

Does Marital Quality Predict Togetherness?

Couples' Shared Time and Happiness During Encore Adulthood

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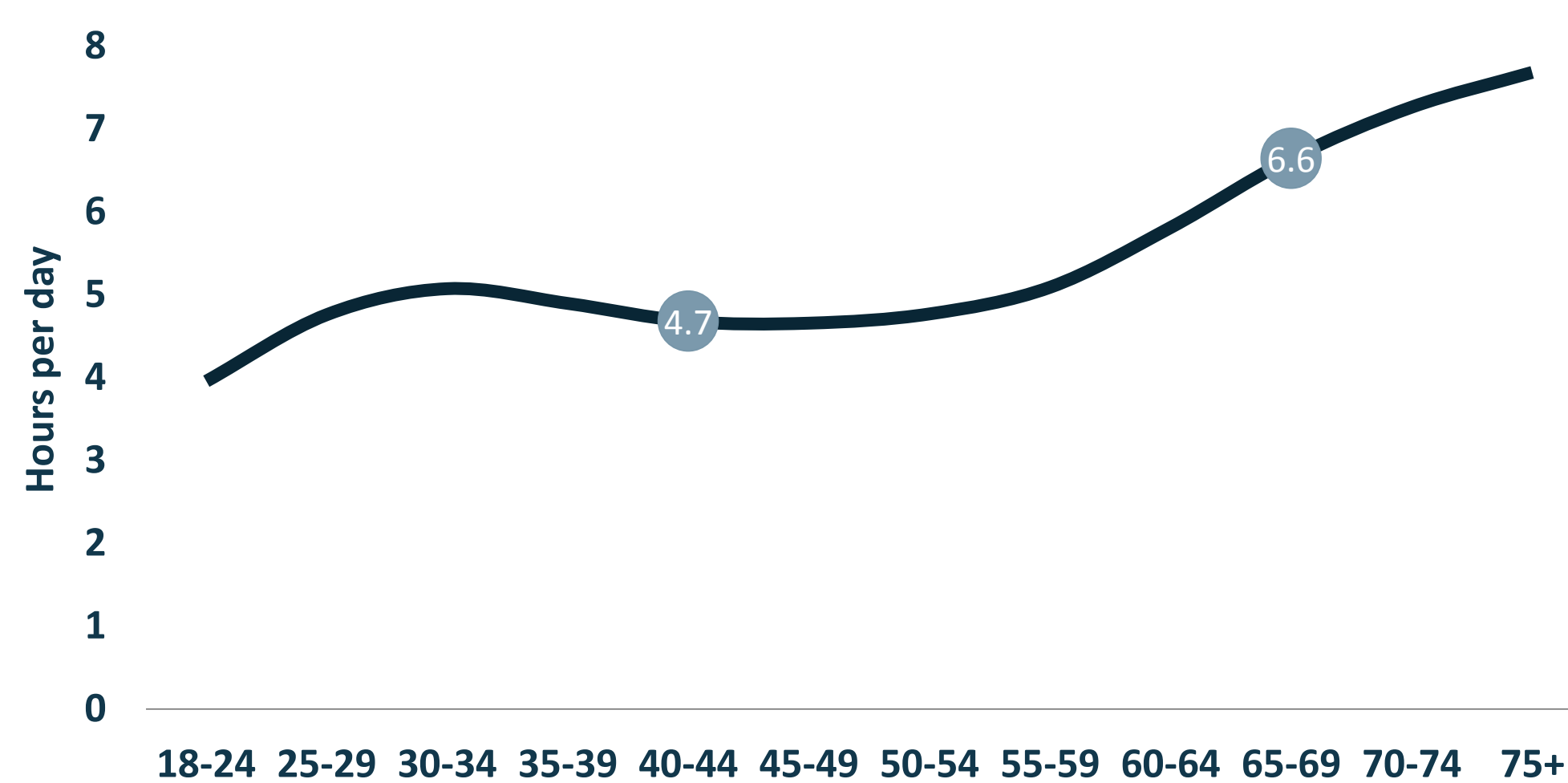


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Motivation & Research Question

Time spent with a spouse on an average day increases with age

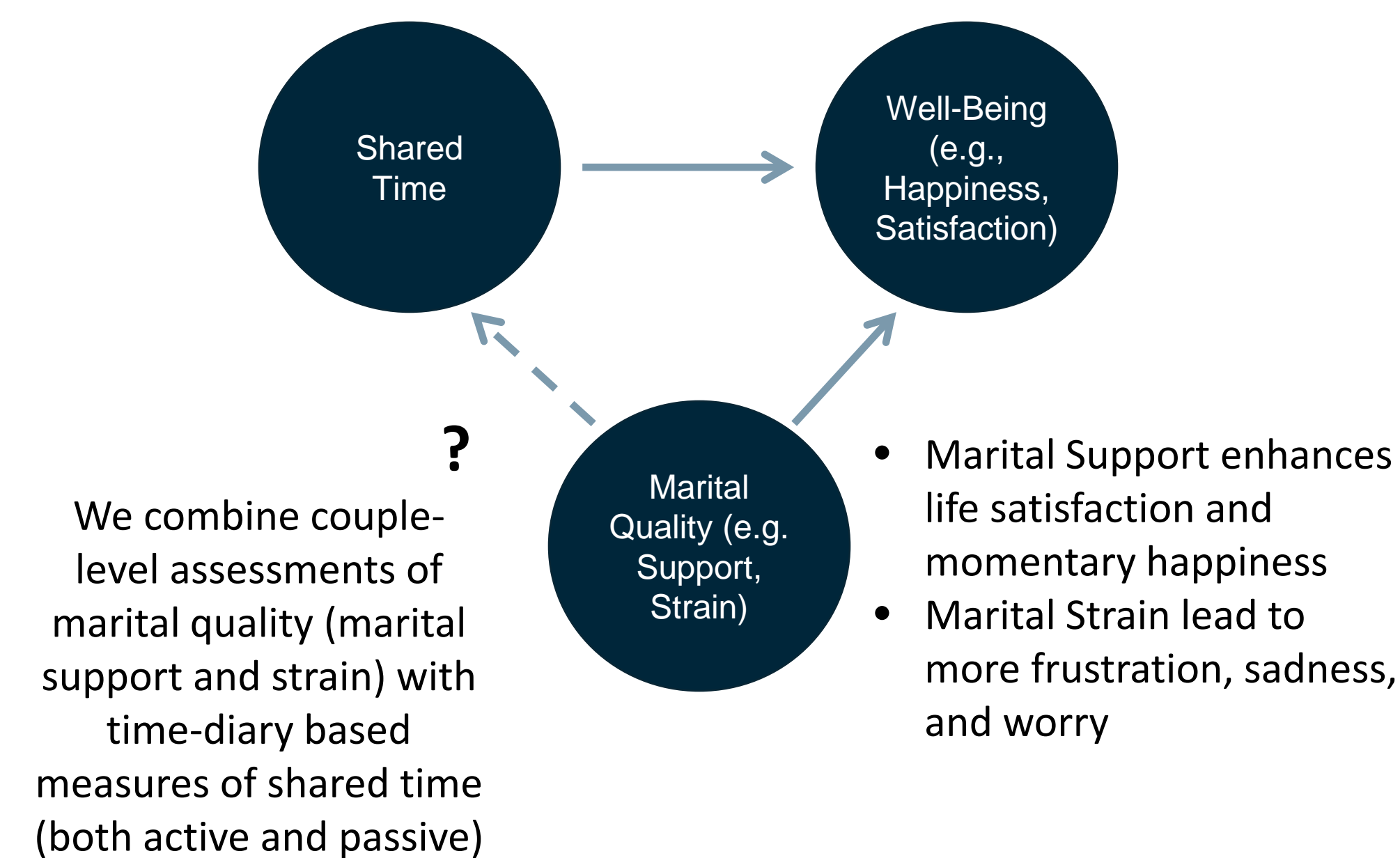


Research Question:

Is togetherness itself what couples do in the absence of raising children or working for pay? Or is the quality of the relationship an indication of how couples do togetherness?

Background & Contributions

- Positive association between marital interaction and marital happiness and satisfaction
- Individuals are happier, find more meaning and enjoyment, and experience less stress when they're with a spouse



Data, Sample, Expectations, Descriptive Statistics

Data:

- 2009 and 2013 Disability and Use of Time Supplement to the Panel Study of Income Dynamics
- Respondents surveyed about one weekday and one weekend
- Main respondent and spouse (if married) completed time diaries

Sample:

- Respondents and spouses ages 50-74
- 1,409 individuals; 2,804 diaries

Key Measures:

- Active: minutes per day performing activities with one's spouse
- Passive: minutes per day where the spouse was present but not doing the same activity

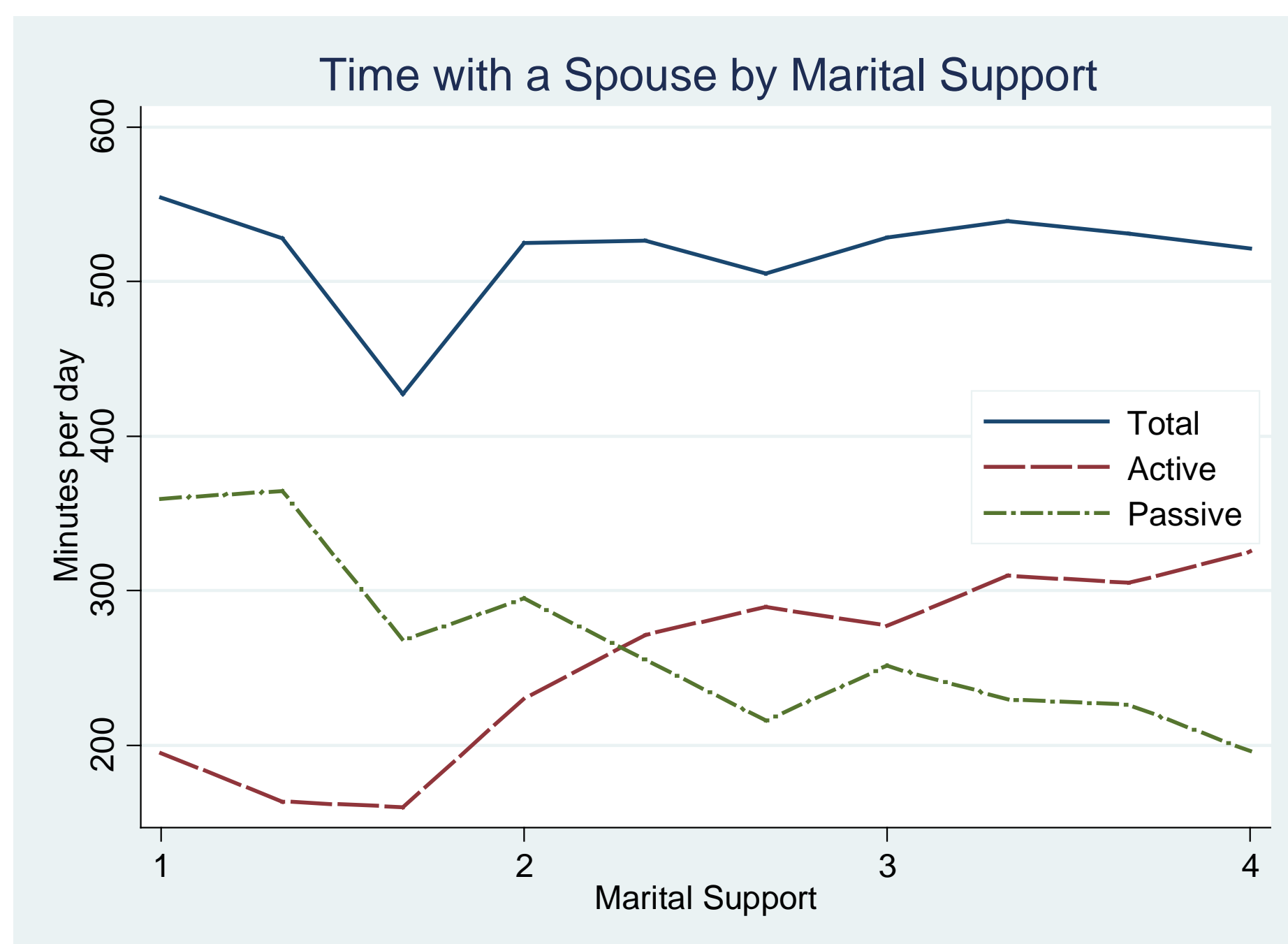
Expectations:

Hypothesis 1a: Individuals with higher marital support will spend more active time together.

Hypothesis 2a: Individuals with higher marital support will spend less passive time together.

Hypothesis 1b: Individuals with higher marital strain will spend less active time together.

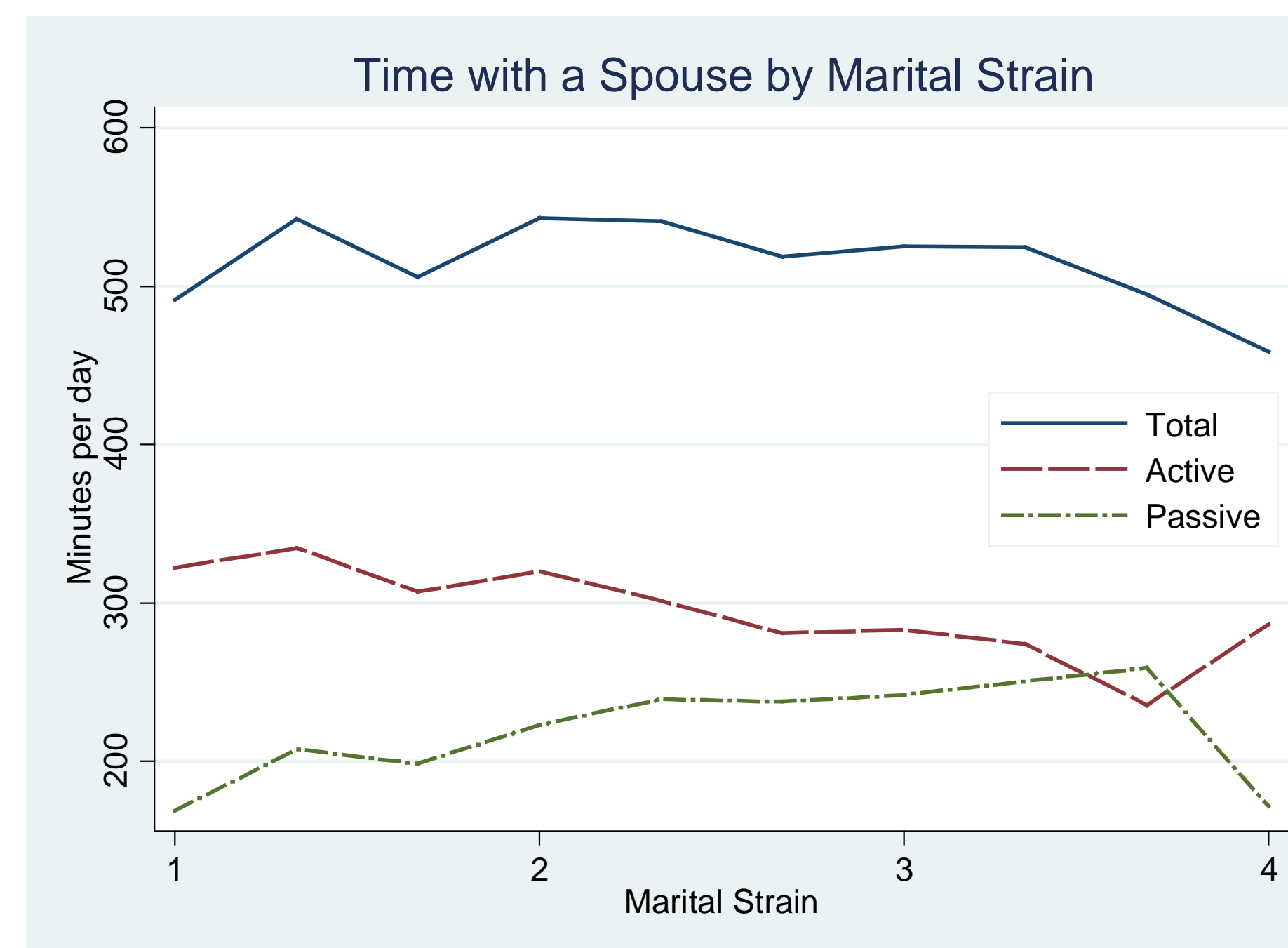
Hypothesis 2b: Individuals with higher marital strain will spend more passive time together.



Marital Support Scale (alpha=.78)*

How much "you can open up to our spouse if you need to talk about your worries," "your spouse appreciates you," and "your spouse understands the way you feel about things."

*Response categories range from 1 to 4 where 1 means "not at all" and 4 means "a lot".



Marital Strain Scale (alpha=.74)*

How much your spouse "makes you feel tense," "argues with you," and "gets on your nerves."

Actor-Partner Interdependence Models

More active time together when...

Wives' (as actor or partner) assessments of marital support are more positive

Less passive time with a spouse when...

Husbands and wives (both as actors) report more marital support

	Active Time		Passive Time	
	Husbands	Wives	Husbands	Wives
Actor	30.83 (19.39)	53.36*** (13.27)	-37.76* (15.61)	-38.65** (11.91)
Partner	38.59** (13.49)	6.86 (18.67)	-10.30 (12.52)	11.13 (15.33)

Conclusions

- Togetherness (active + passive time) in encore adulthood is what couples do, but how they do it is influenced by marital quality
- Higher marital support is associated with more active shared time
 - Wives' assessments matter more
- Daily time shared with a spouse reflects the cumulateness of marriages as indicated by marital quality
- Going beyond individuals to focus on couples yields important insights about how husbands' vs. wives' assessments of marital quality matter for shared time