA reactivity readings might shed more light on the role that RSA in relation to conflict resolution styles.

The third aim of the study was to examine baseline RSA as a moderator between daily hassles and conflict resolution styles. It was predicted that baseline RSA would moderate the link between daily hassles and conflict resolution styles with higher baseline RSA predicting more positive strategies and lower baseline RSA predicting more negative strategies. For wives, the interaction of daily hassles and baseline RSA strengthened the association between daily hassles and conflict engagement. In particular, wives were more likely to use conflict engagement more when they had low baseline RSA and greater daily hassles. This result is in line with what was predicted as we expected baseline RSA and daily hassles to combine to produce a stronger association with maladaptive conflict resolution styles such as conflict engagement. For wives, the interaction of daily hassles and baseline RSA made the relationship between daily hassles and positive problem solving stronger. When wives reported higher daily hassles and high baseline RSA, they reported using positive problem solving more. This result is also in line with what we predicted as we thought that high baseline RSA might protect against the effects of daily hassles on conflict resolution styles. We predicted this result as some past studies have linked high baseline RSA with better self-regulation and social adaptation (Thayer & Lane, 2000; Pu, Schmeichel, & Demaree, 2010). This result

suggests that baseline RSA may act as a buffer between daily hassles and conflict resolution styles. For example, even when wives reported higher hassles, as long as they had high baseline RSA, they still reported using more positive problem solving.

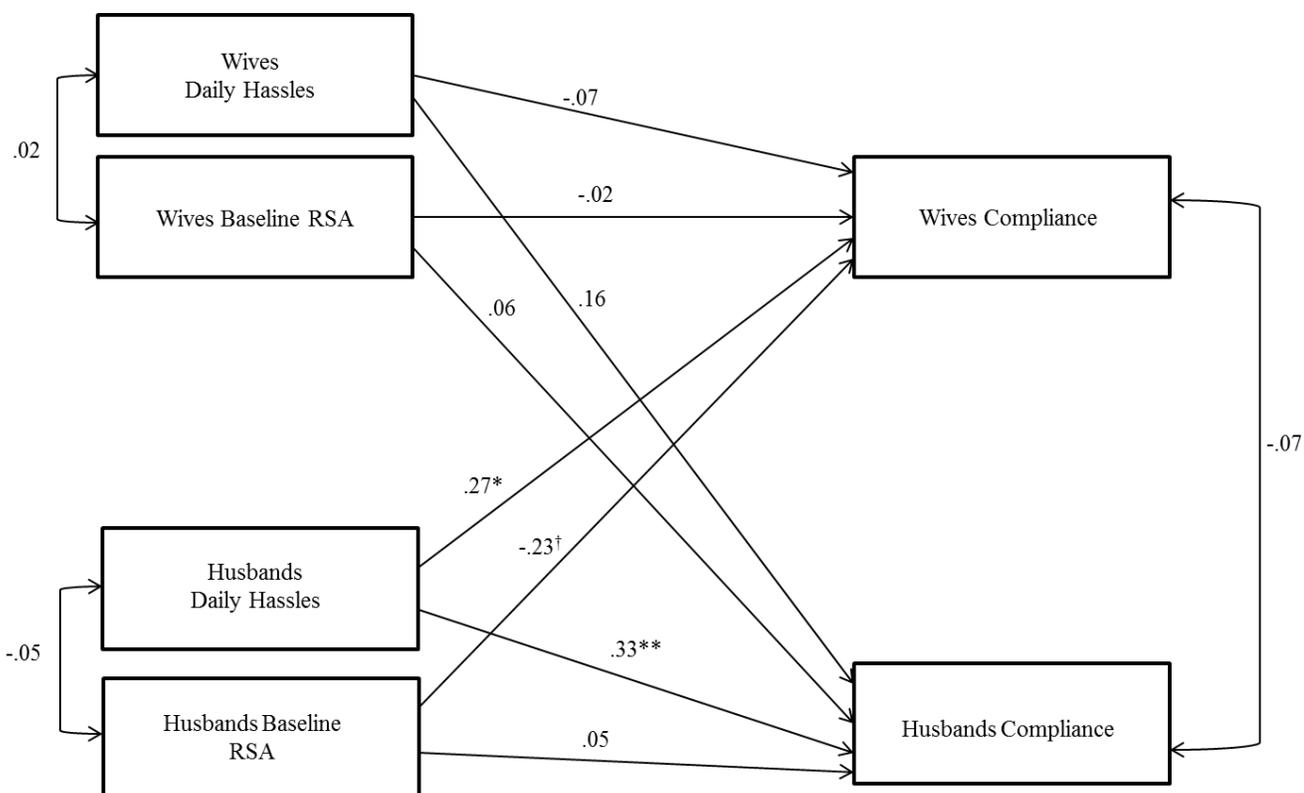
There are a few limitations to this study. One limitation is that there were no filmed video interactions to confirm the couples' reported conflict resolution styles. Having video footage would enhance the validity and reliability of our findings. Another limitation is that the sample consists of mostly Caucasian, well educated, and financially sound couples. Further, these couples were also emotionally stable and without any major psychopathology. Perhaps if the sample were more diverse in terms of ethnicity, education level, socioeconomic status, and psychopathology there would be greater variation in the link between daily hassles and conflict resolution styles. Another limitation in the study was that the sample only includes data from seventy couples. Therefore, it may be difficult to generalize the findings to the general population. A final limitation of the current study is that only baseline RSA was explored. Exploring RSA reactivity in addition to baseline RSA might diversify and strengthen the validity and reliability of the findings.

In conclusion, evidence emerged that suggests husbands' daily hassles are related to their conflict resolution styles, but more research is needed to explore further the links between daily hassles and couple's conflict resolution strategies. In general, when husbands have higher daily hassles, they report more maladaptive conflict resolution styles such as conflict engagement. There was also some evidence to suggest that there are important cross spousal effects. Specifically, husbands' daily hassles were related to wives' report of conflict engagement and compliance. Some evidence exists to suggest

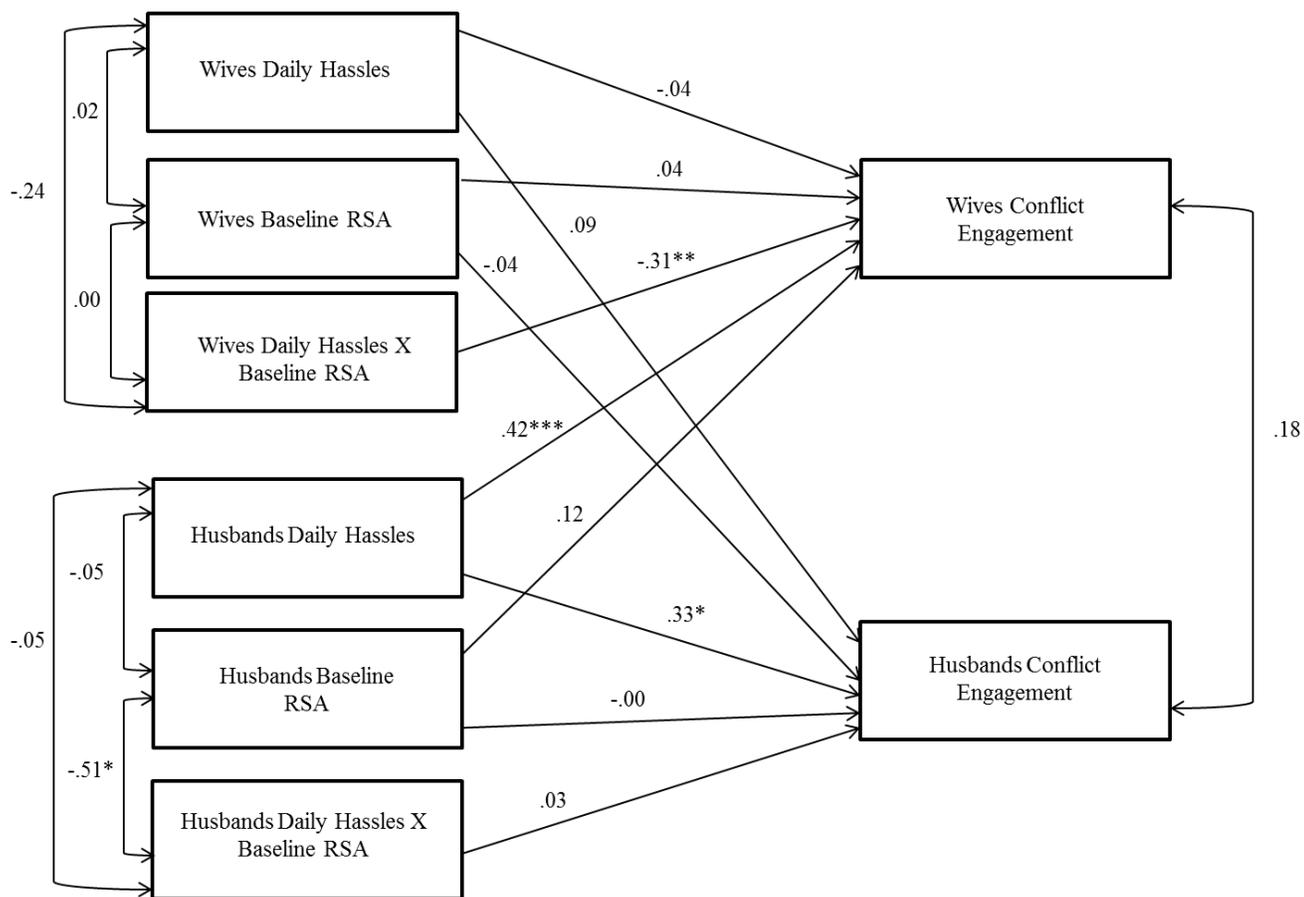
that baseline RSA can moderate the relationship between daily hassles and conflict resolution styles. In general, higher baseline RSA promoted positive problem solving in wives even when they reported high daily hassles. Further, lower baseline RSA promoted conflict engagement in wives when they reported high daily hassles. More studies should also be done to explore baseline RSA and other forms of physiological regulation such as RSA reactivity. Based on these results, daily hassles appear to have a significant impact on husbands' interactions with their wives. More research should be done to further explore the implications of daily hassles on intimate relationships and baseline RSA as a moderator.

## Appendix A

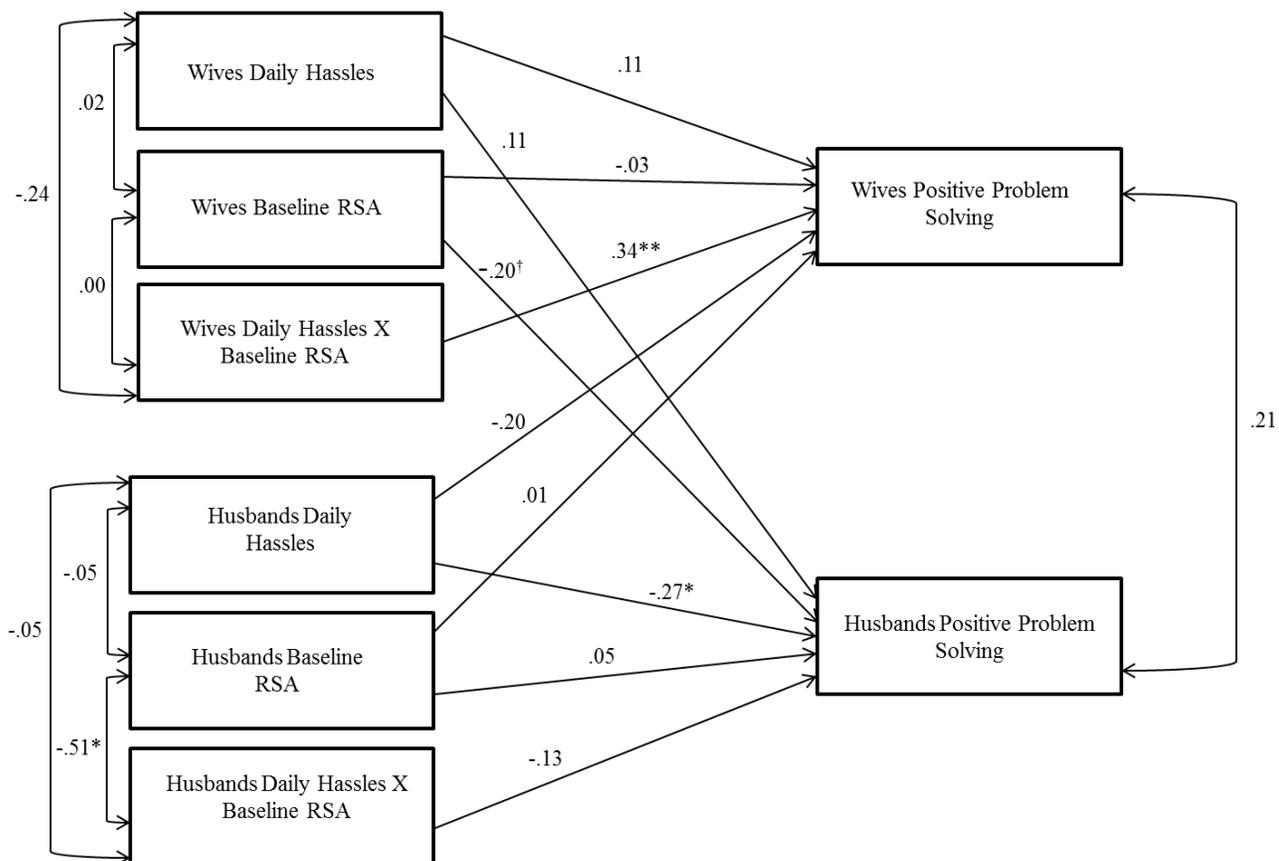
## Figures



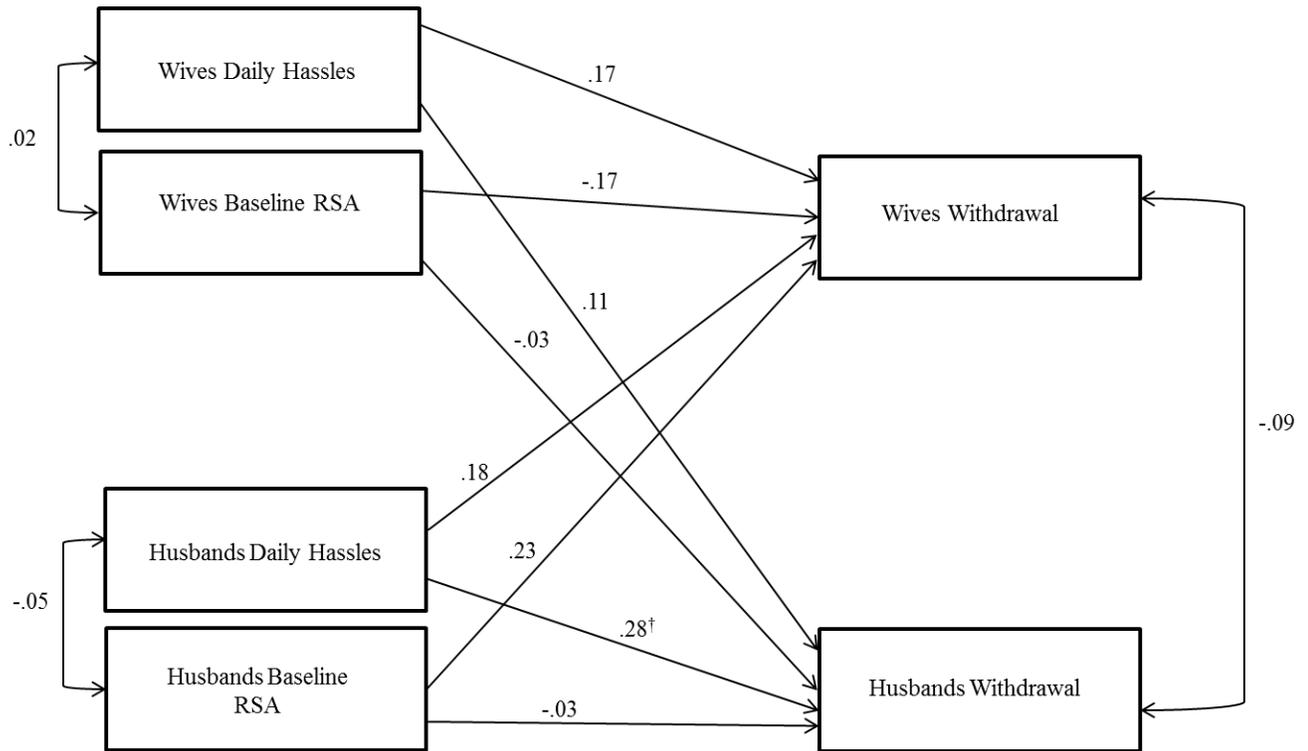
*Figure 1:* The actor-partner model predicting wives and husbands compliance standardized coefficients are reported. Within-time correlations between husbands and wives predictor variables were also tested but are reported in the text.



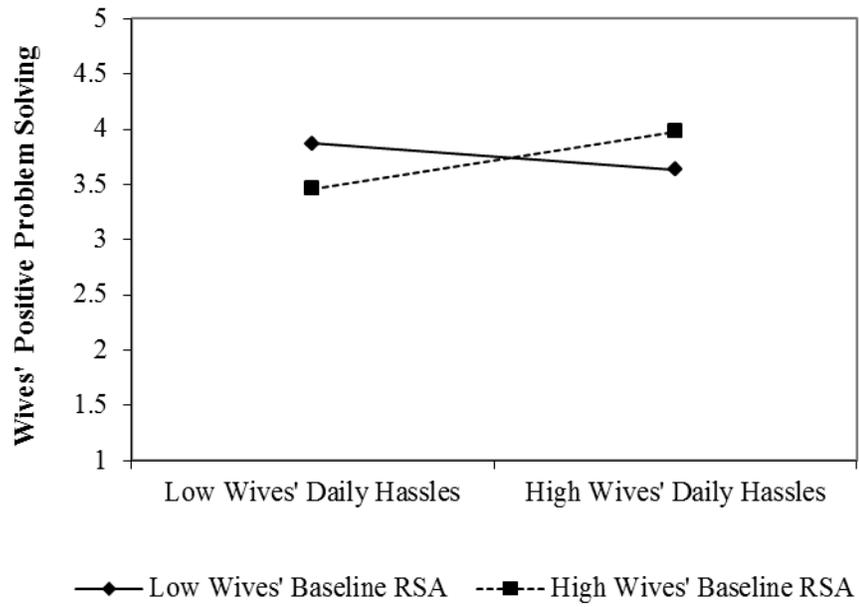
*Figure 2:* The actor-partner model predicting wives and husbands conflict engagement standardized coefficients are reported. Within-time correlations between husbands and wives predictor variables were also tested but are reported in the text.



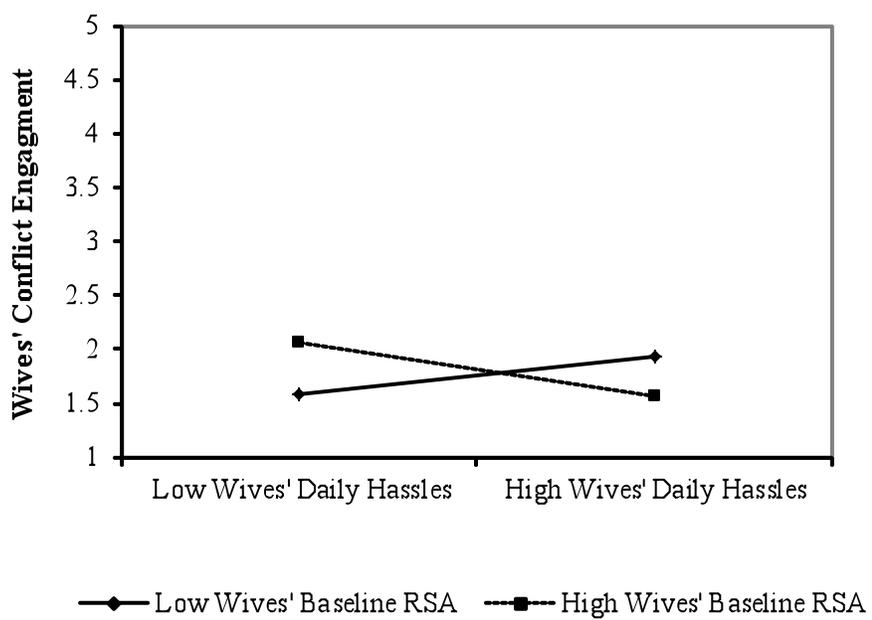
*Figure 3:* The actor-partner model predicting wives and husbands' positive problem solving standardized coefficients are reported. Within-time correlations between husbands and wives predictor variables were also tested but are reported in the text.



*Figure 4:* The actor-partner model predicting wives and husbands withdrawal standardized coefficients are reported. Within-time correlations between husbands and wives predictor variables were also tested but are reported in the text.



*Figure 5.* The interaction between wives' daily hassles and baseline RSA predicting wives' positive problem solving.



*Figure 6.* The interaction between wives' daily hassles and baseline RSA predicting wives' conflict engagement.

**Appendix B**

**Tables**

Table 1

*Descriptive Statistics for Husbands and Wives Daily Hassles, Baseline RSA, and Conflict Resolution Styles*

	Husband		Wife	
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Daily Hassles	28.14	20.41	22.37	17.45
Baseline RSA	6.07	1.32	6.34	1.55
Compliance	2.18	.78	1.78	.77
Conflict Engagement	1.92	.75	2.00	.71
Positive Problem Solving	3.60	.65	3.66	.58
Withdrawal	2.32	.90	2.34	.67

Table 2

*Correlations for Husbands and Wives Daily Hassles, Baseline RSA, and Conflict Resolution Styles*

<b>Study Variables</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>
1. Daily Hassles	<b>.32**</b>	.02	.10	.15	-.05	.18
2. Baseline RSA	-.05	<b>-.06</b>	.73	.05	-.04	-.17
3. Compliance	.39**	.00	<b>.06</b>	.09	-.19	.39**
4. Conflict Engagement	.35**	-.06	-.21 <sup>†</sup>	<b>.26*</b>	-.33**	.39**
5. Positive Problem Solving	-.25*	.05	-.19	-.08 <sup>†</sup>	<b>.35**</b>	-.35**
6. Withdrawal	.32**	-.04	.45**	.53**	-.18	<b>.02</b>

*Note.* Husbands' correlations are below the diagonal and wives' correlations are above the diagonal. Cross-spouse correlations are bolded on the diagonal.

<sup>†</sup>  $p < .10$ . \* $p < .05$ . \*\*  $p < .01$ . \*\*\*  $p < .001$ .

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## EDUCATIONAL BACKGROUND

Bachelor of Science (anticipated), The Pennsylvania State University, State College, PA

Major: Psychology

Minor: Human Development and Family Studies

Summer Abroad: Department of Human Development and Family Studies,

Pantheon Institute, Rome, Italy May – June 2012

## HONORS AND AWARDS

Schreyer Honors College	2010-2014
Schreyer Honors College Endowment for Academic Excellence Scholarship (\$3500 yearly)	2010-2014
Dean's List	2011-2014
Psi Chi, The International Honor Society in Psychology	2012-2014
Schreyer Ambassador Travel Grant (\$525)	2012

## RESEARCH EXPERIENCE

**Relationships and Stress Lab** 2011-Present

**The Pennsylvania State University, Department of Psychology**

*Undergraduate Research Assistant*

Supervisor: *Amy Marshall, Ph.D.*

- Used an adapted version of the System for Coding Interaction In Dyads (SCID) to globally code behaviors, such as pursuit-withdrawal and negative/positive escalation patterns, in video-recorded couple discussions
- Trained and reliable for three separate studies:
  - The Communication, Perception, Life Events, and Stress (CouPLES) Study, which examines how communication behaviors could affect posttraumatic stress disorder severity and intimate partner violence

- The Children, Intimate Relationships, and Conflictual Life Events (CIRCLE) Study, which explores the spillover of intimate partner aggression to parent-to-child aggression
- The Oxytocin and Vasopressin in Life Events (LOVE) Study which considers gender differences in posttraumatic stress disorder prevalence rates
- Assisted with CIRCLE Study phone interview procedures by maintaining confidentiality and keeping the participants' identities anonymous
- Reviewed, presented, and discussed current research on topics such as posttraumatic stress disorder, marital distress, and intimate partner violence at weekly lab meetings
- Helped recruit new research assistants each semester
- Checked and entered data using SPSS

### **Relationships and Stress Lab**

2011-Present

#### **The Pennsylvania State University, Department of Psychology**

*Lab Manager*

Supervisor: *Amy Marshall, Ph.D.*

- Supervised over 20 research assistants by distributing tasks in lab and acting as the undergraduate liaison with the principal investigator and graduate students
- Coordinated schedules of lab members for lab meeting/journal club times
- Maintained the lab website by creating a virtual calendar of events and organizing member biographies
- Sent out reminder emails each week about lab expectations and upcoming lab events
- Facilitated preparation for lab meetings by creating timelines and gathering materials for presentations
- Reviewed the lab manual for yearly update
- Constructed a research assistant lab hour tracker document

### **Family and Childhood Development Lab**

2012-Present

#### **The Pennsylvania State University, Department of Psychology**

*Undergraduate Research Assistant*

Supervisor: *Alysia Blandon, Ph.D.*

- Event-coded co-parenting behaviors in family interactions of couples with two children between the ages of two and seven
- Gained proficiency in operating INTERACT coding software
- Conducted literature searches on topics, such as parenting practices and positive emotions in children, and presented journal articles at lab meetings
- Entered and checked data in SPSS

## **Honors Thesis Research**

2012-Present

### **The Pennsylvania State University, Department of Psychology**

*Family and Childhood Development Lab*

Supervisor: *Alysia Blandon, Ph.D.*

- Reviewed research on stress, daily hassles, conflict resolution styles, and respiratory sinus arrhythmia (RSA) in intimate relationships
- Examined the general relationship between couples' daily hassles and conflict resolution styles
- Investigated the effects of specific hassles such as those related to the work environment on conflict resolution styles
- Considered RSA levels as a mediating factor in the relationship between daily hassles and conflict resolution styles
- Explored gender differences
- Performed regressions and achieved proficiency using SPSS

## **LEADERSHIP EXPERIENCE**

### **Gateway Schreyer Honors College Program, The Pennsylvania State University**

2012-2013

*Student Mentor*

- Helped organize new student orientation for the Honors College
- Answered questions and provided students with information about the Honors College
- Organized student-faculty dinner discussions at the orientation
- Contacted faculty members to attend the orientation

### **Penn State Dance Marathon, The Pennsylvania State University**

2013-Present

*Psi Chi - Family Relations Chair*

- Provided emotional support to a family, who has a child with cancer, assigned through the Four Diamonds Fund
- Coordinated activities, such as holiday events, with the family

### **Penn State Homecoming Captain, The Pennsylvania State University** 2012

University Relations Committee

*Dance Competition – Dance Organization Liaison*

- Contacted Penn State dance organizations and judges to participate in the Homecoming Dance Competition
- Conducted an information session for the interested dance organizations
- Constructed a rubric for judges to use during the competition
- Gathered music files and personal biographies from each participating organization
- Collaborated with other Homecoming Captains and directors to promote the event
- Created a timeline for the day of the Dance Competition

**Penn State Homecoming Captain, The Pennsylvania State University 2013**

Parade Committee

*Community and Alumni Liaison*

- Recruited alumni groups and community organizations to participate in the largest student-run Homecoming Parade in the nation
- Informed participating groups/organizations about Parade procedures
- Answered any questions/concerns that alumni and community groups presented

**PRESENTATIONS**

Mengle, E. T. & Blandon, A. Y. (2014, April). Effects of daily hassles on couples'

conflict resolution styles. Poster session to be presented at the Pennsylvania State

University Undergraduate Exhibition, State College, PA.

**MEMBERSHIP IN PROFESSIONAL ASSOCIATIONS**

- American Psychological Association, Student affiliate