

EDITORIAL

Crossover of Positive States and Experiences

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Published online in Wiley Online Library (wileyonlinelibrary.com) DOI: 10.1002/smi.2535

In a previous editorial (Westman, 2011), I focused on the crossover of stress and strain between partners and among team members. The current editorial focuses on the crossover of positive states and experiences between partners.

Crossover was defined by Bolger, DeLongis, Kessler, and Wethington (1989) as the interpersonal process that occurs when job stress or psychological strain experienced by one person affects the level of strain of another person in the same social environment. Most crossover studies have investigated and found evidence of the crossover of psychological strains such as anxiety (Westman, Etzion, & Horovitz, 2004), burnout (e.g. Bakker & Schaufeli, 2000; Westman & Etzion, 1995), distress (Barnett, Raudenbush, Brennan, Pleck, & Marshall, 1995), depression (Howe, Levy, & Caplan, 2004), work–family conflict (e.g. Hammer, Allen, & Grigsby, 1997; Westman & Etzion, 2005), health complaints and perceived health (Gorgievski-Duijvesteijn, Giessen, & Bakker, 2000; Westman, Keinan, Roziner, & Benyamini, 2008) and marital dissatisfaction (Westman, Vinokur, Hamilton, & Roziner, 2004).

Westman (2001) proposed three different mechanisms to explain the crossover process. One, *direct crossover*, in which experiences and states are transmitted between partners via empathy. Two, *indirect crossover* that occurs via specific *mediating or moderating mechanisms* (e.g. spousal support and interaction style between partners). Finally, *sharing* some common stressors (e.g. economic difficulties) may lead to shared common affects (e.g. anxiety and dissatisfaction) in both partners. In this case, the relationship between partners' dissatisfaction is spurious, because what appears to be a crossover effect is the result of common experiences.

Westman (2001) has suggested broadening the definition of crossover to include the transmission of positive experiences and states. Accordingly, just as stressful job demands have a negative impact on the partner's well-being, positive feelings following positive

job events may also cross over to the partner or colleague and have a positive effect on the latter's well-being. From a theoretical perspective, positive emotions may be expected to cross over as well. Thus, the same suggested processes for negative crossover may operate for positive crossover.

Westman (2001) argued that if the crossover process operates via empathy, one would expect to find not only crossover of negative experiences but also positive experiences as well. Just as strain in one partner may produce an empathetic reaction in the other, which increases the recipient's strain, work engagement expressed by one partner may fuel the other partner's engagement. One can think of many positive instances, such as enjoyable experiences at one's job (reaching one's sales targets and promotion), which lead to the crossover of job satisfaction and engagement to a partner. Furthermore, crossover of positive emotions may occur indirectly, following the interaction between the partners. When one person's resources at work increase (supervisor's support and control), he or she has a positive interaction with the spouse and provides support. Finally, spurious positive crossover effects may occur in a work environment where all workers are exposed to the same levels of job resources (e.g. job autonomy and flexible work arrangements). In this case, similar levels of engagement across different individuals may not be an indication of crossover. By virtue of belonging to the same work environment, these individuals experience the same types and levels of job resources and therefore have similar levels of engagement.

The suggestion to extend crossover research to positive experiences and states is also consistent with Fredrickson's *broaden-and-build* theory (Fredrickson, 2001), which postulates that positive emotions broaden individuals' thought–action repertoires, prompting them to pursue a wider range of thoughts and actions than they typically use. In the interpersonal context, the broaden-and-build theory predicts that positive emotions broaden people's sense of self to include others and enhance individuals' identification with others, consequently producing greater feelings of self–other overlap and 'oneness' (Vaughan & Fredrickson, 2006). Such feelings may lead to positive crossover through the suggested direct crossover

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process, via empathy. The proposition to investigate the crossover of positive emotions is also in line with the growing interest in positive psychology (e.g. Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000).

Several studies have demonstrated positive crossover (e.g. Bakker, Demerouti, & Schaufeli, 2005; Bakker & Xanthopoulou, 2009; Demerouti, Bakker, & Schaufeli, 2005; Westman, Etzion, & Chen, 2009). Most of the studies that explored positive crossover focused on crossover of engagement or its components.

Engagement is defined as a positive, fulfilling, work-related emotional response that is characterized by vigour, dedication and absorption (Schaufeli, Salanova, González-Romá, & Bakker, 2002). Vigour refers to high levels of energy and mental resilience while working, the willingness to invest effort in one's work and persistence also in the face of difficulties. Dedication refers to a sense of significance, enthusiasm, inspiration, pride and challenge. The third dimension of engagement is absorption, characterized by being fully focused on and happily engrossed in one's work. An individual who is engaged at work may experience an expansion of energy and personal resources, such as positive affect and self-efficacy. In turn, this addition of resources may increase the likelihood that he or she would participate in other roles, such as providing support to partners and coworkers. The engagement literature identifies job resources (e.g. performance feedback, job autonomy, perceived advancement opportunities and supervisor support) and personal resources (self-efficacy, optimism, self-esteem etc.) that predict individual engagement.

According to the JD-R model (Demerouti, Bakker, Nachreiner, & Schaufeli, 2001; Xanthopoulou, Bakker, Demerouti, & Schaufeli, 2007), job resources (e.g. coworker supervisor organizational support) reduce job demands and their associated negative outcomes (e.g. burnout); aid in the achievement of work-related goals; stimulate growth, learning and development; and increase personal resources (e.g. self-efficacy) that enhance perceptions of control and facilitate effective functioning at work. This subsequently fosters intrinsic motivation in the form of engagement. Engaged coworkers provide more support to the focal individual, who in turn, experiences higher levels of engagement upon receiving this support. Schaufeli and Bakker (2004) demonstrated that job resources (performance feedback, colleagues support and supervisory coaching) were predictors of work engagement.

Several studies demonstrated the crossover of engagement between partners. To illustrate, Bakker et al. (2005) provided evidence for crossover of engagement among partners. Their results revealed that positive feelings of vigour and dedication (two components of engagement) expressed by one partner influenced the other partner, even after controlling for

relevant aspects of the work and home environment. This suggests a process whereby one partner who feels engaged as a result of the resources available at work is likely to express this engagement. The partner is influenced by this positive emotional state and starts feeling the same way, that is engaged. Bakker and Demerouti (2009) found crossover of work engagement in a sample of husbands and wives. The crossover of work engagement was stronger when husbands were high in perspective-taking (empathy). This finding supports Westman's (2001) suggested direct process of crossover. Similar results were obtained by Bakker, Shimazu, Demerouti, Shimada, and Kawakami (2011) in a Japanese sample. Bakker and Xanthopoulou (2009) examined the crossover of work engagement among 62 dyads of employees. Their results confirmed the crossover of daily work engagement, but only on days when employees interacted more frequently within a dyad than usual. Moreover, they found that employee's work engagement (particularly vigour), when frequently communicated, had a positive indirect relationship with partner's performance through partner's work engagement. Thus, frequent communication, which is one of the conditions of crossover, played an important role in the process. Westman et al. (2009), studying business travellers and their spouses, found that travellers' vigour crossed over to their spouses. These studies among others offer preliminary support for crossover of positive experiences and states.

While crossover of stress and strain among team members has been demonstrated, we found only one study that investigated crossover of engagement among team members (Bakker, Van Emmerik, & Euwema, 2006). Bakker et al. (2006) found that team-level engagement enhanced individual team members' vigour, dedication and absorption. They found that engagement (and especially vigour) crossed over from one employee to another, particularly on days when colleagues interacted frequently. They concluded that expressiveness manifested through frequent daily communication may increase the chances for work engagement to cross over. Similarly, Totterdell, Wall, Holman, Diamond, and Epitropaki (2004) argued and found that the extent to which affect converges between individuals in work groups depends on the intensity of their communications, because interactions are the channels of the affect-sharing processes.

Based on these findings, organizations should facilitate engagement by supplying organizational resources and developing personal resources. Furthermore, organizations may facilitate and cultivate frequent exchanges between engaged colleagues to promote the crossover of engagement among employees. The end result of such a process may be an 'engaged organization'.

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