ABSTRACT. This investigation applied Zautra and colleagues’ Dynamic Model of Affect (DMA; Zautra: 2003, Emotions, Stress and Health (Oxford University Press, New York); Reich et al.: 2003, Review of General Psychology 7(1), pp. 66–83) to help understand resilience among a sample of middle-aged participants coping with the recent death of a spouse or child. We replicated and extended this model by examining interaffect correlations (individual correlations between negative and positive affect over time) in resilient versus symptomatic bereaved people. As predicted by the DMA, resilient bereaved had weaker (or less negative) interaffect correlations than symptomatic bereaved even when controlling for self-reported distress. These findings suggest that resilient individuals possess a capacity for a more complex affective experience and that this capacity serves a salutary function in the aftermath of aversive life events.

KEY WORDS: affect, bereavement, resilience, stress

INTRODUCTION

The dedication with which investigators explore the nature of affective experience needs little justification. Our affective experience can both define and determine the richness and the impoverishment of our own world. It is also of no surprise that the study of the structure of affective experience has been intensely debated (e.g. Watson and Tellegen, 1985; Green et al., 1993; Diener et al., 1995; Cacioppo et al., 1999; Feldman Barrett and Russell, 1999; Rafaeli and Revelle, 2006) as accurately capturing affective experience may potentially reveal key aspects of personality, cognition, emotion regulation, and their
concomitants in psychological and physiological disease (e.g. emotional disorders, chronic pain, auto-immune disease etc.) (e.g., Mischel and Shoda, 1995; Davidson, 1998; Zautra and Smith, 2001).

The study of affective experiences has unfolded in three significant but distinct lines of inquiry. One group of researchers has focused on understanding one of two valences of affective experience (positive and negative affect or activation; Watson et al., 1999) as it relates to pathology (e.g. negative affect and depression, Seidlitz et al., 2000) and/or coping (e.g. positive affect and stress, Folkman, 1997). Another group has focused on the dimensional aspects of affective experience by defining the structure of affect as either bi-variate or bi-polar (for a brief review see, Feldman Barrett and Russell, 1999). The third and most recent line of inquiry, has attempted to integrate aspects of the previous two, by expanding the investigative lens to isolate individual differences in the within-person structure of affect (e.g., Valence and arousal focus: Feldman, 1995; Feldman Barrett, 1998; Affective synchrony: Rafaeli et al., 2005) as well as dynamic processes and oscillatory mechanisms involving two or more affective dimensions and/or variables that can account for variations in affective structure (Zautra, 2003; Reich et al., 2003).

In the current investigation, we apply this third line of inquiry in the context of resilience and coping with bereavement. Specifically, we attempt to replicate and extend the model of affective dynamics put forth by Zautra and colleagues (Zautra, 2003; Reich et al., 2003) by examining how the inter-affect correlation (i.e., individual differences in the correlation of negative and positive affective states over time) measured during the early months of bereavement relates to individuals exhibiting a resilient outcome trajectory (Bonanno, 2004, 2005a).

**THE DYNAMIC MODEL OF AFFECT**

As noted above, seemingly disparate research traditions have tended to emphasize either independence between positive and negative affect (i.e., a bi-variate dimensional structure), or a