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Crossover of Organizational Commitment

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Spousal commitment toward an employee's organization is a little-studied construct that deserves attention because his or her spouse may influence the employee's assessments of organizational commitment and turnover intentions. Using 186 couples, this study investigated spousal influence on U.S. military members' organizational commitment and their decisions to reenlist. Results of a structural equation model analysis indicate that indirect mechanisms of crossover (e.g., positive emotions displayed by the spouse during discussions of reenlistment) facilitated the positive relationships between the organizational commitment of military spouses and members. Findings and discussion contribute to the fields of organizational commitment and crossover, and we conclude our analysis by offering practical implications for nonmilitary occupations.

Organizational commitment represents a crucial individual evaluation of how attached an employee is to his or her employing organization and represents an important determinant of employee retention (Luchak & Gellatly, 2007; Meyer & Allen, 1997; Meyer & Herscovitch, 2001). Consequently, research within the area of organizational commitment has investigated antecedents, consequences, and components of this evaluative attitude. The majority of antecedent research has concentrated on individual and organizational determinants of organizational commitment (e.g., Meyer, Stanley, Herscovitch, & Topolnytsky, 2002). However, research within the area of social influence indicates that individual perceptions and evaluations of situations or objects is influenced by other social contextual cues and is not limited to the organizational environment (Salancik & Pfeffer, 1978; Schachter, 1959). Furthermore, literature within the field of work-to-family conflict makes it clear that partners, spouses, and families have an influence, albeit direct or indirect, on how employees feel about their work and their intentions to exit the organization (Lee & Maurer, 1999; Mesmer-Magnus & Viswesvaran, 2005; Spector et al., 2007). Therefore, it should follow that spouses may be another crucial antecedent of employees' evaluations of organizational commitment.

Given the evidence from studies on social and family influence on employee attitudes and intentions, this research focuses on how spouses think and feel about their partners' jobs and how those assessments influence the way partners feel about their organizations. We argue that, although not employed by the same entities, spouses are likely to form their own sense of organizational commitment to their partners' organizations (cf. Gade, Tiggler, & Schumm, 2003). Moreover, drawing from crossover theory (e.g., Bakker, Westman, & van Emmerik, 2009; Westman, 2001; Westman & Etzion, 1995, 2005; Westman & Vinokur, 1998), we explain how spousal commitment to their partners' organizations can influence the partners' organizational commitment and turnover intentions. Thus, the present research seeks to contribute to the field of organizational commitment by first exploring the idea of spousal organizational commitment and investigating its effect on employee organizational commitment. Second, we identify crossover mechanisms by which spouses can influence their partners' work attitudes. Finally, we offer contributions to crossover research, which traditionally targets the investigation of strain transference between members of a couple by examining the link between spousal and employee organizational commitment as explained by a process of positive crossover—a relatively unstudied form of crossover (Westman, 2001, 2006).

SPOUSAL ORGANIZATIONAL COMMITMENT

Research on organizational commitment (see, e.g., Allen & Meyer, 1990; Meyer & Allen, 1991, 1997), explores organizational commitment as an individual assessment of the employee's attachment to his or her employing organization. Spousal commitment to a partner's organization has received virtually no attention (for an exception, see Gade et al., 2003). We feel that this omission is an oversight that ignores the possibility that spouses may develop their own sense of commitment to their partners' employing organizations and that such spousal commitment may significantly affect their partners' levels of commitment to their organizations.

The work-to-family literature provides ample evidence that work impacts the family, both by creating work-to-family conflicts (Eby, 2001; Eby, Casper, Lockwood, Bordeaux, & Brinley, 2005; Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985) and by stimulating positive spillover from work to family (Edwards & Rothbard, 2000; Greenhaus & Powell, 2006; Grzywacz, Carlson, Kacmar, & Wayne, 2007; Hanson, Hammer, & Colton, 2006). Thus, it is clear that the partner's work is salient to the spouse. Also, characteristics of that work have been shown to engender events that can affect spousal beliefs and affective experiences with regard to the organization promoting those work-related events (e.g., long work hours may lead to the spouse seeing the company as insensitive to family issues and to the spouse feeling anger). It follows that the spouse is likely to form attitudes about the organization that demands such work (Weiss, 2002). This scenario is especially likely when the partner's organization places onerous demands upon him or her. For example, firefighters, nurses, and surgeons are oftentimes required to work several 12-hour or overnight shifts in a row (Barger, Lockley, Rajaratnam, & Landrigan,

2009). Police officers are often placed in life-threatening situations (Henry, 2004; Oudejans, 2008), and members of the U.S. military are often transferred or deployed to different states or countries for administrative or combat purposes (Gill, Haurin, & Phillips, 1994). Similarly, such organizations can be the source of inspiring stories and often create a strong sense of community among employees and their families (Martin & McClure, 2000). In all of these cases, spouses of these employees would be significantly affected by their partner's work and are thus likely to form attitudes (positive and/or negative) about these organizations.

Currently, many organizational leaders are making an effort to implement family-friendly policies to support their employees' families (Kelly et al., 2008). By implementing policies to help families cope with the demands placed on employees, the employing organizations may increase the likelihood that spouses will develop positive attitudes about the employer and will encourage their partners to remain employed with the firm. As an example of an organization making direct attempts to appease spouses, we find the U.S. military implementing several family-oriented programs in an attempt to engender positive spousal evaluations about the military and to encourage the retention of military members (Huffman & Payne, 2006). Such strategies appear to be a tacit acknowledgment that spouses can have a sense of commitment to their partners' organizations and that such spousal commitment may influence the attitudes of employees.

Because the U.S. military setting is one organization where spouses are likely to develop such commitment attitudes (e.g., Gade et al., 2003), we chose to examine our questions about spousal organizational commitment within this context. We propose that spouses develop a sense of commitment to the military which parallels the members' sense of organizational commitment (Gade, 2003) to the armed forces. Specifically, in a similar way that members feel attached to the military, military spouses identify with military values or feel the need for their partner to continue in the military due to organizational investments or perceived lack of alternatives (Gade et al., 2003). Moreover, such spousal attitudes are important because of their implications for military members' levels of organizational commitment and potential turnover intentions.

CROSSOVER OF SPOUSAL ORGANIZATIONAL COMMITMENT

The importance of spousal commitment and attitudes towards reenlistment is widely acknowledged in military organizations and supported by research (Bourg & Segal, 1999; Burrell, Durand, & Fortado, 2003; Gade et al., 2003). However, exactly how spouses influence the commitment of military members remains unstudied. Research on crossover theory (Westman, 2001) suggests specific ways that a spouse's attitudes can affect his or her partner's sense of commitment and turnover intentions.

Research in crossover is found in the work–family literature to describe how strain transfers between spouses through a variety of communicative mechanisms (e.g., Westman & Vinokur, 1998; Westman, Vinokur, Hamilton, & Roziner, 2004); crossover

explains the process of transference between a spouse and an employee. For example, a spouse's strain, experienced in the home domain, transfers to his or her partner (the employee) in the home domain, and then the partner, in turn, experiences strain that influences another domain, for example, work domain (and vice versa: employee/partner strain transfers to the spouse). Crossover theory explains how this transference could be due to the style of interaction that occurs between the two parties (Westman, 2001; Westman & Vinokur, 1998).

Although, strain transference is typically studied in crossover (Hammer, Allen, & Grigsby, 1997; Hammer, Bauer, & Grandey, 2003; Westman, Etzion, & Danon, 2001; Westman, Etzion, & Horowitz, 2004; Westman, Vinokur, et al., 2004), positive crossover has also been predicted to occur (Bakker & Demerouti, 2009; Bakker et al., 2009; Westman, Etzion, & Chen, 2009). Specifically, spouses may transfer their positive attitudes and positive affect in much the same way they transfer their negative attitudes and affect. We explore the possibility that spousal commitment to the military can crossover through interactions between the spouse and military member, influencing his or her organizational commitment and intentions to reenlist. Specifically, we argue that the spouse's feelings of organizational commitment and attitude toward reenlistment will lead to the spouse having emotional reactions, and displaying those reactions, when the spouse and military member discuss the reenlistment decision.

Emotional displays are spontaneous and hard to suppress; emotional displays invariably find a way into people's interactions, albeit unintentionally (Morris & Keltner, 2000). Moreover, partners are likely to be aware of and sensitive to the spouses' displays of emotions during discussions (Morris & Keltner, 2000). Consequently, emotions are likely to be present in discussions of reenlistment, even if the spouse is not intentionally trying to persuade the military member about the reenlistment decision. Therefore, it is hypothesized that spousal commitment toward the military will influence their emotional displays during discussions of reenlistment.

H1a: More positive spousal commitment attitudes will be associated with the military member reporting more positive emotional displays by the spouse during reenlistment discussions.

H1b: More positive spousal commitment attitudes will be associated with the military member reporting fewer negative emotional displays by the spouse during reenlistment discussions.

Consistent with Westman and Vinokur's (1998) crossover arguments, we also expect these displays to serve as crossover mechanisms and to be associated with the military member's commitment attitudes. Westman et al. (2001) described how during couples' interactions, a partner's negative and positive emotional displays can be seen as an "interpersonal exchange style" (p. 469) that can serve as indirect crossover mechanisms (Green, Bull Schaefer, MacDermid, & Weiss, 2011). Research on the functional value of emotions indicates that emotional displays by an individual can affect

other people's behavior by providing information to them, by evoking emotional responses in them, and by serving as an incentive and reinforcement for them to engage in specific behaviors (Morris & Keltner, 2000). Although not intuitive, direct verbal persuasion may not be a tactic chosen by spouses to influence work decisions (Bull, Green, MacDermid, & Weiss, 2007). However, evidence supports that spousal emotional displays are still likely to be present during work-related discussions and serve as a source of influence and crossover on the employee (Green et al., 2011). Thus, when the spouse's attitudes about the military are more negative, we expect that strain is transferred to the military member through the spousal emotional displays, which lead to less positive commitment attitudes in the member. Similarly, positive emotional displays by the partner such as happiness and elation may crossover evoking positive feelings in the military member and lead to more positive commitment attitudes (see Figure 1).

H2a: Greater displays of positive emotions by the spouse will be associated with higher levels of member commitment.

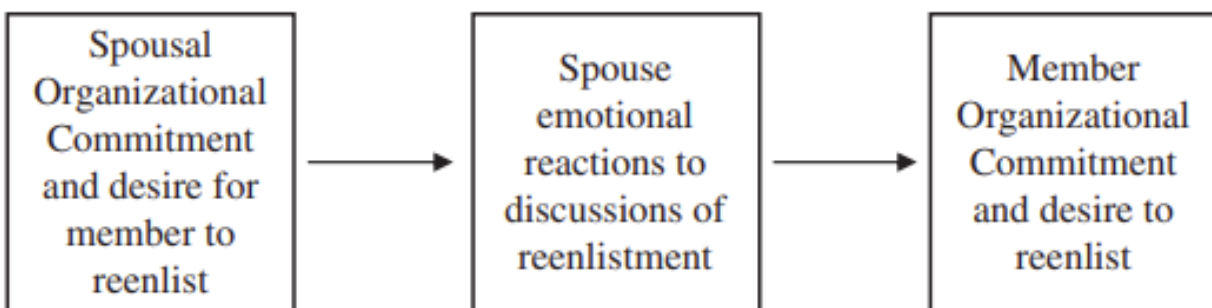


FIGURE 1 Basic hypothesized model.

H2b: Greater displays of negative emotions by the spouse will be associated with lower levels of member commitment.

Finally, although we expect crossover mechanisms to influence military members' attitudes, we recognize that other factors such as similar life experiences or other common stressors may also influence the relationship between spouse and member commitment (Westman & Vinokur, 1998). Therefore, we cannot predict that a spouse's emotional displays during discussions of reenlistment will fully mediate the relationship between the spouse and member attitudes. However, recent research within the area of indirect crossover of work-family conflict (Green et al., 2011) has found that emotional displays partially mediate the link between spouse and member strain. Thus, following the arguments of indirect crossover (Green et al., 2011; Westman, 2001), we do expect emotional displays during discussions of reenlistment to partially mediate the relationship between spouse and member commitment attitudes, that is, affective and continuance commitment and reenlistment intentions.

H3: Positive and negative emotional displays by the spouse during discussions of reenlistment will partially mediate the relationship between spousal commitment attitudes and member commitment attitudes.

METHOD

Participants

With relatively little previous work on spousal organizational commitment, we began our study by assembling focus groups of U.S. military spouses to gather information on how they thought about and might form assessments of organizational commitment and reenlistment. In total, 13 focus groups and 76 spouses were interviewed over a period of 1 year (2004). During this period, members and spouses were well aware of the fact that the United States was involved in multiple wars, and multiple and frequent deployments to various placements around the world were common. Using Meyer and Allen's (1997) work on organizational commitment and turnover as a reference, focus groups discussed the ways in which they identified with the military, the reasons why they would want their spouses (the military members) to remain with the military, and how discussions of reenlistment took place. These focus groups informed our creation of a spousal commitment measure (see next) and guided the research design that was employed in the survey stage of our study.

Next, with the help of administrative staff members within the U.S. Department of Defense, separate one-time surveys for members and spouses were mailed to a random sample of 3,056 military members across four branches of the service. However, the authors had no access to information regarding how many members of the large sample were actually married. In addition, given the strict controls that accompany this type of sample, no incentives, reminders, or special military endorsement was included with this one-time mailing. Military members and spouses mailed their respective surveys in separately for analysis and were matched by coded survey. After matching complete paired data, the sample for analysis was composed of 186 couples: 21% army, 35% navy, 25% air force, and 19% marine corps.

Measures

The following subsections summarize the variables for this study. Descriptive statistics can be found in Table 2.

Spousal Organizational Commitment

To our knowledge, the only measure of spousal organizational commitment that exists was utilized by Gade et al. (2003) and was composed of a subset of Meyer and Allen's affective and continuance items. Our measurements were also focused on the concepts of affective and continuance commitment. Items were adapted for spouses from Meyer and Allen's (1997) affective and continuance organizational commitment measures (10 items) to identify the military as the organization. These scales were then augmented with four additional items per construct that were developed based on

information gained from the focus groups that were conducted with military spouses (see Table 1). These new items represented issues that drew on the spouses' perspectives while still adhering to the view of affective and continuance commitment as defined by Meyer and Allen (1997). As can be seen in Table 1, exploratory factor analysis with Varimax rotation revealed a clear two-factor solution, although two items from Meyer and Allen's (1997) original measure were dropped from analysis due to low or cross-loadings. The military spouses may not have been able to differentiate those items. However, the factors substantially mimicked Meyer and Allen's original factors, and Gade et al.'s factors, and were subsequently named *spouse affective commitment* (eight items, $\alpha = .90$) and *spouse continuance commitment* (eight items, $\alpha = .93$).

Spousal Emotional Displays

Members were asked to rate how frequently (0 = *never*, 5 = *often*) that their spouses displayed certain emotions when the couple discussed the decision to reenlist. Crossover should occur during interactions if the receiver actually receives the communication. Thus, member reports were used instead of spouse self-reports. Fourteen emotions, comprising happiness, sadness, fear, and anger, were adapted from work on emotions done by Diener, Smith, and Fujita (1995) and Shaver, Schwartz, Kirson, and O'Connor (1987). A confirmatory factory analysis examining a four-factor solution revealed adequate fit (comparative fit index [CFI] = .96, root mean square error of approximation [RMSEA] = .08), but rather large correlations between the measures of negative emotions were still evident (average correlation = .78). Consequently, a confirmatory factory analysis for a two-factor solution, positive and negative emotions, was tested and yielded fit statistics that were comparable to the four-factor solution (CFI = .96, RMSEA = .08). Both solutions had better fit than a one-factor model (CFI = .86, RMSEA = .15). Therefore, for hypothesis testing, we created measures of *spouse positive emotional displays* (five items, $\alpha = .93$) and *spouse negative emotional displays* (nine items, $\alpha = .94$).

Member Organizational Commitment

Members provided ratings of their commitment attitudes regarding the military by responding to measures of their levels of organizational commitment and intention to leave the military, that is, turnover intention. The measures of affective and continuance organizational (five items each) were adapted from Meyer and Allen's (1997) measures to target the military as the employing organization (see Table 1 for reference).

Reenlistment Intention

Each spouse and member was asked, "What do you want to do when you next make a decision about remaining in the military?" Responses were to "leave the service and take a civilian job" (coded 1) or to remain in the military (coded 0) and "select a new assignment, remain in current military assignment, or return to a previous military assignment."

TABLE 1
Spousal Commitment Measures

<i>Item</i>	<i>Continuance Commitment Factor 1</i>	<i>Affective Commitment Factor 2</i>
1. I feel emotionally attached to the military. ^a		.73
2. I really feel as if the military's problems are my own. ^{a,b}	.13	.19
3. I feel like "part of the family" in the military. ^a		.72
4. I feel a strong sense of belonging to the military. ^a		.79
5. The military has a great deal of personal meaning for me. ^a		.75
6. What the military stands for is important to me.		.72
7. Each day, I am proud to be a military spouse.		.78
8. I feel a strong obligation to support my spouse's commitment to a military career.		.68
9. I am proud to tell others that I am married to a service member.		.71
10. Too much in our life would be interrupted if my spouse left the military. ^a	.72	
11. It would be difficult to give up the benefits that are available in the service. ^{a,b}	.47	.34
12. One of the problems with my spouse leaving the military would be the lack of available alternatives. ^a	.81	
13. I am afraid of what might happen if my spouse quit the military without having another job lined up. ^a	.69	
14. It would be too costly for us if my spouse left the military. ^a	.89	
15. If my spouse left the military we would do just fine. ^f	.81	
16. My spouse continues to service in the military because leaving would require considerable sacrifice.	.74	
17. The lack of civilian opportunities for my spouse makes me think we should stay in the military.	.83	
18. My spouse would have difficulty finding a good job if he/she left the military.	.84	

^aAdapted from Meyer and Allen (1997). ^bItem dropped due to low or cross-loading. ^fReverse scored item.

Control Variables

To test hypotheses, we controlled for years of education, military pay grade, years of military service, military branch (army, navy, or air force), gender, age, and member indications of marital satisfaction. Bivariate correlations for these control variables are not reported in Table 2 in the interest of conserving space; however, these scales and descriptive statistics are available by request.

RESULTS

Structural equation modeling using AMOS 18 was used to test hypotheses and assess overall model fit and individual path significance. In our model, we allowed for direct paths from spouse to member organizational commitment and reenlistment intentions (see Figure 2). Allowing these paths helped us to assess whether the indirect crossover mechanisms of positive and negative emotional displays fully mediated or partially mediated the crossover of commitment from spouse to member. Following

procedures and guidelines described by Byrne (2001), an examination of the chi-square divided by the degrees of freedom (1.48), the CFI (.91), and the RMSEA (.05) indicate support for our crossover model, which fit the data significantly better than an independence model ($p < .001$).

TABLE 2
Correlations and Descriptive Statistics for Variables Used in Hypothesis Testing

	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
1. Spousal affective commitment	3.74	0.75	—									
2. Spousal continuance commitment	2.45	0.71	.16*	—								
3. Spousal reenlistment intention	0.69	0.46	.45**	.31**	—							
4. Member reports of spouse positive emotional displays	2.55	1.32	.40**	.25**	.42**	—						
5. Member reports of spouse negative emotional displays	1.80	1.24	-.26**	-.07	-.27**	-.38**	—					
6. Member affective commitment	3.41	0.77	.31**	.172*	.32**	.37**	-.10	—				
7. Member continuance commitment	2.70	0.86	.14	.520**	.27**	.33**	-.02	.37**	—			
8. Member reenlistment intention	0.70	0.46	.28**	.231**	.56**	.37**	-.11	.52**	.40**	—		

Note. Control variables not listed in this table, but are available upon request.

*Correlation is significant at the .05 level (two-tailed). **Correlation is significant at the .01 level (two-tailed).

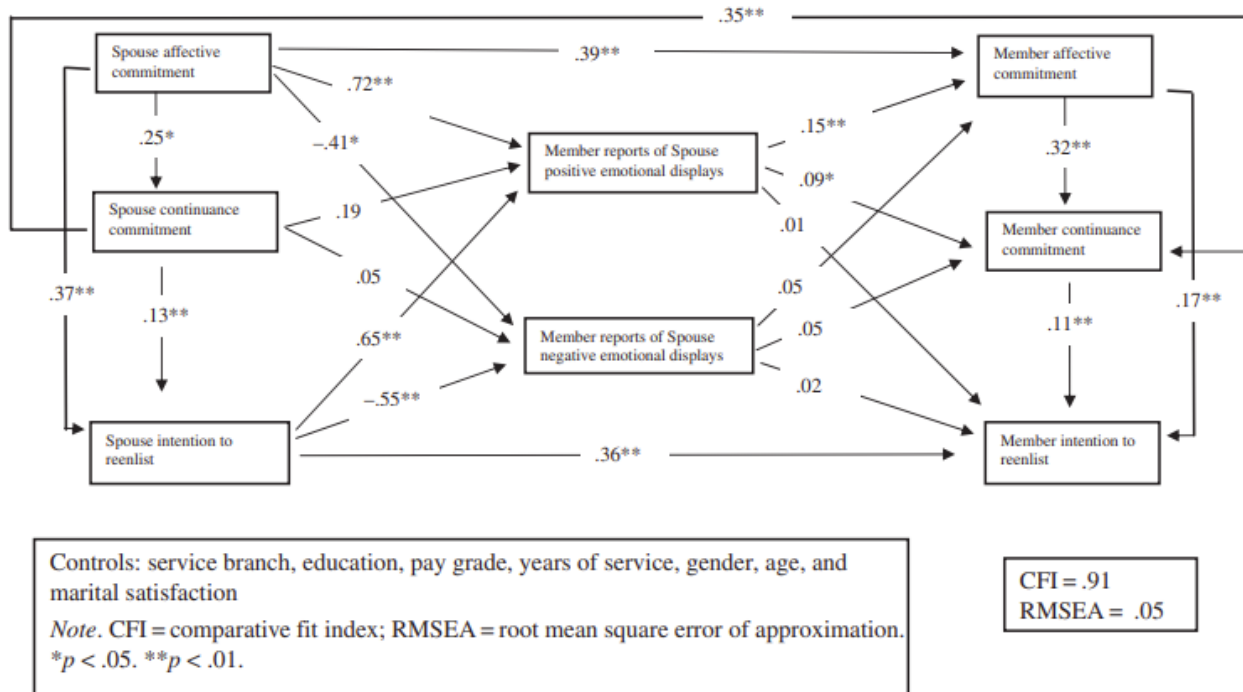


FIGURE 2 Organizational commitment crossover.

Individual path coefficients and their significance levels are reported in Figure 2, finding partial support for H1 and H2. Spousal affective commitment and intent to leave were associated with members reporting both positive and negative spouse emotional displays, but only member reports of spouse positive emotional displays had a

significant and positive relationship with military member affective and continuance commitment levels. These results are consistent with our predictions based upon crossover theory, and the role of emotional displays in crossover, providing partial support for the first hypothesis. Spousal attitudes about the military are associated with members observing emotional displays by the spouses when discussing reenlistment, and those displays are significant predictors of the military members' work attitudes.

Finally, significant direct-path relationships existed between all three spouse and member commitment measures (affective commitment, continuance commitment, and intention to reenlist) despite the inclusion of emotional displays and the control variables. Therefore, we next investigated the extent to which our crossover mechanisms, specifically, positive emotional displays, mediated the relationship between spouse and member commitment assessments. To test H3, we employed steps suggested by Baron and Kenny (1986) and used a Sobel mediation test (Baron & Kenny, 1986; MacKinnon, Warsi, & Dwyer, 1995; Sobel, 1982). Because we were testing mediation within a structural equation model, which contains multiple latent variables, the Sobel test was an appropriate test for partial mediation. We limited our mediation test by only examining the mediation effect of positive emotional displays between spouse and member affective organizational commitment. The reasoning for this decision is that this was the only relationship where, within our structural equation model and controlling for all other variables, a significant relationship existed between the independent and dependent variables of interest and the paths to our proposed mediator (see Figure 2). Results indicate that spouse positive emotional displays during discussions of reenlistment as assessed by the military member served as a significant partial mediator between spousal affective commitment and the military member's affective commitment (test statistic = 2.06, $p = .04$). We concluded partial mediation given that a direct relationship between spouse and member affective commitment continued to be significant while still controlling for this mediator and the other variables in the model. Therefore, H3 was only partially supported given that no partial mediation existed via negative emotion displays.

Ad Hoc Analysis

Although crossover theory and previous research suggests that our hypothesized partial mediation hypothesis is appropriate, as per the suggestion of our reviewers, we did perform an analysis of an ad hoc model to compare fit of our hypothesized model to a moderating model. Specifically, we incorporated emotional displays as moderating variables, rather than mediators, within our ad hoc structural model (moderating the relationship between spouse and member commitment variables). The ad hoc model did not fit the data ($\chi^2/df = 3.52$; CFI = .671, RMSEA = .11). Thus, emotional displays serve as partial mediators in the indirect crossover relationship and do not act as moderators in the crossover process. Despite the partial support of our hypotheses, we are confident that our model and findings support our broad arguments of indirect positive crossover of spousal commitment.

DISCUSSION

Previous scholars have spent a significant amount of effort identifying various organizational and personal antecedents of employee organizational commitment, but spousal commitment has received scant attention. Drawing from the literature on crossover, the present study investigated how spousal commitment to an employee's organization may serve as a significant antecedent to that employee's commitment and turnover intentions. This work demonstrated that positive emotional displays by the spouse can serve as important crossover mechanisms in understanding how spousal attitudes are related to employee work attitudes. As organizations place increasing pressure of work demands upon families and face the constant threat of talent loss through turnover, gaining a better understanding of these dynamics within couples seems a useful undertaking. In that regard, this study makes a number of contributions to research, theory, and practice.

Research Contributions

The first major contribution of this study is directed at the commitment literature. We proposed that spouses are likely to form commitment attitudes towards their partners' employing organizations. Within the context of the U.S. military, we found evidence that spouses form evaluations of affective and continuance commitment toward the armed forces, similar to arguments made by Gade et al. (2003). We, however, extended Gade's approach by adding items to the commitment measures that were derived from military spouse focus groups. Also, we directly measured spouses' reenlistment intentions and found that spousal commitment was related to spousal desires for the military member to turnover. This extension of Gade's work suggests that the concept of spousal organizational commitment is viable and worth pursuing within the field of organizational commitment. Future research is needed in the measurement of this variable in addition to the exploration of whether this type of commitment exists in other occupational and organizational contexts such as firefighters, police officers, nurses, surgeons, and other for-profit settings, which are likely to evoke spousal attitudes toward employees' organizations. Increasingly, many organizations and a variety of occupations are making onerous demands on employees which are likely noted and evaluated by spouses (in the form of work attitudes). Although the context for the present investigation is the U.S. military, we believe that the fundamental processes involved in the formation and transfer of organizational commitment should remain the same across different occupations. Although the U.S. military is indeed a rich and complex organization, we have little reason to suspect that the current findings would not generalize to other occupations.

Next, through the application of crossover theory, we demonstrated that spousal commitment attitudes could crossover to affect an employee's commitment attitudes. Positive emotional displays made during discussions of the decision to reenlist were found to partially mediate the relationship between spouse and member commitment, whereas negative emotional displays had no mediating effect in this study. The

significant relationships of positive emotions and the lack of results for negative emotional displays runs somewhat counter to the patterns typically found in research on crossover. Westman and colleagues have focused on crossover of strain and found negative interactions to be the communicative mechanisms to facilitate crossover (e.g., social undermining: Westman et al., 2001; Westman & Vinokur, 1998; Westman, Vinokur, et al., 2004). Our findings indicate that crossover is operating in a different manner within our context and between commitment attitudes. It may be the case that positive emotions have more potential to facilitate the process of crossover of attitudes, which hold a stronger positive affective evaluative component (affective commitment) rather than a stronger cognitive component. Research on crossover theory should continue to explore when positive crossover mechanisms serve a greater predictor of other work related outcomes compared to negative mechanisms.

Practical Implications

Family-friendly initiatives may provide the opportunity for this type of commitment to form or be assessed (Burrell et al., 2003; Huffman & Payne, 2006), and practitioners should include family members in periodic work attitude surveys to track the effectiveness of different initiatives. However, no evidence exists yet to describe how exactly spousal commitment may develop over time. Future longitudinal practitioner-oriented research should explore to what extent popular family-friendly policies (e.g., Kelly et al., 2008) directly and positively influence spousal attitudes toward their partners' employers. If positive commitment attitudes can be fostered and improved within spouses, organizations may find their family-friendly investments reduce turnover intentions by their employees. In light of the present research, practitioners would do well to not discount the role of spousal influence on their employees' organizational commitment and resulting behaviors. In general, this can be particularly valid for more demanding occupations and roles such as those requiring frequent travel, expatriate work-assignments, very long work hours, and those posing danger to employee health and safety such as in the resource, energy, and mining industry, and so forth. Positive emotional displays play a role in the crossover of a couple's desire to stay with the partner's current employing organization. Thus, if employers want to strengthen an employee's affective commitment, it will be in the employer's best interest to focus policies and communications that could influence the spouse to want for the partner to stay employed at his or her current organization. Keeping spouses happy and instilling pride seems to be a crucial component of ensuring continued employment.

Limitations

In examining the limitations of this research, several issues need to be acknowledged. First, although theory and past research supports the idea that spousal feelings about the organization can influence the focal employee, it is clear that we use cross-sectional data in this study and cannot confirm causality. A longitudinal design would be required to test the direction of the hypothesized relationships and track the process of crossover. Given the very limited research on the processes we studied

here, however, we believe a good first step was to establish that such paths are possible and consistent with existing theory. Second, these research questions need to be examined in other settings that also place burdensome demands on employees' and their families' time. Future research also would do well to investigate if crossover of other evaluations or attitudes pertaining to work may occur within couples and in a particular direction. Our study looked at organizational commitment specifically, but it is likely that emotional reactions and emotion displays may be linked to other work attitudes and processes including job satisfaction, psychological contracts, perceived organizational support, or even leadership evaluations. Finally, although our survey response rate for paired data appears to be very low, we did not have access to information regarding how many married couples were sent surveys, and compensation and standard follow-up procedures were not available for this particular U.S. Department of Defense–permitted survey. Future studies, if permitted, should strive to include some type of compensation or reminders, at the very least, to improve response rates.

Conclusion

However, these limitations do not discount the findings of this study. The idea of spousal organizational commitment has received little attention; yet spousal commitment appears to be an important concept that has implications for how employees regard their work and their employing organizations. The crossover relationship found here also demonstrates that spousal attitudes exist and they are related to employee attitudes. A deeper understanding of those attitudes and processes can only help organizations better manage work demands and organizations' relationships with their employees and their employees' families.

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