

# All in the Family: Work–Family Enrichment and Crossover Among Farm Couples

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This study expands upon the contextualization of the work–family interface by examining positive work–family experiences within the farming industry. Both individual and crossover effects were examined among a sample of 217 married farm couples. Results demonstrated multiple significant relationships between self-reported attitudes, work–family enrichment, and health outcomes. In addition, crossover effects reveal the importance of individual attitudes (husband work engagement and wife farm satisfaction) for spousal work–family enrichment and health outcomes. Furthermore, individual work–family enrichment was positively related to spousal psychological health and negatively related to spousal physical symptoms. Many of these findings remained significant after controlling for work–family conflict. Overall, our results suggest the potential beneficial impact of the integrated work–family dynamic associated with the farming profession for positive work–family experiences. Implications of these findings, as well as directions for future research, are discussed.

**Keywords:** work–family enrichment, crossover, psychological health, family business, farming

A recent trend within the work–family literature is an emphasis on contextualization due to the fact that the interaction between work and family is a dynamic process that varies according to one’s particular occupational and family situation (Kossek, Baltes, & Matthews, 2011). A unique setting that has been relatively neglected is that of family businesses. This represents a significant omission because family businesses necessitate an interesting context in which family members cooperate to achieve mutual business goals. Furthermore, a key distinguishing factor of family businesses is their tendency to emphasize the health and well-being of family members as an important part of business goals (Rothausen, 2009). To address this gap, the current study examined work–family experiences among married farm couples.<sup>1</sup>

Although farming is commonly recognized among the most stressful and hazardous occupations in the United States, a feature that is often overlooked within occupational health research is the unique social and psychological environment in which farmers are immersed. Gregoire (2002) notes that work in this occupation is intimately tied with nearly every aspect of farmers’ own lives and the lives of their families across several generations. Because of the close proximity and inseparable nature of the work and family domains within this setting, the farming industry provides an

appropriate context to explore work–family issues in a family business setting.

The current study advances the contextualization of the work–family interface by (a) examining a novel population, (b) focusing on both individual and dyadic work–family relationships, and (c) emphasizing the positive side of the work–family interface. Specifically, we examine several relationships concerning work–family enrichment (WFE)—when work and family domains enhance one another (Greenhaus & Powell, 2006)—and the process by which positive work–family interactions occur among farm couples. Both individual and crossover effects (i.e., the dyadic process by which attitudes and experiences are transferred from one partner to another; Westman, Brough, & Kalliath, 2009) are examined.

## Theoretical Background

Theoretical rationale for our hypotheses stem from the overarching theme that work, family, and life roles blend together in the farming context. Within the context of role theory (Kahn, Wolfe, Quinn, Snoek, & Rosenthal, 1964), we expect individual attitudes, work–family experiences, and overall well-being to be linked together within and across husbands and wives. Role theory postulates two competing perspectives: role scarcity and role enhancement. The role scarcity perspective suggests that engaging in one role makes participating in other roles more difficult (i.e., work–family conflict; WFC). In contrast, the role enhancement perspective states that energy, skills, and resources in one role may promote functioning and facilitate involvement in other roles (i.e., WFE; Marks, 1977). We focus on positive attitudes and WFE.

<sup>1</sup> Because of the demographic makeup of those employed in the farming profession, the current study examined male farmers with female spouses, as this represents the majority of farming couples.

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It is well established that WFE is a bidirectional construct, because work may enrich family experiences and vice versa. However, in the present study we examine the overall construct of WFE—rather than separate directions—because of the unique farm setting as it pertains to work and family domains. Specifically, farm families have different definitions of “work” and “family” than previously studied samples, with much more overlap regarding work and family activities. For example, Trussell and Shaw (2007) note that work and leisure are not completely separate entities for farm families; instead, these activities often overlap and become infused into daily life. Moreover, farming is commonly referred to as a lifestyle and “way of life”—more so than any other industry—because of the unique sociocultural context of the profession (Vanclay, 2011). Melberg (2003) perhaps states it best, suggesting that “Unlike in most families, work and family roles are intertwined in farm families and the boundaries between work and family, duties and relaxation are often unclear” (p. 56). Therefore, we believe it makes theoretical sense to examine the overall construct of WFE rather than distinguishing directionality between the two domains.

### Positive Work–Family Experiences

WFE theory posits that work (family) experiences can improve the quality of one’s family (work) life because work resources may lead to a positive affective state at home, or vice versa (Greenhaus & Powell, 2006). One way in which this can happen is via attitudes such as work engagement and satisfaction (e.g., Ilies, Wilson, & Wagner, 2009; Siu et al., 2010). We examine these attitudes among husbands and wives, respectively.

### Work Engagement

A construct receiving increased attention regarding positive work–family experiences is the attitude of work engagement. Work engagement is defined as a positive work-related state of mind in which workers have an energetic and effective connection to their work activities (Schaufeli, Bakker, & Salanova, 2006). Much of the research on engagement, however, has focused on beneficial outcomes within the work domain with little attention given to engagement’s contribution to the family domain and general health outcomes.

The few studies that have examined work engagement in relation to the family domain seem to demonstrate positive effects. For example, Siu et al. (2010) found that work engagement was positively associated with work–family facilitation among a sample of hospital and factory workers. Given that employees with highly integrated work and family roles tend to show stronger work–family spillover effects (Ilies et al., 2009), it seems especially likely in the current population. Based on role theory, we believe that farmers with higher engagement are more likely to involve their families in their work experiences due to the positive mood that their work creates, thereby creating a synergy between the work and family domains.

*Hypothesis 1a:* Farmers’ work engagement will be positively related to their WFE.

Furthermore, a recent review of the engagement literature suggests that to date, few studies have examined work engagement’s

relation to health, and the results from these studies are inconclusive (Bakker, Albrecht, & Leiter, 2011). One study that has examined this relation—Hakanen and Schaufeli (2012)—found that work engagement was negatively related to depressive symptoms and positively related to life satisfaction. The current study sought to build on this finding by examining global psychological health and short-term physical symptoms.

Engagement represents a significant portion of one’s work-related well-being. However, given the blending of family and business systems within farm families, and paired with the centrality of farmers’ profession to their overall lifestyle (Gregoire, 2002), engagement is also likely to have a significant impact on farmer’s overall well-being. For example, greater engagement will likely lead to less psychological worry and general anxiety, as positive attitudes in the work domain may be transmitted to general psychological functioning (Marks, 1977). Furthermore, this enhanced functioning may prevent—or at least decrease the intensity or perception of—short-term physical symptoms that individuals experience on a daily basis.

*Hypothesis 1b:* Farmers’ work engagement will be positively related to their psychological health and negatively related to their physical symptoms.

### Farm Satisfaction

Wives were also expected to experience greater WFE stemming from their attitudes regarding the farming lifestyle. It is well established that satisfaction in one life domain is related to satisfaction within other life domains (e.g., Ilies et al., 2009). Accordingly, wives’ satisfaction with the unique occupational lifestyle associated with farming—regardless of their own primary occupation—likely has implications for their work–family experiences and general well-being. This has not been examined previously and represents an important concept to consider, especially in settings where work and family are highly interrelated between spouses. As such, we propose two exploratory hypotheses examining spouses’ satisfaction with her *partners’* occupational lifestyle in relation to WFE and health outcomes.

Farm couples lend an appropriate sample to explore this issue because spouses typically contribute to farm duties even when employed off the farm. Moreover, the conceptualization of farming as an occupation *and* a lifestyle represents a crucial factor that distinguishes farm families from nonfarm families (Vanclay, 2011). Accordingly, wives that are highly satisfied with the farming lifestyle will likely experience less competition between roles and have an open-mind regarding positive work–family interactions and activities due to the integration of work and family roles. Extending upon WFE and the role enhancement perspective (by examining individual satisfaction with spousal occupational lifestyle), we propose the following:

*Hypothesis 2a:* Wives’ farm satisfaction will be positively related to their WFE.

There is a well-established link between job satisfaction and mental and physical health outcomes (e.g., Faragher, Cass, & Cooper, 2005). However, previous research has focused on individual job attitudes and neglected attitudes associated with a spouse’s occupation and the work–family environment that it

creates. Given that individuals are embedded within the larger family system, and paired with the well-established assumption that the work–family experience is a joint function of both person and context, it stands to reason that satisfaction with a spouse's occupation/occupational environment is important to consider in relation to health outcomes. Further rationale for this relation comes from the concept of gain spirals posited by conservation of resources theory (COR), suggesting that those possessing resources are likely to gain more resources with time (Hobfoll, 2001). Satisfaction stemming from a spouse's occupation may act as a surplus resource resulting from a meaningful family life, thereby increasing the tendency for positive attitude spillover into one's psychological and physical well-being.

*Hypothesis 2b:* Wives' farm satisfaction will be positively related to their psychological health and negatively related to their physical symptoms.

## WFE and Health

Recent research has demonstrated evidence that positive work–family experiences may enhance one's general mental and physical well-being (e.g., McNall, Nicklin, & Masuda, 2010). Furthermore, Van Steenbergen and Ellemers (2009) assert that supporting employees in combining work and family roles may enhance their well-being. Given that work and family are inextricably linked due to the nature of the farming profession (Gregoire, 2002), we sought to replicate these findings with our current sample. We also extend the literature by examining WFE's relation to self-reported physical symptoms. Based on the role enhancement perspective and gain spirals described above, we propose that WFE will relate to superior psychological and physical well-being because of the improved personal functioning created by WFE.

*Hypothesis 3:* For both spouses, WFE will be positively related to individual psychological health and negatively related to individual physical symptoms.

## The Positive Crossover Process

Crossover theory posits that individuals in relationships are influenced by their partners, and therefore the behaviors and attitudes of one member of a dyad cannot be fully understood in isolation. Interestingly, little is known regarding work–family interactions among family businesses and the self-employed, as these individuals are usually excluded from analyses. Moreover, Westman et al. (2009) have called for increased examination of positive crossover (i.e., the transfer of pleasant attitudes/experiences between couples). Therefore, we examine several direct crossover relationships between husbands and wives. Direct crossover occurs when the experience of one partner directly elicits a response in the other partner, and typically occurs among closely related people sharing a great deal of their lives together (Westman et al., 2009).

## Attitude Crossover

Positive crossover often occurs when individual energy is directly transmitted to the partners' home resources (Demerouti, 2012). Positive attitudes are one way of transmitting energy to

one's spouse, and work engagement has been proposed as a central construct in positive work–family experiences (Bakker & Demerouti, 2013). Although crossover effects are commonly examined among parallel constructs between spouses, few studies have examined direct crossover involving nonparallel constructs. We propose that husbands' work engagement will be related to wives' experience of WFE and overall health outcomes. Applying COR theory and the concept of gain spirals to crossover, when farmers are highly engaged they may not only enhance their own resources, but also create a positive, resourceful atmosphere for their spouses. This positive atmosphere may thereby enhance wives' work–family interactions and well-being.

Previous research has also demonstrated that attitudes regarding the work *environment*, in addition to individual engagement attitudes, may crossover to influence partners' work–family experiences (Ho, Chen, Cheung, Liu, & Worthington, 2013). Because the farm lifestyle is a large part of wives' livelihood (and pertains to both work and family domains), it was expected that wives' attitudes regarding the farming lifestyle would be associated with husbands' WFE and health outcomes. When wives experience higher satisfaction with the farming lifestyle, this is likely to be evident in their husbands' work–family interactions and general well-being due to the intimate work–family setting in which the couple is nested. This aspect—crossover of wives' attitudes regarding their husbands' occupation—has not been examined within previous crossover research and represents a novel contribution to the literature.

*Hypothesis 4:* Individual attitudes (husband work engagement, wife farm satisfaction) will be positively related to spousal WFE.

## WFE Crossover

Although previous research has provided evidence that individual WFE tends to be related to personal health outcomes (e.g., McNall et al., 2010; Van Steenbergen & Ellemers, 2009), few studies have examined the potential for WFE to impact spousal health. One study was found that has examined this phenomenon. Hammer, Cullen, Neal, Sinclair, and Shafiro (2005) found that for both husbands and wives, positive work–family experiences were negatively related to spousal depression. Furthermore, Bakker and Demerouti (2013) have recently proposed that one's experience of WFE can have direct effects on spousal well-being.

As noted previously, the health and well-being of family members often represent important goals for family businesses (Rothausen, 2009), and farm families in particular. We believe that WFE may serve as a mechanism by which farm families meet this goal, as positive work–family experiences create enhanced individual functioning. Furthermore, because work and leisure activities often meld together as a part of daily life among farm families (Trussell & Shaw, 2007), it is likely that the experience of WFE is beneficial for spousal health outcomes. We sought to build on current crossover theory and research by examining the crossover of WFE onto spousal well-being. This answers the call for increased research on the positive crossover process and also advances recent research examining WFE in relation to health outcomes.

*Hypothesis 5:* Individual WFE will be positively related to spousal psychological health and negatively related to spousal physical symptoms.

## Method

### Participants and Procedure

To be eligible for participation, individuals had to be a member of a married couple in which farming was the primary occupation of the husband and wives contributed (at least in part) to farm activities. A combination of convenience and snowball sampling was used to recruit farm couples in Iowa. Couples were recruited with the assistance of the Iowa Farm Bureau, as well as via personal contacts of the first author. Separate online surveys were created for husbands and wives, and links to the surveys were emailed to potential respondents. In exchange for their participation, couples that completed both surveys were provided with a \$30 cash incentive.

The final sample consisted of 217 couples (434 individuals). Husbands and wives were primarily Caucasian (husbands: 100%; wives: 99.5%) with a similar mean age (husbands:  $M = 52.56$ ,  $SD = 11.68$ ; wives:  $M = 50.82$ ,  $SD = 11.67$ ). Most couples had children (94.4%), and 48.4% had a child currently living at home. As for off-farm employment, 20.4% of the husbands worked an additional job and 56.7% of the wives were employed off the farm. According to the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Census (2012), the sample demographics were similar to the region in which the data were collected (i.e., farmers within the state of Iowa).

### Measures

**WFE.** WFE was measured with the 18-item Work-Family Enrichment Scale (Carlson, Kacmar, Wayne, & Grzywacz, 2006). To ensure participants were reporting WFE associated with farming (as opposed to a second job), the scale was modified by replacing "job" with "farm work". The following represents an example item: "My involvement in my farm work puts me in a good mood and this helps me be a better family member." Participants responded on a 7-point scale ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 7 (*strongly agree*). This scale had adequate reliability for husbands ( $\alpha = .92$ ) and wives ( $\alpha = .94$ ).

**Work-family conflict.** Work-family conflict was measured with the 18-item Work-Family Conflict Scale (husbands  $\alpha = .91$ , wives  $\alpha = .92$ ; Carlson, Kacmar, & Williams, 2000). Similar to the WFE measure, the word "job" was replaced with "farm" and/or "farm work" for all items. An example item is "My farm work keeps me from my family activities more than I would like." Participants responded on the same seven-point scale as used for WFC.

**Psychological health.** The 12-item General Health Questionnaire (GHQ; Goldberg, 1978) was used to measure participants' psychological health. This scale includes items such as, "Have you been feeling reasonably happy, all things considered?" Participants responded to each item on a 4-point scale (0 = *not at all*; 3 = *very often*). Higher scores indicate better psychological health. Cronbach's alpha for this scale was .84 for husbands and .86 wives.

**Physical health.** Physical health was measured with the 18-item Physical Symptoms Inventory (Spector & Jex, 1998). This

scale contains a series of physical symptoms (e.g., loss of appetite, fatigue). Participants responded on a three-point scale indicating whether they had each symptom (1 = *No*; 2 = *Yes, but I didn't see a doctor*; 3 = *Yes, and I saw a doctor*). The total of all "2" and "3" responses were summed to calculate an overall physical health measure (higher scores = poorer health). Coefficient alpha is irrelevant for this scale (Spector & Jex, 1998).

**Work engagement.** Husbands' work engagement was measured with the nine-item ( $\alpha = .88$ ) Utrecht Work Engagement Scale (Schaufeli et al., 2006). The word "farming" was used to replace "job" where appropriate in order to specifically assess farm engagement. The following represents an example item: "I am enthusiastic about farming." Participants responded on a 7-point scale (0 = *never*, 6 = *every day*), with higher scores representing greater work engagement.

**Farm satisfaction.** Wives' farm satisfaction was assessed with the eight-item Job in General scale (JIG; Ironson, Smith, Brannick, Gibson, & Paul, 1989), modified to measure farm satisfaction. Example items included "good," and "undesirable" (reverse scored). Participants indicated whether each item described their experience of the farming lifestyle by choosing "Yes," "No," or "?" if they could not decide, coded as 3, 0, and 1, respectively. Higher scores represent higher levels of farm satisfaction. Cronbach's alpha for this measure was .80.

## Results

Descriptive statistics, intercorrelations, and reliabilities for study variables are displayed in Table 1. Table 2 displays partial correlations among study variables (controlling for WFC).

### Individual Effects

Hypothesis 1 was fully supported. Work engagement was positively related to husband WFE,  $r = .39$ ,  $p < .05$  and psychological health,  $r = .35$ ,  $p < .05$ , and negatively related to physical symptoms,  $r = -.18$ ,  $p < .05$ . These relations all remained significant after controlling for WFC (Table 2). Hypothesis 2 was partially supported. Wives' farm satisfaction was positively related to WFE,  $r = .16$ ,  $p < .05$  and psychological health,  $r = .36$ ,  $p < .05$ , and negatively related to physical symptoms,  $r = -.18$ ,  $p < .05$ . After controlling for WFC, farm satisfaction was still significantly related to both health outcomes, but no longer related to WFE.

For both husbands and wives, respectively, WFE was positively related to psychological health ( $r = .42$ ,  $p < .05$ ;  $r = .34$ ,  $p < .05$ ) and negatively related to physical symptoms ( $r = -.20$ ,  $p < .05$ ;  $r = -.14$ ,  $p < .05$ ). This lends support to Hypothesis 3. After controlling for WFC, WFE was still significantly related to psychological health for both husbands and wives, but no longer significantly related to physical symptoms. Therefore, Hypothesis 3 was partially supported.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>2</sup> The relation between WFE and psychological health also remained significant after additionally controlling for husband work engagement ( $r = .16$ ,  $p < .05$ ) and wives' farm satisfaction ( $r = .25$ ,  $p < .05$ ), respectively.



Table 1

*Descriptive Statistics, Intercorrelations, and Coefficient Alphas for Study Variables*

Variable	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
1. WFE ( <i>H</i> )	3.82	.45	(.92)									
2. WFC ( <i>H</i> )	2.48	.57	-.41**	(.91)								
3. Psychological health ( <i>H</i> )	27.79	4.71	.42**	-.50**	(.84)							
4. Physical symptoms ( <i>H</i> )	3.49	2.89	-.20**	.23**	-.33**	—						
5. Work engagement ( <i>H</i> )	4.97	.87	.39**	-.08	.35**	-.18**	(.88)					
6. WFE ( <i>W</i> )	3.83	.49	.37**	-.12	.26**	-.15*	.21**	(.94)				
7. WFC ( <i>W</i> )	2.31	.57	-.11	.41**	-.17*	.04	-.04	-.29**	(.92)			
8. Psychological health ( <i>W</i> )	27.62	4.95	.28**	-.25**	.34**	-.11	.07	.34**	-.37**	(.86)		
9. Physical symptoms ( <i>W</i> )	3.52	2.82	-.17*	.12	-.16*	.25**	-.10	-.14*	.20**	-.39**	—	
10. Farm satisfaction ( <i>W</i> )	21.77	4.35	.16*	-.20**	.21**	-.09	.07	.16*	-.25**	.36**	-.18**	(.80)

Note. WFE = work–family enrichment; *H* = husband; WFC = work–family conflict; *W* = wife. *N* = 217.

\*  $p < .05$ . \*\*  $p < .01$ .

### Crossover Effects

Hypothesis 4 was partially supported. Husband work engagement was positively related to wives' WFE,  $r = .21$ ,  $p < .05$ , and this relationship remained significant after controlling for WFC. Wives' farm satisfaction was also positively related to husbands' WFE,  $r = .16$ ,  $p < .05$ . However, this relation was no longer significant after controlling for WFC.

Hypothesis 5 was fully supported. Husband WFE was positively related to wives' psychological health,  $r = .28$ ,  $p < .05$  and negatively related to wives' physical symptoms,  $r = -.17$ ,  $p < .05$ . Similarly, wives' WFE was positively related to husbands' psychological health,  $r = .26$ ,  $p < .05$  and negatively related to husbands' physical symptoms,  $r = -.15$ ,  $p < .05$ . All four of these relationships remained significant after controlling for husbands' and wives' WFC.

### Discussion

The purpose of this study was to investigate positive work–family experiences among a novel sample. Of specific interest were relationships between attitudes, WFE, and health outcomes among married farm couples.

### Individual Effects

Consistent with the resource enhancement perspective, husband work engagement was positively related to WFE. This is no surprise,

especially given the overlap between work and family domains within the farming profession. Furthermore, farmers with higher engagement also reported better psychological health and fewer physical symptoms. These findings are congruent with previous work engagement research (e.g., [Siu et al., 2010](#)), and also contribute to the small body of research examining work engagement in relation to health outcomes.

For wives, farm satisfaction was positively related to psychological health and negatively related to physical symptoms. This represents a novel contribution to the work–family literature, as wives' attitudes regarding their *husbands'* occupation were related to beneficial outcomes. Although researchers typically focus on individual job satisfaction, this may not be sufficient when examining work–family issues, especially with nontraditional work environments.

In addition, WFE was positively related to psychological health for both spouses. This is congruent with previous research (e.g., [McNall et al., 2010](#)) and extends the literature by examining the relation between WFE and short term physical symptoms. Paired with the findings discussed previously, an interesting area for future investigation may be to examine longitudinal data to investigate WFE as a potential mediator in the process by which attitudes (i.e., engagement, satisfaction) contribute to health outcomes among closely related couples.

### Crossover Effects

As predicted, wives reported more WFE when their husbands reported higher work engagement. Therefore, we provide evidence

Table 2

*Partial Correlations Among Study Variables After Controlling for Husbands' and Wives' Work–Family Conflict (WFC)*

Variable	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1. WFE ( <i>H</i> )	—							
2. Psychological health ( <i>H</i> )	.27**	—						
3. Physical symptoms ( <i>H</i> )	-.12	-.26**	—					
4. Work engagement ( <i>H</i> )	.39**	.36**	-.17*	—				
5. WFE ( <i>W</i> )	.39**	.25**	-.14*	.20**	—			
6. Psychological health ( <i>W</i> )	.23**	-.29**	-.08	.05	.26**	—		
7. Physical symptoms ( <i>W</i> )	-.15*	-.12	.24**	-.09	-.09	-.35**	—	
8. Farm satisfaction ( <i>W</i> )	.10	.15*	-.06	.06	.10	.30**	-.13*	—

Note. WFE = work–family enrichment; *H* = husband; *W* = wife. *N* = 217.

\*  $p < .05$ . \*\*  $p < .01$ .

that one partner's work attitudes might enhance their own, as well as their partners' WFE. Wives' farm satisfaction, however, seems to have a stronger relation to husbands' WFC than to husbands' WFE. Taken together with the individual effects, these findings highlight the importance of considering workers' attitudes regarding their own *and their spouse's* occupation for determining work–family outcomes.

Regarding health outcomes, to the extent that husbands and wives reported more WFE, their spouses reported better overall psychological health and fewer physical symptoms. These results advance crossover research and suggest the importance of positive work–family experiences not only for one's own psychological and physical well-being, but also for the well-being of one's spouse. In addition, wives' farm satisfaction was positively related to husbands' psychological health, again demonstrating the importance of spousal attitudes.

### Accounting for WFC

Taken as a whole, our findings highlight the importance of taking into account both positive (WFE) and negative (WFC) experiences when examining the work–family interface. Many of the proposed relationships remained significant after controlling for husbands' and wives' WFC, thus demonstrating the unique effects associated with WFE in predicting psychological and physical health. However, a look at the partial correlations in Table 2 suggests that WFC may play a larger role in the relations between attitudes and health outcomes. For example, farm satisfaction was no longer significantly related to individual or spousal WFE after controlling for WFC. This aligns with previous research suggesting that negative experiences in life generally have a greater impact than positive experiences (Baumeister, Bratslavsky, Finkenauer, & Vohls, 2001). It is interesting, however, that farmers' work engagement was positively related to husbands' and wives' WFE and unrelated to WFC. Similarly, work engagement was significantly related to WFE and individual health outcomes after controlling for WFC. This supports Bakker and Demerouti's (2013) assertion that engagement represents a crucial construct to consider with regard to positive work–family experiences and crossover.

### Theoretical Implications

The current findings provide insight into the ways in which positive work–family experiences occur among farm couples and expand upon the growing trend concerning the contextual nature of work–family experiences. Furthermore, we extend crossover research by demonstrating the crossover of individual attitudes to spousal WFE and general well-being.

An interesting area of future investigation would be to examine whether WFE and WFC differ in prevalence based on occupation. Future theoretical developments may seek to incorporate speculation as to which types of work contexts may lead to increased WFE compared with WFC, and vice versa. For example, farming represents a unique occupation in that workers are typically self-employed *and* working in close physical proximity to their families. It is possible that either or both of these features may have played a role in our current findings.

Perhaps the most important implication is the idea that satisfaction with a *spouse's* occupational lifestyle—in addition to satis-

faction with one's own job—is an important aspect to consider when examining work–family issues, especially when one spouse has a contextually unique occupation. We encourage further examination of this phenomenon to determine if this effect generalizes. Specifically, researchers may examine spousal attitudes toward their partner's work situation and explore whether certain job contexts (i.e., occupations with high permeability and/or low flexibility) allow more crossover between spouses.

### Practical Implications

The most obvious implication of the current findings is that farm couples should be aware of the potential beneficial effects that their attitudes (i.e., work engagement, farm satisfaction) can have on their own, as well as their partners' WFE and well-being. Given the overlap of work and family in this context, the attitudes and experiences of one partner seem crucial for spousal well-being. Furthermore, our results suggest the importance of considering the potential impact that individual career choices have on one's spouse. Simple awareness of the impact that individual decisions can have on one's spouse will lead to better work–family experiences.

As for more global implications, although the current sample is rather unique, our findings suggest that it may be valuable for organizations to provide opportunities—to the extent that it is possible—to let work and family overlap. This may be beneficial in that it not only allows the employee to spend time with family members, but could also serve an educational purpose by providing family members with a better understanding of their spouse/parents' career. Finally, our crossover findings suggest that organizational programs designed to improve worker attitudes, well-being, and work–family balance should broaden their focus to include employees' spouses. Doing so will likely make the program more successful by increasing positive experiences for the whole family, rather than just a single employee.

### Limitations

First of all, because we collected cross-sectional data, causal conclusions cannot be made. For example, higher WFE may contribute to higher levels of engagement and satisfaction rather than vice versa. It is also possible that those with higher psychological health are more energetic and have a more positive outlook on life, which in turn may contribute to positive work attitudes. While this is a limitation, our results provide initial evidence for positive WFE experiences and crossover among farm couples. These results, in turn, can be used to direct follow-up studies among other novel populations. Second, because of the use of convenience sampling, the results of the current study may be partially due to who volunteered to participate in the study. On a related note, because of the relatively small sample size, the current findings may potentially represent an overestimate of the actual population parameters (Ioannidis, 2008). Accordingly, future studies are encouraged to examine whether the current results can be generalized to other populations.

### Conclusion

The current study establishes individual and dyadic relationships between attitudes, WFE, and health outcomes among farm

couples. We build upon previous theory and research by exploring the positive side of the work–family interface and extend the current focus of work–family contextualization by examining a novel sample. Given that work–family experiences differ based on the occupation in which someone works, researchers are encouraged to further explore family business populations—as well as professions in which spouses collaborate on work tasks—to broaden our understanding of the work–family interface.

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