Work–Family Conflict in Coaching I: A Top-Down Perspective

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As numerous qualified women exit the workforce because of the challenges of balancing work and family, investigations of the work–family interface have become increasingly important. Research has indicated how multilevel factors (i.e., individual, organizational, and sociocultural) play a role in work–family conflict. Little research has examined these factors in relation to each other, however. In sport management, Dixon and Bruening (2005) argued that higher level factors (sociocultural and organizational) shape and constrain lower level behaviors (organizational and individual), which ultimately influence the perception and consequences of work–family conflict. The primary purpose of this investigation is to test and further develop Dixon and Bruening's multilevel framework. The current study used online focus groups for data collection from 41 National Collegiate Athletic Association Division I female head coaches with children to examine the factors that impacted work–family conflict from a top-down perspective. The results illuminated the experiences of the coaching mothers and the factors that affected their job and life satisfaction at each of the three levels. Particular attention was paid to how higher level factors such as work climate and culture shaped and constrained lower level attitudes and behaviors such as individual conflict and time management. These relationships highlighted how individual attitudes and behaviors reflect larger structural and social forces at work, and not simply individual choices.

Title IX has increased the number of females who participate in athletics from approximately 16,000 individuals at its inception in 1972 to about 180,000 in 2006 (Acosta & Carpenter, 2006). At the 30th anniversary of the statute in 2002, lawmakers debated whether Title IX had accomplished its purpose and therefore should cease to exist. Supporters of the law have argued that Title IX is more than simply a tool to increase participation of women in athletics. There is now "a generation of women who have grown up in a post-Title IX era whose daughters are now second generation beneficiaries of Title IX" (Acosta & Carpenter, 2004, p. 5). As more

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women play sport, we would expect that an increasing percentage of women would continue their sport careers as coaches. This has not been the case, however (Acosta & Carpenter, 2006). In spite of the increasing number of participants, scholars have argued that women face unique and inevitable challenges in pursuing coaching and administration as careers, including the male-dominated nature of the field, a lack of social networks and role models, inequalities between men's and women's sports, a general lack of administrative support, and reported conflicting interests between the work and nonwork realms (e.g., Inglis, Danylchuk, & Pastore, 2000; Kelley, 1994; Knoppers, 1992; Weiss & Stevens, 1993).

Although it receives only limited attention in coaching, a growing number of scholars have demonstrated an interest in the conflict between work and nonwork, particularly work–family conflict (Dixon & Sagas, in press; Eby, Casper, Lockwood, Bordeaux, & Brimley, 2005; Hart, Hasbrook, & Mathes, 1986; Inglis et al., 2000; Sagas & Cunningham, 2005). In other professions work–family conflict has been found to be associated with high turnover rates among working mothers (Hewlett & Luce, 2005). In fact, Hewlett and Luce, in a comprehensive U.S. study of over 2,400 women ages 28–55, found that 43% of women with children have voluntarily left work at some point in their careers, particularly when their children were preschool aged. This finding among women in general suggests that work–family conflict might also be a challenge for female coaches who have children. Although the work–family conflict literature in general is growing rapidly (for reviews see Eby et al., 2005; Kossek & Ozeki, 1998; Lee, Carswell, & Allen, 2000), very little of it has examined sport contexts. We contend that these contexts will provide particularly salient and informative ground for the investigation of work–family conflict. The current study seeks to capitalize on that opportunity by investigating the antecedents of work–family conflict among National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) Divison I female head coaches with children.

Several questions emerge from a multilevel examination of work–family conflict in coaching. These questions provide the basis of inquiry for the current investigation, which consists of two parts, both aimed at testing and elaborating Dixon and Bruening's (2005) multilevel model of work–family conflict in sport (see Figure 1). Part I, the present piece, examines from a top-down perspective the individual-, structural/organizational-, and sociocultural-level factors that impact work–family conflict among coaching mothers. In a broad sense, we illuminate the experience of work–family conflict among coaching mothers in their terms. In doing so, we also specifically seek to answer the following research questions:

1. What factors impact the experience and consequences of work–family conflict at the individual, organizational/structural, and sociocultural levels?

2. How do higher level factors shape and constrain lower level attitudes and behaviors?

Part II, which will follow in a subsequent issue, extends the analysis by examining the work and family outcomes that result from role conflict in this setting and the methods by which coaching mothers seek to manage and reduce their conflict toward achieving work–family balance.

In examining the work–family interface with coaching mothers, we have organized the literature review in the following manner. First, work–family conflict as a general concept is defined and placed in its wider theoretical context. Next,
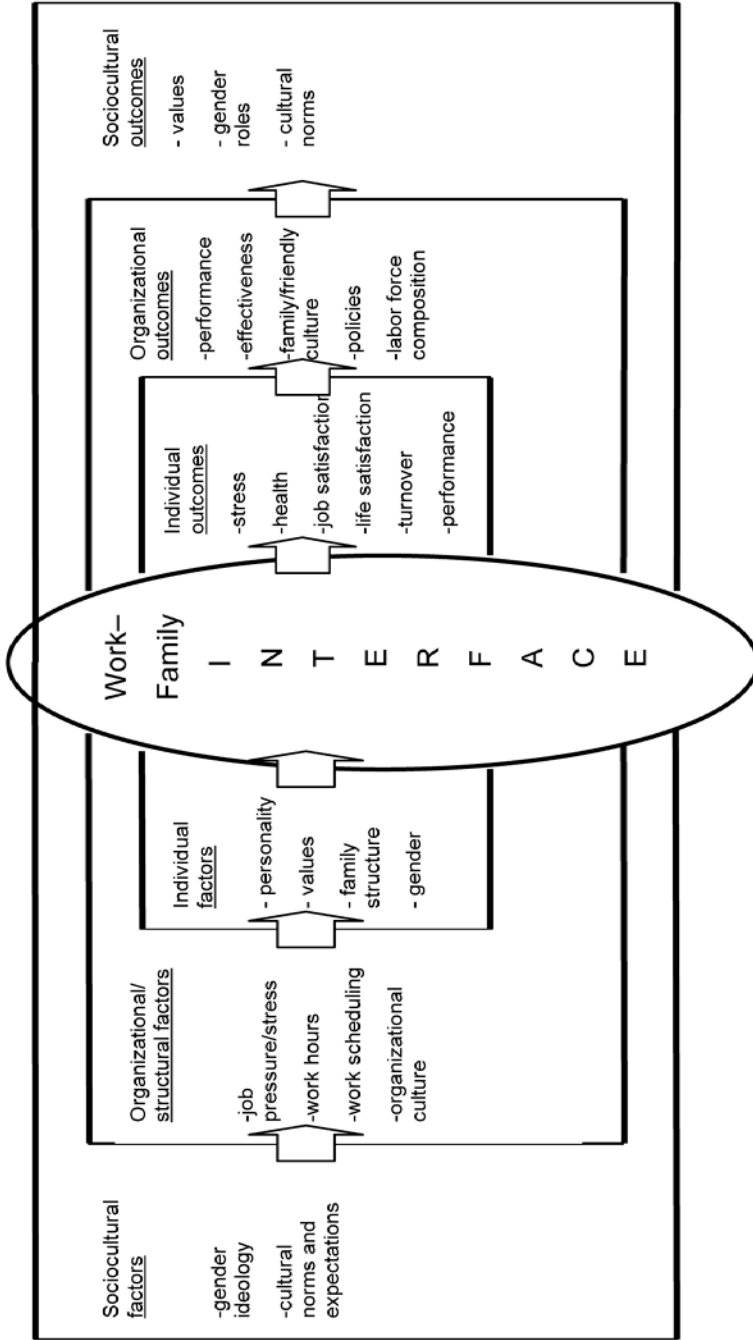
Figure 1 — Dixon and Bruening's (2005) Multilevel Framework of Work–Family Conflict in Sport (used by permission).

Sociocultural
factors

-gender
ideology

-cultural
norms and
expectations

Organizational/
structural factors

-job
pressure/stress

-work hours

-work scheduling

-organizational
culture

Individual
factors

- personality

- values

- family
structure

- gender

Work–
Family

I
N
T
E
R
F
A
C
E

Individual
outcomes

-stress

-health

-job satisfaction

-life satisfaction

-turnover

-performance

Organizational
outcomes

-performance

-effectiveness

-family/friendly
culture

-policies

-labor force
composition

Sociocultural
outcomes

- values

- gender
roles

- cultural
norms

both the value of a multilevel perspective and that of the sport context is demonstrated. Finally, a review is provided of the current research—at the individual, structural, and sociocultural levels—on both the antecedents and consequences of work–family conflict.

Work–Family Conflict

Work–family conflict is defined as a type of interrole conflict wherein at least some work and family responsibilities are not compatible and have resultant effects on each domain (Boles, Howard, & Donofrio, 2001; Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985). That is, sometimes work responsibilities interfere with family ones and vice versa, causing stress and strain on the person attempting to function in multiple roles, as well as those around him or her (e.g., coworkers, spouse/partner, children). Although it acknowledges the existence of unpaid labor, most work–family conflict research has focused on full-time employment and has defined family as "two or more individuals occupying interdependent roles with the purpose of accomplishing shared goals" (Eby et al., 2005, p. 126). Most researchers (e.g., Boles et al.; Carlson & Kacmar, 2000; Frone, Russell, & Cooper, 1997; Kanter, 1977) have agreed that work can spill into family (work-to-family conflict) and family can spill into work (family-to-work conflict). For individuals, work-to-family and family-to-work interactions can result in positive outcomes such as enhanced job satisfaction, family satisfaction, and life satisfaction. But there can also be negative outcomes such as reduced job satisfaction, conflict, poor health, stress, and job turnover (Anderson, Coffey, & Byerly, 2002; Boles, et al.; Carlson & Kacmar; Dixon & Sagas, in press; Greenhaus, Parasuraman, Granrose, Rabinowitz, & Beutell, 1989; Hammer, Bauer, & Grandey, 2003). Work–family conflict can lead to a lack of advancement and turnover in both jobs and professions (Cutler & Jackson, 2002; Wilson, 2003), which is why it might be particularly useful to examine this conflict in a coaching context as an explanation of the lack of women in coaching roles (Dixon & Bruening, 2005).

Although the work–family literature claims no singular comprehensive theory to guide research, role theory has been one of the most popular theoretical perspectives (Allen, 2001; Barnett & Gareis, 2006; Garey, 1999; Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985; Greenhaus & Powell, 2003, 2006). Role theory asserts that, as individuals take on multiple life roles, it becomes increasingly difficult to successfully manage each role. Thus, the navigation of multiple roles results in interrole conflict, usually from the spillover of demands in one role to those of another (Kahn, Wolfe, Quinn, Snoek, & Rosenthal, 1964). Two roles that can often overlap are those of worker and family member. According to Allen, "Work–family role strain is the result of the combined influence of demands and coping resources derived from individual, family, and work-related sources" (p. 417). Thus, according to role theory, work–family conflict results from a combination of factors, including the individual, family, organization, and social structure.

Multilevel Perspectives on Work–Family Conflict

Scholars have long accepted that organizations are complex systems composed of both micro- and macro-level phenomena (e.g., Kozlowski & Klein, 2000; Lewin, 1951; Oldham & Hackman, 1981). Over the past 30 years we have seen an increasing

effort to bridge the gap between these levels and employ models that incorporate a variety of perspectives (e.g., top-down, cross-level, bottom-up) rather than one single lens for exploring and explaining attitudes and behavior. Kozlowski and Klein argued that complete multilevel theories will examine both top-down and bottom-up processes. A top-down perspective addresses the influence of macro (e.g., social or organizational) levels on micro (e.g., individual) levels. For example, a top-down perspective might specify how human resource management policies exert influence on individual-level job satisfaction. Conversely, a bottom-up perspective describes how attitudes and behaviors at the micro level emerge into macro-level phenomena. For example, individual attitudes might collect to form an organizational climate. Combining these perspectives engenders a more integrated science of individual and organizational behavior.

> By focusing on significant and salient phenomena, conceptualizing and assessing at multiple levels, and exhibiting concern about both top-down and bottom-up processes, it is possible to build a science of organizations that is theoretically rich and application relevant. (Kozlowski & Klein, p. 9)

The value of multiple perspectives is that they give us a more comprehensive picture and allow us the best opportunity to understand, explain, and solve problems (Allison, 1971; Bolman & Deal, 2003).

In sport management Dixon and Bruening (2005) introduced a multilevel model of work–family conflict that examined the interactions of three levels—sociocultural, organizational/structural, and individual (see Figure 1). They argued that higher level environments shape and constrain lower level behaviors, which ultimately influence the perception and consequences of work–family conflict. They also argued that individual attitudes and responses to work–family conflict have the potential to shape organizational climate and policy from the bottom-up. They asserted that the sport industry is composed of some unique elements, making it a ripe context for work–family conflict inquiry. For example, most jobs in the sport industry require long, nontraditional hours (i.e., nights and weekends) and extensive travel, making work–family conflict inevitable. Dixon and Bruening (2005), following Inglis et al. (2000) and Knoppers (1992), also reasoned that the sport industry is highly male dominated, which highlights particular social and structural strains that are not as obvious in more gender-balanced occupations (Budig, 2002). That is, women functioning in male-dominated professions might have more difficulty negotiating their multiple roles because they are not given power to control their daily work schedules and might feel extreme pressure to perform well at work in order to prove themselves worthy of the profession (Inglis et al.).

Purpose and Significance of the Study

As Geertz (1973) argued, one of the most critical steps in theoretical development is to map a phenomenon thoroughly, providing a thick description of the content and context of the issue, the people, the structures, and the relationships involved. By using this grounded, interpretive approach, we can move from "an awkward fumbling for the most elementary understanding to supported claim" (Geertz, p. 25). The primary purpose of this investigation is to further develop Dixon and Bruening's (2005) multilevel framework of work–family conflict by examining

this conflict in high-level coaching mothers from both a top-down and a bottom-up perspective. That is, we intend to examine and further understand the social and structural factors that shape and constrain individual behavior and the experience of work–family conflict. Second, we investigate how individuals cope with conflict and how this leads to changes in both individuals and organizations.

Insight into work–family conflict of coaches adds to the literature in at least three ways. First, it can provide valuable background as to why women do or do not choose to coach, why they stay or leave, and how those decisions and behaviors impact the next generation of women in sport. Second, it can provide valuable information regarding the potenially unique nature of sport. Several sport management scholars (Chalip, 2006; Costa, 2005; Frisby, 2005; Kellett, 1999; Knoppers, 1987) have challenged researchers to examine what makes the sport industry unique, what establishes boundary conditions for current theory, and what could be areas for change, particularly in underrepresented populations. The work–family interface provides rich ground for such inquiry. That is, there seem to be unique aspects about the structure and culture of the sport industry when compared with other industries through the work–family lens. Third, it extends knowledge of work–family conflict into a new industry. Anderson, Morgan, and Wilson (2002) pointed out that nearly all work–family conflict research has been conducted in large corporate environments. They stated, "Distinctive organizational cultures that exist in different industries call into question the validity of extending conclusions and policy implications drawn from corporate studies to other industries" (p. 75). Thus, examining work–family conflict in the sport industry helps establish boundary conditions on current work–family conflict theory drawn from other industries and identifies concepts in need of change.

Individual, Structural, and Sociocultural Factors Related to Work–Family Conflict

Dixon and Bruening (2005) showed that individual-, organizational-, and sociocultural-level factors each influence the experience of and the outcomes related to work–family conflict. The following section briefly reviews current research on the antecedents and consequences of work–family conflict, with partcular attention to the multiple levels and how, when examined in concert with each other, these levels of analysis can lead to a deeper understanding of work–family conflict.

Individual-Level Factors

Research has demonstrated that in a given context individuals differ in their experience of work–family conflict and ability to cope with it because of differences in individual characteristics such as personality (Carlson, 1999; Tenbrunsel, Brett, Maoz, & Stroh, 1995), values (Carlson & Kacmar; 2000; Carlson & Perrewe, 1999; Parasuraman & Simmers, 2001), coping skills and support systems (Hughes & Galinsky, 1994; Kossek, 1990), and gender (Eby et al., 2005; Kossek; Kossek, Colquitt, & Noe, 2001; Parasuraman and Simmers; Staines & Pleck, 1984).

For individuals, the consequences of work–family conflict are lower job satisfaction, lower family satisfaction, lower organizational commitment, higher

organizational and occupational turnover, high stress, lower overall health, and lower overall family well-being (Anderson et al., 2002; Boles et al., 2001; Carlson & Kacmar, 2000; Cutler & Jackson, 2002; Dixon & Sagas, in press; Greenhaus et al., 1989; Hammer et al., 2003; Wilson, 2003). Some outcomes result from the internal feelings of conflict. For example, high stress levels are associated with the constant negotiation of roles and time constraints (Vinokur, Pierce, & Buck, 1999). Other outcomes are the result of a scarcity of resources (e.g., time, emotional energy, money). Because resources are limited, benefits in one realm (e.g., work) are achieved at some cost to the other (e.g., family; Greenhaus & Powell, 2003). As roles conflict and spill over into each other, individuals must find their own methods for negotiating their work and family worlds in order to maximize overall satisfaction and performance.

Individual-level differences can be particularly salient when examining people in the same or similar organizations or occupations. For example, coaching jobs can be similar in the types of work–family interference faced by employees (e.g., travel for play and recruiting, evening practices, emotional exhaustion), but those types of interference might be dealt with very differently by different individuals. Thus, in the context of coaching, the role of individual-level variables should be included in analysis.

Organizational/Structural-Level Factors

Although individuals have the capability and rationality to make choices about work and family, they do not make choices from an unlimited set of options. As Kay (2003) argued, "The commonly used terminology of individual and family 'choices' carries the everyday connotations of rational, pro-active decision-making, which can underplay the constrained context within which many courses of action are developed" (p. 233). Therefore, although the individual-level findings certainly have merit, one must keep in mind the possibility that contextual conditions can interact with individual behavior. It is critical to also examine these organizational-level factors.

The structural/organizational-level approach to work–family conflict is largely concerned with examinations of workplace characteristics and how they interact with individual behavior (Knoppers, 1992). The structural approach posits that work–family conflict partly results from organizational characteristics that reduce or increase conflict (Carlson, 1999; Dixon & Sagas, in press; Knoppers, 1992). That is, organizational structures can be support systems to help cope with role overload, or they can exacerbate it. Correlates of work–family conflict at the organizational level fall into three main categories: job pressure/stress, work hours/schedule, and work culture. More pressure, longer hours, lower organizational support, and a non-family-friendly culture are associated with higher work–family conflict (Clark, 2001; Dixon & Sagas, in press; Kossek, 1990; Staines & Pleck, 1984; Thompson, Beauvis, & Lyness, 1999).

It is interesting that although organizational elements have been investigated in terms of their contribution to work–family conflict at the individual level (a top-down perspective), very little research has examined the influence of collective work–family conflict on organizational outcomes such as organizational performance or effectiveness. It is not well understood how individuals collectively

shape the organizational policies and cultures in which they work and live on a daily basis.

The organizational-level approach acknowledges that conflict is not inevitable, and organizations can influence the level of conflict perceived and experienced. The application of this argument is highly salient in coaching because, typically, one finds that it is not a family-friendly profession (McKay, Messner, & Sabo, 2000; Theberge, 1992; Weiss & Stevens, 1993). The multifaceted, high-paced work setting full of practices, recruiting, off-season workouts, administrative responsibilities, and teaching duties has created an environment in which only those willing to work 12 hour days, 6 days a week, for 50 weeks a year can thrive (Knoppers, 1992; Theberge, 1992). This work culture must surely impact the experience of work–family conflict.

Sociocultural-Level Factors

Sociocultural-level factors examine the social meanings, norms, and values associated with work and family as social institutions. From a top-down perspective, this approach emphasizes that work and family are embedded in a larger system of social meanings that impact both the experience and the interpretation of work, family, and conflict. From a bottom-up perspective, individuals are not simply passive observers of behavior but active participants in their own choices and in changing the norms and structures of organizations and society.

For work and family, social norms related to gender, particularly on the definitions of masculine and feminine, have had a critical impact on perceptions and structures. Scholars have argued that American society is largely predicated on traditional gender roles of the male as worker/breadwinner and the female as domestic caretaker (Budig, 2002; Garey, 1999; Pastore, Inglis, & Danylchuk, 1996; Williams, 1995). The implications of traditional gender roles on work–family conflict are threefold. First, opportunities for women to enter and remain in male-dominated professions is often limited (Cutler & Jackson, 2002; Garey, 1999; Hewlett, 2002). Women who enter the coaching profession have also reported that they must constantly "prove their worthiness" to continue in the profession (Inglis et al., 2000; Pastore et al., 1996).

The second implication of a traditional gender ideology is that women typically have a more difficult time maintaining both work and family responsibilities. Male-dominated jobs, like coaching, often assume that the person employed has a significant external support system, resulting in few internal support structures (Dodds, 2003; Goodstein, 1995; Inglis et al., 2000; McKay et al., 2000; Theberge, 1992). This, coupled with women usually having greater responsibility for child care, can unduly burden women who attempt to manage career and family in these settings.

Third, traditional social definitions of gender have emotional and psychological impacts. In a traditional sense, women who have children and work outside the home are often subject to feelings of guilt, self-doubt, and degradation because they feel deviant (Garey, 1999). Social norms not only exert pressure on women

to choose work *or* family but also impart a negative social connotation in choosing work *over* family.

Although social norms can influence behavior, dominant norms are not simply accepted by the subordinate group in society (Knoppers, 1992; Sage, 1998). In fact, many changes in structure and social definitions result from the individuals struggling against the dominant social group. For example, research has suggested that girls and women who participate in sport report increased androgyny (Andre & Holland, 1995; Lantz & Schroeder, 1999) and more liberal attitudes toward gender roles (Richman & Shaffer, 2000), along with an increasing sense of power over their bodies and a sense of personal empowerment (Blinde & McAllister, 1994) and increased self-esteem (Richman & Shaffer). Thus, these women have not simply accepted a dominant social definition, but have worked to change their own definition and acceptance of self, potentially paving the way for larger social changes.

Structural elements such as individual ones are also housed in a larger context of social realities and expectations built into the concepts of work and family. Thus, to understand them fully, one must also examine the larger social context of how work and family are defined and how these social definitions impact the work and family lives of both the workers and their families.

Integrating the Three Levels

Although all three levels are essential to understanding work–family conflict, they are incomplete when isolated from each other. The multilevel approach to examining work–family conflict integrates the individual and organizational influences in people's lives as they interact with each other and the larger society around them or how they develop their individual identities in connection to the social world (Dixon & Bruening, 2005).

In the context of coaching mothers, the integrative approach also seeks to merge the two social spheres of work and family into a single view of the working mother in which each sphere can inform the other. Throughout her work, Garey (1999) used the concept of "weaving" to structure her discussions of work and family. In her conceptualization, weaving represented both process and product. As a process, weaving is a constant negotiation of schedules, priorities, and tasks that represent an integrated life of a working mother. As a product, it represents the experience of women as a whole, whereby individual choices become patterns that develop and intertwine with the meaning of self and the social world. Although rooted in individual lives, we can take those experiences and attempt to make sense of the connections and patterns, "illuminating connections between individual experience and social relations and thus deepening our understanding of the social world" (Garey, p. 19). Thus, by understanding both the work and the family lives of individual coaches, we can learn more about the structure and culture of coaching and sport. The current study applies this multilevel lens to the issue of work–family conflict in coaching.

Method

Participants

Our criteria specified that participants should be mothers 40 years of age or younger and standing Division I head coaches. We sought to examine the experiences of women who had grown up as athletes in the Title IX era. The women in the study were at most 8 years old when Title IX was first passed in 1972, so their formal or organized athletic involvement has spanned the entire life of the statute. Participants were limited to head coaches in the Division I setting as a starting point to focus on the women who would be under particular pressure to succeed in the workplace and with consequently high expectations placed on them professionally.

We used snowball sampling to identify participants. Our initial list of contacts numbered 5 women whom we knew personally, and our final database numbered 85 women. Of that 85, 16 were over 40 years old, 17 never responded to our e-mail invitation to gauge interest in participation, and 1 declined the invitation. The remaining 51 women were all contacted by phone and told the details of the study. All initially agreed to participate, but 6 soon withdrew because their work commitments conflicted with the study's data-collection schedule. Another 4 failed to complete the background questionnaire, leaving 41 participants in the study.

The participants were grouped into nine focus groups. Selection was based on achieving diverse groups based on sport coached, conference affiliation, and geographic location. We sought to have 4 or 5 members with no more than 2 basketball coaches and 2 volleyball coaches per group, because they were the most represented sports. We also avoided placing coaches from the same institution or conference together. In the final group configuration, after reforming the groups several weeks into the study, Groups 1–7 each had 5 members and Groups 8 and 9 each had 4 members.

Participant Demographics

The Mothers.   The women who participated in the study ranged in age from 29 to 40 years, with an average age of 35.4 years and a mode of 34 years. The average tenure as a head coach was 6.46 years with a range of 2–10 years of head-coaching experience. They represented eight sports (basketball, cross country, rowing, softball, soccer, tennis, track, and volleyball) and 14 conferences (Big East, Horizon, Southeastern, Ohio Valley, Atlantic Coast, Sun Belt, Atlantic 10, USA, Big 10, Big 12, Pac 10, Ivy, Mountain West, and Colonial). As a group, they were very achievement oriented, which is quite typical of the population of NCAA Division I head coaches. In addition to their coaching experience, 27 of the participants had earned a master's degree and another 8 had begun working on a master's degree. One had even started a doctoral program, leaving just 9 women with only a bachelor's degree.

The Families.   Thirty-seven of the participants were in heterosexual marriages, and of the remaining participants, 1 was in a same-sex partnership in which the partner was the birth mother, 2 were divorced, and 1 was a single adoptive parent. The average number of children for each mother was 1.9, with families ranging

from one to four children. Most frequently (n = 23) the participants had one child. Seventeen mothers had two children, 3 had three children, and 1 had four children. The average age of the children was 2.6 years, with the youngest being born during the course of the study and the oldest being 10 years old. Of the 70 children, 58 were under the age of 6 (i.e., not in school all day) and 45 were age 3 or younger.

Child care choices reflected that most of the women used child care centers or home child care (n = 22). Ten of the women listed themselves as the primary caregiver, 6 listed their spouse or partner, 6 used a nanny, and 1 used a babysitter. We also asked about husband or partner's occupation, and found that 52% were employed in athletics or education, with 3 of the women having a husband or partner as their assistant coach. Eleven percent listed business as their husband or partner's occupation and another 5% of the spouses or partners stayed home with the children (other occupations did not register a sufficient number to warrant reporting). Finally, proximity of family was an important piece of demographic information: 59% of the women had no family within 60 miles, 13% had one family member (mother, brother, nephew), and 28% had two or more (parents, in-laws, aunt/uncle, grandparents) within 60 miles.

Instrument

The online focus groups followed an interview guide designed to help us learn about each participant's individual work and family situation and how she managed balancing both. (see Appendix A for interview questions and response rates.) Questions were derived from previous literature and were all open-ended. Participants were first asked to introduce themselves to the group and were invited to select a pseudonym for themselves. Some women chose to use their real name and publicly introduce themselves, whereas others used only descriptors relating to the sport they coached or conference affiliation (e.g., volleyball coach in the Southeast; see Appendix B for background questionnaire). To further protect the identities of the participants, identifying information was not required on the background questionnaire.

Procedure

The study used asynchronous online focus groups and the technology of WebCT. WebCT is an online teaching tool used primarily as a supplement to or substitute for class meetings. One particular tool WebCT offers is a discussion-group format for unlimited users, provided they have a password to enter the site constructed for their course or, in this case, research project. WebCT provides the format necessary to assemble a group of participants who are separated geographically and who have such demanding schedules that live communication is next to impossible (Burton & Bruening, 2003).

Participants were notified by e-mail when the host site was functional and each was issued a login name and password. Instructions on how to maneuver the site were included in this informational e-mail and were also included as a link on the host site. The participants were all instructed to read the information sheet and consent letter included on the site first and then to proceed with the study (assuming they agreed with the consent letter).

From there each participant completed a brief (22-item) questionnaire to provide basic demographic information (e.g., age, number of years in the profession, number of years as a head coach, number and ages of children, spouse or partner's occupation) without taking valuable time away from the online focus-group format to answer these questions. Once the background questionnaires were completed, the online focus groups commenced. The 41 women who completed a background questionnaire were placed into nine focus groups to facilitate interaction. Although Burton and Goldsmith (2002) recommended that 10–15 participants be selected for asynchronous online focus groups, the current study found that the smaller groups of 4 or 5 participants worked well because the participants would not have had the time to read responses from 10–15 fellow focus-group members, analyze them, and then post their own response to the site. As it was, two of the six focus groups were reformed 2 weeks into the study to separate the less active participants into Groups 8 and 9. The more active focus-group members from the original Groups 8 and 9 were then reassigned and, thus, given the chance to interact more in their new groups (Burton & Goldsmith, 2002).

The duration of the asynchronous online focus groups was 18 weeks (November 9, 2004 to March 2, 2005), with a new question being posted approximately each week. After all participants completed their background questionnaires, question posting began with each participant introducing herself, then following the interview-guide questions (November 16, 2004). With allowances for no new question postings during the winter holidays, the 13-question interview guide was covered in the remaining 17 weeks.

All participants were alerted to each new question posting by e-mail. E-mail was also used as a reminder to participants who initially failed to respond to a posting. All participants were able to view the question posting, and they had the option of responding to only their particular group ($n = 4$ or 5) or to all participants ($n = 41$) in the study. Just as with in-person focus groups, we, as researchers, could also then direct follow-up comments and questions privately to individuals, to certain groups, or post selected responses for all to view, which acted as prompts to stimulate further discussion. For instance, one participant shared with her 5-member focus group several "quotable" stories about her son's reactions to her work schedule and travel obligations. We chose to share with all of the participants in the study one stressful situation she described: "He had a play at school during . . . one of our volleyball matches and when I picked him up, he said 'all of the other mommies were there except for you.'" In this case, the posting elicited an additional nine responses from participants who identified with this situation.

Data Analysis

Response rates were calculated based on how many participants responded to each of the initial questions posted. We did not include follow-up posts by the same participants to the researchers. We also did not count additional posts in response to individual comments that were shared with all of the participants, regardless of their small-focus-group membership.

To establish intercoder reliability, the two researchers independently developed coding schemes based on previous research, our knowledge and experience in the

field of coaching, and our perspective on gender and motherhood in the workplace, while realizing that there would be differences in our interpretations (Goodwin & Goodwin, 1984; Kirk & Miller, 1986). After creating these independent codebooks, we discussed our coding schemes (Altheide & Johnson, 1994). In discussing the similarities and differences in our individual theme identifications within the framework of the individual, structural, and sociocultural levels, we found agreement after three rounds of discussion (see Appendix C for codebook).

To further aid in our interpretation and presentation of results, we created a composite matrix of all participants' demographic information and their coded thematic responses to assess any additional trends in the data (Miles & Huberman, 1994; For example, were there any particular issues only related to softball coaches? Did single parents comment more about organizational support than married or partnered parents?) Although these were not statistically significant relationships, nor had they been analyzed empirically, we have noted any relevant trends and demographic data throughout the results, such that the reader can gain an appreciation of the participants' background situations and representativeness of the data to the entire group (Miles & Huberman).

Results

Although it is impossible to share every participant's view on each theme, in presenting the results of the study we selected the quotes we deemed most representative of the participants' comments. The nature of qualitative research is to elicit "rich descriptions" (Creswell, 1998; Geertz, 1973), but it is also important to acknowledge the necessity of "counting" (Miles & Huberman, 1994) to assure accurate representation of the data. This being said, we included the tallies of how many participant responses were coded under each theme. This serves to present a sense of the scope of each theme, or a precise number of how many participants commented on any given theme. Miles and Huberman served to further inform our presentation of the results because we included instances of "outliers," or where small numbers of participants or even individual participants shared dissenting views. The results follow, organized around the themes and subthemes of the coding tree, as they arose from the research questions. Research Question 1 focused on the individual-, structural/organizational-, and sociocultural-level factors that impacted work–family conflict. The following section presents results pertaining to that question using individual, structural, and sociocultural levels to organize responses, with examples at each level that illumine the overall work–family experience of the coaching mothers woven throughout.

Individual Contributors to Work–Family Conflict

Competitive Drive. The coaching mothers expected a high level of success from themselves in everything they did. For instance, 16 of the participants articulated the internal pressure they felt, or placed on themselves, to achieve as both coaches and mothers. They were constantly challenged to "try to [be] Super Mom while meeting all of the demands of [their] position[s]" (Lindy, volleyball coach), or,

as other mothers elaborated, "I think that whenever I can't do something 100%, I feel lacking in areas" (Trish, tennis coach), and "I think that I am performing to the expectations I was given, but I am no where near what I expect from myself" (Liz, basketball coach).

The participants argued that their personality type definitely led to more conflict and more feelings of stress and strain both at work and at home—these same 16 participants specifically mentioned self-imposed feelings of guilt over time spent at work rather than home and time spent at home rather than work.

Valuing Family and Work.   Although the self-identified driven women felt the strain of striving to be successful at everything they did, they found common ground valuing both family and work, often verbally prioritizing family over work. Because of this ranking, they tended to feel "more stress about not spending enough time with the family than . . . not spending enough time at work" (Jennifer, soccer coach). Work tended to interfere more with family than family with work, especially for those who had difficulty compartmentalizing:

> There is a constant . . . stress at work that I carry home unfortunately. The pressure of wanting to succeed in this profession becomes so internal that it is very difficult for me to leave it at work. That naturally spills over to home life. (Beth, tennis coach)

The women said they could not see their lives as being complete without both family and work: "I feel that I am a better Mom as a working Mom, and don't know if I could stay home all the time and be happy" (Delaney, soccer coach). These dual roles inevitably created conflict when one realm spilled over into the other. This was a rather common occurrence in coaching, as 22 women indicated in their responses. Coaching is a profession that demands a level of commitment and personal investment, unlike most other professions. Even on a day off, the coaching mothers were concerned about what was in store for them at work the following day:

> Sometimes I go to the office on a Sunday afternoon while my son is sleeping and my husband is busy around the house. This gives me the mental edge I need Monday morning back at work and makes me feel as though I am not cheating my family out of anything. My husband understands this about me, but I really wish I could leave the office at the office when I come home. (Catherine, volleyball coach)

Although they valued their family time highly, work was often on the minds of the participants, affecting their stress level, quality time with their families, and even their own personal downtime.

Family at a Distance.   Another individual factor that affected the women in the study was the lack of family in close proximity. They stated that they would love to have family nearby to be able to assist in child care, especially in emergency situations with travel, and to serve as a network of personal support. The coaches who did have family close by ($n = 16$) relied on them for both of these functions and listed family as a critical factor in their ability to balance work and home. More women in the study than not, however, were without family nearby—25 of

the 41 indicated that no relative lived within 60 miles. For instance, "Our closest relative is my partner's sister and brother-in-law [approximately 2 hr away]" (Jessica, softball coach). "Our closest family is 5 hours away and because of their care giving situation [elderly grandmother stays at their house], they can only get away for a day at a time" (Catherine, volleyball coach).

> The most difficult part for us is that we are displaced from our permanent home of residence on the West Coast. Both of our children were born here in the South, but we do not have any blood relatives close by. (Lindy, volleyball coach)

The nature of the profession of coaching is that these women go to where the jobs are; therefore, they are not always able to stay close to family. For the women who had nearby family support, it was the result of their family (not the coaching mother) relocating to provide that support.

Summary.   Data from the participants reflected the contribution that individual-level factors make toward work–family conflict. Their own values and personality types, as well as their individual family supports, influenced their feelings of work–family conflict. As in previous research (Carlson, 1999), the coaching mothers placed a high value on success at work while simultaneously valuing family time, thus causing stress and strain, particularly at home. Furthermore, having little practical or emotional support from extended family also increased conflict and strain, particularly in the family realm, a finding also supported by the work–family conflict literature (Carlson & Kacmar, 2000). One of the most interesting findings, and one not previously investigated, was that for most coaches, even though they said they value both work and family, their families felt the sacrifices more than their work. This finding certainly leads us to inquire about the organizational/structural and sociocultural factors that might influence such behavior. Why are family sacrifices more common and why does that seem to be accepted as status quo among the coaching profession?

Organizational/Structural Contributors to Work–Family Conflict

Work Hours/Travel.   The most significant structural/organizational contributor to work–family conflict among Division I head-coaching mothers was the work hours and travel necessary to do the job. Take for instance the daily schedule of one of the mothers:

6:30 a.m.	Wake up call by 15-month-old
7:15 a.m.	5-year-old gets up for breakfast
8:15 a.m.	Oldest to school
8:40 a.m.	Youngest to daycare en route to work
9:00 a.m.–4:30 p.m.	Office time and training
5:00 p.m.	Get youngest from daycare
5:30 p.m.	Cook for family, games, cleaning up after dinner
6:45 p.m.	Bath time
8:15 p.m.	Bed time for youngest

8:30 p.m.   Bed time for oldest
9:00p.m.–10:00 p.m. Recruiting calls, personal mail, cleaning
10:00 p.m.   Bedtime for me
(Cassie, soccer coach)

This was an example of a "typical day" (i.e., one with no competition or travel). Twenty-five women responded to the posted question, "What is your typical day" by indicating that they spent 8–10 hr in their office each day and came home for another 1–3 hr of work after their children were in bed.

On the family side, the 14 women in the study who had infant children (less than 1 year of age) felt an additional impact with their work hours because the time the children were in bed varied every night:

So, my typical day at this point is overwhelming. We practice 7–10 a.m. right now. And my 3-month-old is not sleeping well yet—so we are on about 3–4 hours of sleep each night. My day begins at 5. My husband tries to let me sleep, but it is hard to not hear the baby. So, I get up for good at 5, feed him, make coffee, and get to work by 6–6:30. [We] practice until 10. [I] meet with my staff about practice for an hour or so, then paperwork, emails, etc. until early afternoon. We meet again as a staff late afternoon for about 2 hours to cover new things, practice, and all the things you have to do with new staff in a new job. In between all this I have meetings, phone calls, etc. My husband tries to bring the baby in to work during the day to get my fix. I try to be home at 6 to help him and allow him to nap a little. At night [I have] phone calls, email, and time with the baby. . . . Typical days do not happen for any of us, but next year might be easier as we will have more of a routine with job and child. (Liz, basketball coach)

Another participant echoed Liz's comments about the intensity of caring for an infant while having a job that demands long and irregular hours in an industry that is not structured for the allowance of such practices as maternity leave:

I still can't get over the lack of time you have to spend on anything other than the babies. [I get] mad that I don't have a normal job where I could take 6 weeks of maternity leave to focus totally on being a mother. Practices, budgets being due, recruiting . . . not something to put on hold for 6 weeks. (Jamie, rowing coach)

Travel was an added responsibility and necessity of the job that quickly turned the "typical day" into a further effort to juggle time at work with time with family. The same 25 participants discussed travel as an unavoidable expectation of the job and contributor to long work hours:

When we travel, I drop off the children in the morning on a Thursday and will not see them until Monday morning. We play our matches on Friday and Sunday. It is very difficult for those who have families. My children express quite often how much they do not like when I am gone and I struggle missing all the extra-curricular activities and events with my children's schools. (Molly, volleyball coach)

Travel also created child-care issues for the families in which the spouse or partner was also involved in athletics ($n = 18$), other professions that required travel (e.g., the 6 spouses or partners who work in sales or consulting), and the single mothers ($n = 3$). It was not always a given that there would be someone at home for the children or that these substitutes would fill the void created by having a traveling mother. "When my team travels we have had our son stay home with my husband, brought him with me, or hired someone to stay with him while we are out of town. We have done it all" (Catherine, volleyball coach).

> Where do I start? Just the other night when Brian was running a high fever and we were on [the] road . . . on the phone . . . he said, "All I want is my mommy." Or when he had a play at school during another . . . match and . . . I picked him up and he said, "All of the other mommies were there except for you." (Bailey, volleyball coach)

This last comment highlights a noteworthy and unique facet of the sport industry. Those employed in the sport industry are working when other families are participating in leisure activities. In fact, many times these coaches were providing the entertainment, in the form of a sporting event, for other families to enjoy. The participants said that their children sometimes understood, but the children also felt resentment that their mother was not involved in her own children's extra-curricular activities because she was providing them for someone else, as with Bailey's son. Thus, not only was the time of the work (i.e., evenings and weekends) a factor in creating conflict, but so was the fact that it interfered so directly with family leisure time and children's activities.

Expectations in Coaching: Autonomy Versus "Face Time."   In addition to the long work hours and extensive travel, there were other structural aspects of the profession that contributed to work–family conflict among the mothers in this study. Fourteen of the mothers said that flexibility in the workplace was one positive in the constant battle to balance work and family. Other than practices, competitions, and some meetings, work could be finished on their own time. Coaching is still far more than a 40 hour a week job, but these mothers believed that the autonomy to work where and when it was best for them was helpful for balancing their demands. A few ($n = 3$) of the mothers were outliers and disagreed, however, as the expectations in their department were based on "face time" in the office:

> I really struggle with the countless hours expected to be here whether I really need to be here or not. I can work from the house and get a lot more accomplished than coming in here just to "show my face," especially right now that I am in the noncompetitive portion of the year. (Lindy, volleyball coach)

These coaches felt a strong pressure, whether overtly stated by their administration or simply "felt," to spend considerable time in the office, especially at odd hours, to prove that they were willing to make the time sacrifices necessary to have a winning program. For these women, having children at home for whom they were responsible did not fit the cultural expectation of the department. The two other coaches shared related comments about the supposed "flexibility" of the athletic workplace. One spoke of an administrator who dictated that it was "not

appropriate to bring children along" (Catherine, volleyball coach) to conferences and events, thus limiting her flexibility in attending and decreasing her potential "face time." And the other coach who commented on the concept of "face time" related her story: "I've been told that I'm their first head coach with a baby and they really don't know what to do with me" (Kathleen, soccer coach). She felt as if she received no support for working away from the office or for saying no to additional work expectations that would require more hours away from her child.

One of the coaches whose departmental culture was based on "face time" also felt the pressure or feeling of being "expendable" or treading carefully as "our administration can dispense of us at any time for any reason" (Lindy, volleyball coach). When she felt this pressure, she said that the "make the sacrifice" culture of work, in particular coaching, dictated that she needed to be present in the office; flexibility was not a part of the scenario. Therefore, in spite of a great deal of autonomy, the pressure of office "face time" placed a considerable restraint on the choices and behavior of this coaching mother.

Summary.   The last two aspects of the structural-factors theme, leisure-time work and the pressure to be at work or be let go, lend some insight into the dynamic of family time being sacrificed when work and family collide. The coaches stated that it was usually easier, in the short term, to displace or pass-off family activities than work ones. They indicated that their families, especially young children, were more forgiving than were their work colleagues or superiors. Perhaps the children were just too young to realize (e.g., "my little girl is too young to know differently" [Carmen, basketball coach]) the choices their mothers were making, and instead accepted and valued their mother's contribution to the home, even if she was away from home or missed some activities. The coaching world, however, was not so forgiving—jobs, even careers, were on the line when work was not given priority. One can see, given these structural realities, why coaching mothers often chose work over family, even though they said they valued both and worked very hard to develop organizational skills and networks that allow them to maintain and succeed in both worlds.

Furthermore, the actual hours spent working, despite whether those were in the office, at home, or while traveling, were the one aspect of their job that the coaching mothers felt had a huge impact on their work–family interactions and saw as a great source of frustration. The pressure of Division I athletics, both in their sport and in the other sports at their institution, both explicitly and implicitly dictated that they needed to spend considerable time on their jobs. A few argued that as long as they were completing their work and performing well, these hours could be reduced or at least spent at home. Even when including those coaches who felt they did work in a department whose structure allowed them a great deal of flexibility as far as when and where they worked, however, most of the coaches felt that the overwhelming amount of time spent working in the office and traveling was the one structural contributor they would change if given the opportunity.

Sociocultural Contributors to Work–Family Conflict

Male-Dominated Nature of the Workplace.   Gender was the social construct that permeated work for the coaching mothers. They experienced the gendered nature of the sport industry as female coaches in a male-dominated profession. Although

it was apparent that some of the conferences (Conference USA) and sports (e.g., volleyball) had multiple mothers as coaches, the prevalent trend on the Division I level is that there are still more male head coaches than females in all sports except basketball (Acosta & Carpenter, 2006). As one volleyball coach explained, she felt her peers did not have the same struggles with balancing work and family because they were all men:

> I put my role as mother first, which I can do intellectually, but guilt filters in. . . . I am the only female coach in my conference. Of men with young children, all their wives stay at home. Others have [older] children. (Norah, volleyball coach)

Norah was acutely aware of her position as a minority (i.e., a female and a mother) in her conference and how time she spent away from work and with her family was time her peers spent on the job. Norah's situation reintroduces the autonomous structure of college athletics. As some of the coaches commented on the "face time" expectations in their departments, Norah made the link between the male-dominated nature of coaching and these expectations because her guilt of putting family priorities first "comes more from knowing that [her] male counterparts aren't in this situation" (Norah, volleyball coach). She felt the classic "double bind" or a tremendous pressure to spend time at work in order to stay competitive and meet departmental expectations, but at the expense of family, which lead to more guilt at home. So as hard as she tried to "intellectually" put family first and attempt to spend more time at home, she felt pressure and guilt about not spending time at work.

Five of the coaches stated that the "rules of the game" were made by men who have different supports and strains than women, yet women must play by these rules. For instance, Trish explained the family-friendly environment in her department where there were "50+ kids under the age of 5 at one point" between coaches and administrators' families (Trish, tennis coach). In this department they all worked together to find and keep daycares and to coordinate kids' activities for carpooling and supervision. But, consistent with the theme of the male-dominated nature of athletics, Trish went on to comment, "things will probably change now that we no longer have a female AD." Here, very clearly, and in line with Dixon and Bruening's (2005) model and previous research (Dodds 2003; Inglis et al., 2000; McKay et al., 2000), a sociocultural factor played a large role in shaping the structure and expectations of the workplace. The structure of the workplace is clearly not a neutral factor, but one that is open for struggle and negotiation between genders, work groups, and job-status levels.

Women's Home Responsibilities.   Beyond struggling with a male-dominated work environment, the participants also shared their opinions on how their homes were or were not gendered. Fourteen of the 21 participants who discussed their home responsibilities explained that the dynamic in their home was a division of labor based on skill or time available. One coach commented about the equality of tasks in her home:

> There isn't really a division of labor in our house. With my husband and me, it's whoever has time to do the laundry, cook, pick up the children from school,

run the dog, whatever. . . . It's only about the time factor, not the gender factor. (Trish, tennis coach)

When asked to identify a stressful time at home, however, this same coach revealed that there was a gendered division of responsibilities because she was the child-care coordinator. Whenever there was a problem with child care availability, the burden fell on her:

A stressful time at home where I feel like I'm neglecting work is when I have child-care issues. I use university students and sometimes it's difficult to schedule them around their classes. If I don't have it completely lined up, it's very stressful and I end up not being able to get my office work done. (Trish, tennis coach)

She did not refer to these issues as shared with her spouse, but as *her* stressors. Thus, even in a home where responsibilities were fairly balanced, this mother carried extra responsibility. One coach summed up this sociocultural dynamic that she attributed to "most moms": "In my home, as much as my husband participates in cooking, cleaning, and caring for the kids, I am definitely the 'head coach' of the house. The needs of the children are instinctual to me (like most moms)" (Katie, volleyball coach).

In the two families in which the partner or spouse did not work outside the home and in the one family in which the spouse only worked outside the home during his wife's off-season, the participants reported that they still regularly assisted in home and family responsibilities. An example of this arrangement is Jessica, who stated, "Even though I work outside the home and support my partner and child financially, I also do most of the housework" (Jessica, softball coach). Although the dynamic of the coaching mother being the only parent employed full-time outside the home is present in just three families, it is interesting to note that those coaching mothers still fulfilled at least their share of the family responsibilities.

In the three other family structures (i.e., single parent, spouse or partner as assistant coach to participant, and household in which responsibilities were not balanced), household and family responsibilities varied. Both divorced women commented that their ex-husbands lived locally and handled childcare in most travel-related situations. One of the women whose husband was her assistant discussed how they brought their son with them to the office, practice, and on team trips most of the time. She said, "At training, he's around the water jugs, within earshot . . . the girls say hi and they love him" (Kathleen, soccer coach). They shared parenting responsibilities and relied on her husband's sister for care for their son at times when he could not be with them (e.g., at games, during meetings). The final family structure represented in the data was the home with unbalanced responsibilities. Three participants shared details of their daily home existence with husbands who travel extensively ($n = 2$) or coach ($n = 1$). The following quote relays the typical day of one of the women whose husband travels for work.

I wake up when my daughter wakes up (6 a.m.–7 a.m.-ish). We get ready, eat, and head off to day care. I get to work around 9 a.m. and put in the day's work of e-mails, phone calls, training, paperwork, etc., and then pick up my

daughter by 5 p.m. We play outside or read books until dinner . . . bathe her . . . more play time until . . . she's off to bed around 8–8:30 p.m. I usually catch up on work . . . and go to bed around 9:30 p.m. Whew. I'm tired writing this. (Lucy, volleyball coach)

Regardless of the family structure in regard to work outside and inside the home, the participants were actively involved in caring for their homes and their families.

The Way Women "Are Wired": Social Expectations of Mothers.   The final contributor to sociocultural-level work–family conflict was what the participants described as a difference in gender orientation toward children and family. None of the women placed blame or indicated their husbands or partners were uninvolved in their children's lives, but they did discuss how they believed women were just "wired differently" (Jennifer, soccer coach). One of the basketball coaches explained, "Every day someone says to me, 'I don't know how you do both.' It's harder than I thought. I'm not sure how 'the husbands' just automatically go to work all day and see their children at night" (Liz, basketball coach).

The women felt a need to be good mothers to their children, which implied spending time with them and making them a priority over work. When they chose work over family, they felt guilty or, as one coaching mother stated, "my heart strings are being pulled most of the time" (Lindy, volleyball coach). Furthermore, the women felt they needed to interact with their children during the work day, not just before and after work. One had even based their living situation and work schedule around being able to do so.

Because we live [close] I can usually run home for lunch, or my partner and son can come into the office and bring me lunch or say hello. Some days are really packed and this cannot happen, but most of the time when I have a longer day, I will go in early and make sure I can take a break and see them before the late evening. On days we do not train, I stay home later in the morning, spend some time with my son—take him to a toddler tumble class . . . head into the office and work on paperwork or have meetings. On nice weather days my partner and son walk down and pick me up from practice, or attend games. . . . I have gotten more creative with taking time off in the mornings when I can to allow catch up time with my family. Often I take [my son] into my office; he has a box of toys he plays with which allows me to see him more. (Jessica, softball coach)

Sixteen of the women in the study did not feel that men made this type of choice as often as women, and they felt they were not adequate mothers if they did not take this time and make the work sacrifices to be with their children. "I am so torn some days as to being at work then being home, and am I giving my all to both?" (Liz, basketball coach). These sentiments were consistent with Garey's (1999) arguments about the impact of traditional gender definitions on individual behaviors. In this case, the social pressure did not necessarily create more work–family conflict for the mothers, but certainly impacted the way they felt about their roles as worker and mother and how they *should* prioritize them.

A Top-Down Perspective

Research Question 2 asked how the higher level factors shaped and constrained lower level attitudes and behaviors (i.e., a top-down analysis). From this top-down perspective, there were at least three significant findings from the coaches with regard to how the multilevel factors shaped their experience of work–family conflict. First, traditional definitions of a coaching job, family roles, motherhood, and fatherhood clearly shaped the workplace, the family, and feelings of conflict. Hegemonic sociocultural definitions of work, particularly coaching, assumed a workplace where the worker could commit not only his time and energy, but his spouse's, as well. Thus, workers who fit that model succeeded in that workplace, and others who did not have those resources (i.e., they had more home responsibilities or their spouse also worked) struggled (Knoppers, 1992). Coaching mothers certainly felt the organizational/structural constraints of long hours, extensive travel, and "face time" in the office and narrow definitions of success that deal almost exclusively with on-field performance and very little with overall athlete development. These structural constraints were traced by the mothers back to a male-definition of success in the workplace.

The results highlight the need to critically examine the assumption in the coaching world that working more and working longer equate success. Is the ethic of "face time," (i.e., that one demonstrates commitment to the profession by being visible in the office) a healthy and positive model for the coaching profession? Does this ethic subtly or overtly exclude a certain group of employees (i.e., those who desire work–family balance) from coaching, such that coaching becomes an occupation only for those who are willing to sacrifice all nonwork commitments or interests? Is it possible that coaches could be equally productive in less time and that they should be rewarded for their efficiency? Sport in general engenders a greedy definition of success and sacrifice in which athletes and coaches are praised for sacrificing all other aspects of their lives in pursuit of achieving their goals (Dixon, Bruening, Mazerolle, Davis, & Crowder, 2006; Sage, 1998). These coaching mothers, however, indicated that this was a narrow-minded ethic. They argued that they placed equal value on sport and family, pursuing each with equal passion. Is it possible for the coaching world to value and embrace a more holistic definition of success?

Second, on the individual level, the mothers defined themselves as "driven" and "achievers" and were willing to accept the ramifications of their personalities on their behavior (i.e., the stress of trying to do it all and do it well). They still felt the added social pressures placed on them for trying to do so, however, and the subtle implications that sometimes choosing work over family was not acceptable. This was obvious in their feelings of guilt over not spending time with their families and their emphatic expression that men did not experience this same sense of guilt. Note, this does not mean that men do not experience these feelings, but all the women in this study felt strongly that women experience more guilt over family sacrifices, which indicates those guilty feelings are embedded in socially defined expectations of gender.

The pervasive guilt among coaching mothers calls us to question whether or not coaching fathers also feel the strain of not spending time with their families and if there are social and structural constraints on them expressing their desire to

achieve more balance. There is some evidence that in male-dominated professions there might be stronger sanctions for putting family first, thus leading men not to take advantage of available work–family benefits (Thompson et al., 1999). As sport clearly embraces a hegemonic masculine culture (Messner, 1992), this study highlights the need to examine the social pressures and guilt that men also feel in light of the work–family interface.

Furthermore, it is not clear from this study how actual performance impacts work and family tensions. From a strain-based role-conflict perspective (Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985), one might surmise that losing would increase tension and anxiety at work, which would spillover into the family realm, creating additional strain at home. From a role-enrichment perspective, however, it is possible that family roles might serve as a buffer from negative events or stressors at work and vice versa (Greenhaus & Powell, 2006). This relationship is important to continue examining, especially in this population of achievement-oriented women; that is, what happens when they are not achieving in the way they think they can or should be, especially at work?

Third, findings from the current study show that the aspect of the coaching mothers providing leisure and entertainment, while other mothers and families are enjoying it, might be an organizational/structural factor of coaching, and perhaps the sport industry, that has a unique impact. Not only were there logistical complications of finding child care at nontraditional hours to allow for the women to provide these services, but there were also feelings of resentment. The coaches' children expressed disappointment to their mothers that they, the mothers, were not able to participate in the children's activities. The mothers were too busy providing these activities for others. On the other hand, the coaches often exposed their children to women's sport by having them involved at practices, games, and maybe even travel. So, as a result of their mothers providing leisure and entertainment to others, the children of the coached might benefit from broadening their definition of sport participation and promoting gender equity; both goals of Title IX. The long-term consequences of this dynamic, although beyond the scope of the current study, have definite implications for the sport involvement of the coaches' children, as well as their perceptions of work and family in the sport world. The current study lays a foundation for these issues that certainly warrants future study.

Congruent with Dixon and Bruening's (2005) multilevel perspective on work–family conflict, the current findings demonstrate how sociocultural factors (e.g., gender roles and hegemonic definitions) shape and constrain both structural and individual factors, and how structural factors (e.g., "face time," expectation that more hours worked yields a better result) shape and constrain individual factors as they related to work–family conflict. They illuminate how individual-level behaviors (e.g., stress and guilt) and choices (e.g. sacrificing family time for work obligations) might not simply have been the result of working parents negotiating their lives, but of much larger structural and social realities that influenced those choices (Kay, 2003).

The current study, by providing a thick description and interpretation of the context and everyday realities of coaches, certainly contributed to the authors' understanding of the challenges facing individual coaches and the occupation of coaching (Geertz, 1973). This description is not an end, however. Instead, it opens the door for more critical thinking and theorizing. In this case in particular, it paves

the way for inquiry into what several scholars (e.g., Amis & Silk, 2005; Frisby, 2005) suggest is a much needed critical examination of the structure and culture of sport, one that goes beyond the search for more efficiency and effectiveness in management, and "empowers individuals by confronting injustices and promoting social change" (Amis & Silk, p. 357). That is, now that we have illumined some critical structural issues in coaching, particularly with reference to the work–family interface, further investigation can build on those issues to develop theory and to promote strategies for change.

The Next Step

Representing the first part of a two-part inquiry, this study's aims were to illumine the multilevel factors that influence work–family conflict among coaches from the top-down and to explore the ensuing implications for sport. This portion of the study, however, did not examine or explain the consequences of work–family conflict among the coaches. That is, how does work–family conflict impact their work and their families? In order to understand the importance of work–family conflict, we must also examine the consequences at the various levels. By itself, the current study could leave one with the impression that these coaching mothers are merely passive victims of the constraints placed on them. It does little to explain how individuals cope with stress and strain of the role conflict, or how they attempt to strategically negotiate both their work and family responsibilities such that they can achieve maximum satisfaction in both realms. Social scientists argue strongly, however, that individuals are not passively shaped by their environment, but are active in the formation of their own identities (e.g., Messner, 1992). Furthermore, role theory purports that individuals seek to alleviate both the feelings of stress and the actual conflict brought on by conflicting roles (Greenhaus, Collins, & Shaw, 2003). In the specific context of work and family, role theorists argue that individuals will employ both individual and organizational supports to both reduce conflict and find balance (Allen, 2001; Greenhaus et al., 2003; Kahn et al., 1964). The next logical step, therefore, is to examine both of these issues: consequences of work–family conflict and the active, strategic pursuit of work–family balance. In order to further develop Dixon and Bruening's (2005) framework, and to deepen our understanding of the impact and implications of work–family conflict in the coaching profession, Part II of this study will examine these issues.

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Appendix A

Focus Group Interview Guide With Response Rates

Individual

1. Describe a day in the life—is there such a thing, a general in-season then out-season, summer? ($n = 33$ or 80%)
2. How do you handle traveling with team, recruiting? ($n = 33$ or 80%)
3. Share an example of when the demands of work interfered with home life. ($n = 25$ or 61%)
4. Share an example of when the demands of home life interfered with work. ($n = 25$ or 61%)
5. Tell us about a stressful/frustrating time at home and how you handled it personally. How does your support system come into effect there? ($n = 21$ or 51%)

Organizational/Structural

1. Tell us about a stressful/frustrating time at work and how you handled it personally. How does your support system come into effect there? ($n = 21$ or 51%)
2. How do your work peers/department/administration help or hinder in these instances? ($n = 14$ or 34%)
3. Are you performing to your expectations at work? To others' expectations? ($n = 22$ or 54%)
4. Are you advancing in your coaching career as you planned? As others expect? ($n = 22$ or 54%)

Sociocultural

1. What has your sport experience been as a woman in sports? As an athlete? As a coach? ($n = 21$ or 51%)
2. What do you consider a woman's role in the home, at work, in society? What is the division of labor/home responsibilities? ($n = 18$ or 46%)
3. Are you the mother you want to be? ($n = 12$ or 29%)
4. Are you the spouse/partner you want to be? ($n = 12$ or 29%)

Appendix B

Background Questionnaire

1. How old are you?

a. 28 or under	h. 35
b. 29	i. 36
c. 30	j. 37
d. 31	k. 38
e. 32	l. 39
f. 33	m. 40
g. 34	

2. How many years have you been a head coach?
3. How long have you been employed at your current institution?
4. How would you characterize your family situation?

   a. Single, never married or partnered

   b. Living with significant other

   c. Married or partnered

   d. Divorced

   e. Widowed

5. Indicate your level of education.

   a. Bachelor's degree

   b. Some postgraduate work

   c. Master's

   d. Some post master's work

   e. Doctorate

6. What is the breakdown of your staff? (e.g., 1 full-time assistant, 1 graduate assistant, 1 volunteer)
7. If you are married or partnered, what does your spouse/partner do for a living?
8. Please list your children by gender and age (e.g., daughter–5 years old, son–2 years old)
9. Who is the primary caregiver for your child/children?

   a. Self

   b. Spouse/partner

   c. Child care facility (center or private home)

   d. Family member

   e. Babysitter

   f. Nanny

10. How many days of work have you missed in the last year due to your child/children being ill?
11. In general, describe your child's health (please use additional copies of this question to indicate health of each child). (Excellent, Good, Fair, Poor)
12. How many days of work have you missed in the last year due to personal illness (not including pregnancy/childbirth)?
13. In general, describe your health. (Excellent, Good, Fair, Poor)
14. Please list all family members who live within a 60-mile radius of you.
15. What do your parents do for a living? (e.g., Mother = College Professor, Father = Banker)
16. Please list your siblings, ages, and current occupations. (e.g., sister, 28, high school teacher and coach)
17. Is there anything unique about your particular work and/or family situation that we should know?

Appendix C

Codebook

  I. Individual
     A. Competitive Drive
     B. Valuing Family and Work
     C. Family at a Distance
 II. Organizational/Structural
     A. Work Hours/Travel
     B. Expectations in Coaching: Autonomy vs. Face Time
III. Sociocultural
     A. Male-Dominated Nature of the Workplace
     B. Women's Home Responsibilities
     C. The Way Women are "Wired": Social Expectations of Mothers