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Work–Family Conflict in Coaching II: Managing Role Conflict

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The current study examined, via online focus groups, the consequences of work–family conflict at work and at home with 41 mothers who are Division I head coaches. In addition, the authors focused on the coping mechanisms that these women used to achieve success at work and quality of life with family. Results revealed that work–family conflict influenced outcomes with work (e.g., staffing patterns, relationships with athletes, team performance), family (e.g., time spent and relationships with children and spouses or partners), and life (e.g., guilt and exhaustion, balance and perspective, weaving work and family). Coping mechanisms included stress relief, self-awareness, organization and time management, sacrificing aspects of work, support networks, flexibility with hours, and family-friendly policies and cultures. Implications are that the women work to promote change within their circle of influence. Although their efforts might not result in actual policy changes, over which they feel limited control, they might result in changes in perceptions and attitudes.

Dixon and Bruening (2005) created a model of the individual-, organizational/structural-, and sociocultural-level factors that influence both the experience of and the outcomes related to work–family conflict. They further developed their model specifically for the sport industry using data from online focus groups from a sample of NCAA Division I coaching mothers (Dixon & Bruening, 2007). Consistent with role theory (Kahn, Wolfe, Quinn, Snoek, & Rosenthal, 1964) and multilevel approaches, they found that individual-, organizational/structural-, and sociocultural-level factors all influenced work–family conflict for the coaching mothers.

Dixon and Bruening (2007) found that individual-level attitudes and behaviors were often bound by policies or cultural norms at the organizational level. For example, some athletic directors did not welcome children in the office even in cases of emergencies. As a result, some coaching mothers did not feel that they could

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bring their children to work in order to fulfill job responsibilities while managing family responsibilities. In addition, organizational-level policies were often influenced by sociocultural factors. This was primarily evident in organizations in which male head coaches had a spouse or partner at home to handle most of the family responsibilities, but female head coaches shared or assumed most of the family responsibilities with their spouses or partners or were single mothers. To further explain, some athletic directors implicitly, and others even explicitly, communicated that time spent in the office was one important measure of job commitment. The result was that some coaching mothers completed tasks in the office simply to "show their faces" when these tasks could have been completed at home, allowing them to balance family obligations at the same time. The mothers felt that male coaches in many of these organizations did not have the same family responsibilities, so putting in "face time" did not have the same type of impact on their lives. That is, hegemonic definitions of workers and work expectations created gendered assumptions in the workplace that played a critical role in shaping the behaviors of individual workers (Budig, 2002; Inglis, Danylchuk, & Pastore, 2000; Knoppers, 1992). This phenomenon of the workplace and environment shaping the worker has been labeled as a *top-down* process (Kanter, 1977; Kozlowski & Klein, 2000).

Dixon and Bruening's (2007) findings answered several questions about the interactive nature of the factors related to work–family conflict, with a specific application in the sport industry. Similar to many other studies of work–family conflict, Dixon and Bruening's was rooted in the larger realm of interrole conflict, or role theory (Kahn et al., 1964; Kanter, 1977; Barnett & Gareis, 2006). Role theory predicts that the multiple roles that individuals fill as workers (e.g., employee, supervisor) and family members (e.g., child, parent, spouse or partner, sibling) are in conflict with each other because of the limited amount of time and resources individuals have to spend on each role. Therefore, the time and energy spent in one role necessitates time and energy away from the other roles. Role theory also predicts that as individuals experience conflict in their roles, that conflict will exact a cost. Previous research has indicated that the consequences of work–family conflict include psychological distress, poor health, decreased marital or job satisfaction, reduced job performance, and intent to leave one's profession (Anderson, Coffey, & Byerly, 2002; Boles, Howard, & Donofrio, 2001; Carlson & Kacmar, 2000; Cutler & Jackson, 2002; Greenhaus, Parasuraman, Granrose, Rabinowitz, & Beutell, 1989; Hammer, Bauer, & Grandey, 2003; Hart, Hasbrook, & Mathes, 1986; Pastore, 1993; Wilson, 2003). Dixon and Bruening's (2007) findings supported this contention that coaching mothers experienced conflict in their multiple roles often because of a lack of time or energy to adequately address their goals and demands of each role.

The results from the first part of the study, however, left one with the sense that the individual coach was merely a victim of her environment, in a state of conflict or role strain with no resolution. Role theory argues that individuals do not remain in a perpetual state of strain, however, but attempt to cope with their conflict using both individual and organizational resources (e.g., family resources, peers, or supportive work cultures; Allen, 2001; Kahn et al., 1964). According to role theory, "available resources may prevent or reduce role strain by enabling individuals to cope with [the] demands" (Allen, 2001, p. 417) of multiple and conflicting roles. The current article, the second part of a two-part series, examines the manifestations of role conflict in both the work and family realms. It also investigates how individuals manage work and family role conflict, highlighting the strategies that appear to lead to more strain and those that aid in balance.

The primary contribution of the current article is to complete a multilevel analysis by examining the bottom-up, or emergent, processes related to work–family conflict in the organizational and social contexts. Just as some processes are top-down in nature, shaping individual behavior and influencing individual choices, others emerge from individual cognitions, attitudes, and behaviors, giving rise to higher level outcomes (Kozlowski & Klein, 2000). For example, an organizational climate for work and family balance emerges from the organizational members' shared perceptions of the value of having employees who reap the benefits of time spent at work and time spent with family and, as Dixon and Bruening (2007) found, time spent integrating work and family (e.g., having spouses or partners and children travel to away competitions, attend home competitions, and be included in athletic department events).

Understanding emergent processes is important for two reasons. First, these processes are often the foundation for understanding collective organizational and social norms. By uncovering the roots of organizational and social behavior, we can understand how cultures form and change over time (Geertz, 1973). Negotiations involving work and family roles map an intriguing phenomenon of the meanings behind work, family, maleness, and femaleness. Boris and Lewis (2006) contended, "Women have always worked; what has changed is the economic, political, and social meaning given to their productive and reproductive lives" (p. 91). Uncovering work–family negotiations in a variety of contexts aids our understanding of shifting gender roles, as well as the value and meaning placed on the two often-overlapping realms of work and family.

Second, emergent processes are the foundation for organizational and social change. For example, Messner (1992) contended that women actively participate in their own identity formation "both in terms of how they participate in their own subordination and how they resist" (p. 22). Identifying both sites of subordination and sites of resistance uncovers potential sources for change.

Several scholars have demonstrated how groups of individuals who collectively identify issues and solutions can bring about change at various levels. For example, Rapoport, Bailyn, Fletcher, and Pruitt (2002) argued that their "dual agenda" of organizations valuing both work and family has been a product of individuals within their own organizations recognizing their shared struggles and then working to change existing assumptions and norms. In sport, Frisby and colleagues (Frisby & Hoeber, 2002; Frisby & Millar, 2002; Frisby, Reid, Millar, & Hoeber, 2005) have demonstrated how community members and scholars working in partnership can identify and change problems through collective action. The results from their work with low income Canadian women demonstrated that actions emerging from individuals resulted in change at the individual ("getting out of the house to go participate"), organizational ("organizations were considering changes to policies and practices"), and community ("new partnerships were being created and resources were being shared") levels (Frisby et al., 2005, p. 379). It is also possible that working mothers could attempt to change the organizations in which they work, as well as the social culture, by sharing their struggles and working together to improve their collective situations as dual-role navigators.

In the case of work–family conflict, we aim to examine how individual consequences of work–family conflict might impact organizations and how individual efforts at coping with work–family conflict might illumine organizational and social structures that could become leverage points for action (Rapoport et al., 2002). These consequences and efforts could create organizational and social cultures that improve the work and family lives not just of women coaches but of all coaches, because it is possible that coaching fathers might also struggle with their dual roles. Specifically, this study, employing a bottom-up perspective, seeks to answer the following questions:

1. What are the consequences of work–family conflict for coaching mothers both at work and at home?
2. What are the consequences of work–family conflict for organizations and societies?
3. What individual and structural coping mechanisms do coaching mothers employ to aid in negotiating their role conflict?

Method

Part I of the two-part series outlined in great detail the method employed in this study (Dixon & Bruening, 2007). The following section, therefore, briefly describes the participants and procedures used for the study, with particular attention to the coding and themes specific to Part II.

Participants

The 41 participants in this study were NCAA Division I head coaches who were also mothers. The coaches ranged in age from 29 to 40, with a mean age of 35.4 years. They represented eight sports: basketball, cross country, rowing, softball, soccer, tennis, track, and volleyball. As a group, they had been head coaches for an average of 6.46 years.

There were 70 children represented in the study. The coaching mothers had an average of 1.9 children, with a range of 1–4. Most frequently ($n = 23$), the families consisted of one child. The ages of the children ranged from newborn to 10, with over half of them ($n = 45$) being under the age of 3. Most of the family structures ($n = 37$) were heterosexual two-parent families. The remaining families were a same-sex partnership ($n = 1$), divorced single parents ($n = 2$), and adoptive ($n = 1$).

Participants were selected through snowball sampling, which generated an initial database of 85 coaching mothers. Fifty-one women who met the study criteria were invited via telephone to participate. Although all initially agreed, 6 soon withdrew because of the conflict of the timing of the study with their playing season, and 4 did not complete the background questionnaire. Thus, the final study sample comprised 41 participants.

Procedure

Asynchronous online focus groups were used for data collection. While having similar properties to in-person focus groups (i.e., in-depth discussion and the ability to build off of each other's discussion; Fontana & Frey, 1994), the value of online focus groups is the ability to gather a group of participants who could not otherwise meet (e.g., because of geographic separation or conflicting schedules; Burton & Bruening, 2003). The participants were divided into nine groups designed to achieve maximum diversity based on sport coached, conference affiliation, and geographic location. Groups 1–7 had 5 members each, and Groups 8 and 9 had 4 members each.

The participants were notified via e-mail when the host site for the focus groups was functional. They were each given access to the site, a password, and the ability to choose a pseudonym if they desired. They first completed a brief (22-item) background questionnaire, then began the focus groups by introducing themselves and their family and work situations in a broad sense. To protect the identities of the coaching mothers, they were not required to provide their identity on the background questionnaire or identify themselves by name or university in the focus groups.

The focus groups lasted 18 weeks and followed an open-ended interview guide designed to learn about the work and family struggles of the women and their management tactics for balancing those two spheres (see Appendix A for interview guide and response rates). A new question was posted approximately every week, with the exception of two weeks during the winter holidays. The participants viewed the questions then were given the opportunity to respond only to their group or to the entire group of participants. Most responses were given within the groups. Just as with in-person focus groups, frequently the responses triggered further group discussion that did not strictly follow the interview guide.

Data Analysis

The data from the focus groups were independently coded by the two researchers using coding schemes developed from previous literature and experience, allowing for differences in interpretation and the emergence of new themes (Goodwin & Goodwin, 1984; Kirk & Miller, 1986). Interrater agreement was achieved after three rounds of discussion between the researchers.

The data from the focus groups were first coded by the researchers into antecedents and consequences of work–family conflict and then placed into subthemes following the multilevel approach (i.e., individual antecedents, structural/organizational antecedents, and sociocultural antecedents). The antecedents were presented in Part I of the study. In Part II, the consequences, or outcomes experienced at the individual level, were coded as work, family, and holistic consequences. Next, the means of coping with or managing conflict were also coded into individual and organizational means using a multilevel approach. Most of the coping means were individual in nature, because the women heavily relied on their own resources (support systems) and ability to tap into their organization's resources rather than on any established policies, although some organizational supports did emerge.

After coding, we created a composite matrix of all the participants' coded thematic responses (when possible, keeping in mind that not all of the participants identified themselves in the focus groups) to examine any additional trends in the data (Miles & Huberman, 1994). For one example, we tried to uncover if particular coping mechanisms were confined to or more salient in a certain demographic group or sport. Although these are not statistically significant relationships, nor have 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' situations and the transferability of the data.

As explained in Part I, it is not possible to share every participant's view of each theme. Therefore, throughout the presentation of results we have provided comments and quotes that are most representative of the participants' views. Following Miles and Huberman (1994) and Creswell (1998), we have also provided response rates to the questions and tallies of the participant responses under each theme to assist in accurately representing the data and providing a sense of the scope of each theme. While presenting the majority view, we have also provided salient examples of "outliers," or dissenting views, because they can serve to highlight areas of potential change or further discourse (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Following the coding scheme for Part II, the results are presented in an order that corresponds with the research questions. First, consequences of work–family conflict are presented, followed by coping mechanisms.

Findings: Consequences of Work–Family Conflict

The first two research questions pertained to the consequences of work–family conflict for individuals, organizations, and societies. Although some information was gathered about organizational or societal consequences, most of the results focused on the individual level. The results, therefore, are presented in the following order: individual work consequences, individual family consequences, individual holistic consequences, and structural and sociocultural consequences.

Individual Work Consequences of Work–Family Conflict

Staffing. Six of the participants commented that balancing dual roles impacted who they selected as their assistants. These coaches shared instances of how assistant coaches aided in the attempt to balance work and family. Coworkers became part of their support network, sometimes through default and often through design. The coaches mentioned how they came to rely on their staff in emergency situations:

> I . . . rely on my assistant coaches to help out a lot, too . . . makes me feel very guilty. That is not in their job description . . . even though they are wonderful friends . . . during camp when my son had to go to the emergency room in the middle of the night and my husband was out of town. One came over to watch my daughter while I was at the hospital. I missed the entire camp and my assistant not only had camp duty, but had to help me with the children. (Molly, volleyball coach)

They also discussed how they selected "family-oriented" staff—those able and willing to assume a great deal of responsibility. In addition, the participants shared how the atmosphere they tried to establish with their staff promoted camaraderie so that helping each other out, whether that was with work or family, was not viewed as a burden. "My staff and I take time to enjoy each other and we laugh a lot. We have a very good working environment so that helps" (Melissa, volleyball coach).

Relationships With Athletes. Obviously, the coaches' contact with their athletes was extensive. As a result, the impact of coaches' struggles to balance work and family was most likely greater on their athletes than any other group outside the coaches' immediate families. Six of the coaches, representing five different sports, directly addressed their athletes' reactions to the work–family conflict experienced by their coaches. These reactions were mixed, more negative while the conflict was occurring—or while the athletes were on the team—and more positive once the athletes graduated and reflected on their playing experience. For example, one coach related how her team responded to the birth of her son: "I think my players have a harder time. When my son was first born and I was spending more time at home initially, they looked upon it negatively" (Jessica, softball coach). Another coach told of her experience at a similar time in her life, immediately following the birth of her child during the midst of her team's competitive season:

> I've been here [in my office] five minutes and one of my [athletes] came in crying about how things just aren't the same . . . practices haven't been good because I'm not there . . . basically verified everything I've been . . . feeling guilty about . . . I knew my absence would cause some of the rowers to feel abandoned . . . I recruit them . . . tell them that if nothing else, this team is your second family . . . then there goes mother abandoning them. (Jamie, rowing coach)

Thus, coaches felt a responsibility to care for their athletes much like a mother would for her children. It created a strain in the relationship between athlete and coach when the coach's attention was directed elsewhere.

Two other coaches gave perspective to their relationship with their athletes, suggesting that over time the athletes could appreciate the positives of having a head coach with children. One participant shared a unique story of how her role as a coach had changed somewhat now that she had children:

> One of my players called in the middle of the night with a major issue that she wanted to talk to me about it, but since I couldn't get a sitter in the middle of the night and she did not have access to a car, I felt terrible that I couldn't physically be there for her. We just talked it out. (Bailey, volleyball coach)

Before children, she would have responded by meeting with her athlete in person, but with children she could not. She was still able to work through a difficult situation with this athlete, however, and instill more independence in all of her athletes because they appreciated that her time was not only for them. And although working toward balance created strain on the athlete–coach relationship, it appeared that it could also serve to redefine that role and perhaps to help athletes identify other sources of support to assist them with personal problems.

The second coach revealed how her athletes viewed her: "My players definitely understand I am a mother first and a coach second" (Katie, volleyball coach). Some of her athletes struggled with this while they were participating on her team, but have since communicated their appreciation of the example she set for them. They have reflected back on their time on her team and their experiences watching her juggle work and family, witnessing firsthand how balancing work and family was possible.

Team Performance. The structure of Division I coaching, including the culture of the profession, the culture of the workplace, and the expectations of the job, led to several consequences for coaching mothers related to autonomy and job performance. First, the women in the study had autonomy in the workplace. They all answered to the athletic director or appointed administrator who evaluated their performance, but many of the decisions they made (e.g., scheduling and budget management) regarding their programs were their own. The difficult aspect in that autonomy, as 5 women revealed, was making decisions that were in the best interest of their programs while minimizing work–family conflict for themselves:

> As I sit here at the calendar trying to plan our spring travel and recruiting we have to do to stay competitive, I am trying to minimize the number of times I ask my parents to come from 8 hours away to help out with our son for a 3-day recruiting weekend. (Catherine, volleyball coach)

While 3 of the women acknowledged that their work environment was one in which face time was valued or expected, others who responded (*n* = 22) had little daily accountability to a supervisor. Furthermore, this expectation of face time did not coincide with coaching experience, age, or head coaching tenure. With no one evaluating their daily work productivity, competition results and the quality of experience of their athletes were the measures of performance. As a result, in some situations these coaches could make decisions to prioritize family over work with no immediate negative consequences. But over the long term, these decisions could be detrimental to their team's performance or experience. For instance, one coach told of a time when she made the autonomous decision to take care of her sick child instead of fulfilling a recruiting responsibility:

> I was on my way to do a home visit and I received a call from daycare that my child was sick and I had to come get her. My husband was out of town so I had to turn around and cancel the home visit. I didn't get the recruit. (Katie, volleyball coach)

Another coach commented, "At times I definitely neglect the recruiting in the sense of how much I should be out there and the amount I need to be corresponding with recruits" (Beth, tennis coach).

Recruiting was the responsibility that the coaches commonly (*n* = 25) believed suffered as a result of the autonomous nature of the job. Recruiting was ultimately the responsibility of the head coach, but was a never-ending task composed of late nights of telephone calls and extensive travel. The coaches who responded felt conflicted between spending more time recruiting and time with their families. Recruiting was a task that they controlled, as far as time and effort spent, and one that was essential for success and job security. But because one's recruiting activities were autonomous, they were often the first to fall by the wayside when they conflicted with family demands.

The nature of the profession, or the structure, allowed for tasks like recruiting, in which head coaches were completely autonomous and flexible in making decisions. But, on the flipside, there were also times when there were no choices and no room for flexibility. Competition was one of those times:

> My son was 2 months old and at a race with me . . . he would not yet accept a bottle. My parents came to help. The weather was horrible, races were delayed . . . I ended up having to feed him outside in the wind and rain under my father's rain coat, on baseball bleachers in a park. I am not a good public breast feeder, without a boppy pillow for the first time. My father forgot it at the hotel. I was doing this at the same time I was supposed to be launching my crews for their race. (Jamie, rowing coach)

Babies who needed to be fed did not know that it was time to start a race. Athletes and race personnel needed a head coach to be present and engaged in order to start a race, not a coach who was simultaneously trying to be a coach and a mother. All 25 coaches who discussed their team's performance felt that their dual roles put them in situations that compromised their ability to be the best coach they could be. They could not and did not correlate specific wins and losses with family demands, and although they attempted to keep "family distractions" to a minimum, they felt there were definitely some performance consequences in their work.

Individual Family Consequences of Work–Family Conflict

Children. As the mothers attempted to balance work and family, their relationship with their children was one of the most crucial components. Eleven of the coaches responded to the question, "Are you the mom you want to be?" All 11 felt they were fulfilling their role as mothers and providing a positive childhood for their children. The women felt that they accomplished this because they were committed to being good mothers, not because of any other support in their lives. They made it happen themselves. At times, though, they experienced extra difficulty with their children in relation to obligations at work. This difficulty was most often associated with being in the most demanding part of the competitive season and the time and travel demands of a head coach and not necessarily to the sport they coached or the age of their children. Those reasons, however, did not make it any easier to respond to their children:

> I can remember after about midway through our season when my son was 2 or 4 he asked his dad if he was going to get a new mother. I thought about quitting my job on the spot. During my off-season when my daughter was 2, she told her dad as a plane flew over that Mommy lived there. I had been recruiting nonstop. (Molly, volleyball coach)

One mother in particular interpreted the questions her children were asking in a broader perspective. She also questioned her decision to pursue a coaching career if that meant affecting her relationship with her children:

> I am currently in the midst of questioning my career choice. I get a lot of input from other female coaches saying stick with it, we need coaches like you, but I cannot compromise the eternal relationships that I have with . . . my children. My daughter is 9. She will walk out of our door in 9 years and enter "her life." Half of my opportunity is already gone. Have I been able to impact her in meaningful ways? (Lindy, volleyball coach)

The coaches' relationships with their children were obviously very important. Although they tried to minimize the impact of their career choice on their children, it was clear that at least a fourth of the coaching mothers questioned whether balance was truly possible and if they were making the best choices for their families.

Relationship With Spouse or Partner. Every participant who responded (n = 11) agreed that the one area that suffered most in the effort to balance work and family was their relationship with their spouse or partner:

> At this point of our lives with a 6-week-old and 2-year-old, we are lucky if we have a 5-minute conversation with each other. I don't think I'm being a good spouse right now, however, hopefully it will get better in a few years. As long as he hasn't left me by then?!? (Jamie, rowing coach)

"I don't really remember the last time we had a 'date!'" (Delaney, soccer coach). There was rarely any "alone time" for the couples. They did spend time together caring for the children, like bath and bedtime many nights. But more often than not the coaches and their spouses or partners did not have the time, the childcare, or the energy to work on their relationships. This was a problem they felt may be "a fact of life" in the short term, but presented potential long-term relationship consequences.

Individual Holistic Consequences of Work–Family Conflict

Guilt and Exhaustion. With a predominance of driven personalities, coaches were prone to stress and discussed this as a contributor to work–family conflict (Dixon & Bruening, 2007). Consequences of that stress affected the mothers often, but were more pronounced at certain times of the year (i.e., in season) or when particularly difficult situations presented themselves at home or work. Fifteen of the mothers reported experiencing feelings of guilt as a result of the stress placed on them by others or by themselves to succeed as a parent and a coach:

> This has been a trying couple of weeks—my son is growing quickly and I am not there—my team is struggling so I struggle with both things right now. I had a minor breakdown about my career/parenting this week. (Liz, basketball coach)

They also felt guilty when they made conscious decisions to spend time with their families, but could not stop thinking about work:

> Sometimes I wonder if I can be more aggressive in recruiting, too. Spend more time on the road? So, the guilt sometimes gets to me, and I start to panic that I am becoming static, and I will not be successful. Am I becoming too comfortable? Those are questions I ask myself constantly. So, I feel guilt and stress when I start thinking of these things. (Delaney, soccer coach)

"I sit at home feeling guilty about work" (Jamie, rowing coach). The guilt that the coaches felt when they made decisions to prioritize work or family left many of them feeling on edge. Times when they tried to do it all, both work and family, left them feeling exhausted. One coach admitted that participating in the focus group made her realize just how much she does every day—writing her post to the focus group even made her tired (Lucy, volleyball coach).

Balance and Perspective. A positive consequence of attempting to juggle work and family discussed by the mothers was the perspective they gained after having a child. Seven of them specifically shared how their approach to work and hours spent on work changed once they had children:

> I do have to say that having a child has helped put my life much more in perspective! So as challenging as it is, I feel that I am becoming more balanced than I was prechild . . . especially important in the line of work that we do. (Beth, tennis coach)

The coaches found that they were better able to handle disappointments and losses in coaching when they knew they had a family to come home to afterward. They also were able to put their life roles in perspective. Unlike prechildren for many of the women, being a coach was their occupation, not their identity:

> It is a never ending balance and battle . . . I love what I do, but that is it exactly. It's what I do, not who I am. Yes, my role as coach is part of who I am, and I garner self-confidence from a job well done, but I don't really define myself through my job. My role as mother, wife, and friend is where I truly find my sense of self. (Norah, volleyball coach)

It is interesting that this study is one of the very few (see Garey, 1999 for an exception) that has reported positive findings from the attempt to juggle these highly conflicting roles. Often there appear to be many more negatives and struggles than positives when work and family collide.

Weaving. Garey (1999) introduced the term *weaving* to express the desire for women of this generation to pursue both work and family. In her study, the participants expressed that they received fulfillment from both roles and felt that their lives would be incomplete without one or the other. The coaching mothers tended to agree; 15 of them commented on their attempts to weave their multiple roles. For example, one coach said, "I feel that I am a better mother as a working mother, and don't know if I could stay home all the time and be happy" (Delaney, soccer coach).

That is not to say that there were not those stressful, guilty moments mentioned earlier, especially at certain times of the year (i.e., in season and main recruiting times), but the women chose to remain in coaching knowing that they could weave the responsibilities of work and family. "I would love to have more time to spend with my child certain times of the year, but since this is a slower time of year, you caught me at a low stress time, and I am feeling good!" (Delaney, soccer coach). These coaching mothers believed that their commitment to their dual roles was essential to their happiness. They did not wish to be mothers who had to work or coaches who also just happened to be mothers. They desired a balance. They wanted to weave these two roles. They needed the fulfillment they received from each role.

Structural and Sociocultural Consequences

Because the responses in the current study were garnered from individuals, it was somewhat difficult to assess the outcomes at structural and sociocultural levels. For example, we were unable to assess if coaching mothers performed better or worse than coaches who did not have families, nor were we able to uncover any relationships between specific organizational policies and organizational outcomes (e.g., organizational effectiveness, ability to attract employees, financial performance, etc.).

At the organizational level, however, one outcome was clearly evident from the participants in this study: turnover. As of the beginning of the 2005–2006 school year, 3 of the 41 participants had changed institutions, 6 had quit coaching altogether, 1 had moved into athletic administration, and 2 had taken high school coaching positions. That is, 12 of the 41, (about 29% of the sample) had left Division I coaching. On follow-up inquiry, those who left Division I coaching discussed the desire to obtain more work–family balance as the main consideration in their career change. Although we cannot generalize the results of this study to the entire coaching population, this study has provided initial evidence that work–family conflict is directly related to job and potentially career turnover in the coaching ranks.

There is also some evidence that the coaches worked to create a family-friendly atmosphere in their departments. As will be discussed in more detail in the coping section that follows, the coaching mothers expressed that they tried to change their athletic department's culture to be more family friendly through building relationships with their administrators, discussing family considerations during the hiring process, bringing their children to work, and doing their jobs well. Although these outcomes cannot be objectively assessed as to whether or not the women brought about actual change, there was certainly a sense that they were attempting to create organizational change as one of their coping mechanisms, which could eventually have an impact at the organizational level.

Outcomes at the sociocultural level were also difficult to uncover because of their longitudinal nature. It appears at this point that although conflict has created the awareness and need for some change at the organizational level (Allen, 2001; Budig, 2002; Garey, 1999; Hewlett & Luce, 2005), those changes have not necessarily permeated the sociocultural level. Hegemonic definitions of masculinity still form a strong hold on work–family negotiations and meanings, especially in the context of sport (see also Inglis et al., 2000; Knoppers, 1992). As individuals attempt to cope with work–family conflict, and perhaps rely on organizational supports, however, they might be influential in bringing change to their work and social worlds.

Finding Balance: Managing and Reducing Role Conflict

Research Question 3 asked about the individual and structural means of coping that the coaching mothers employed to manage their work–family conflict. Role theory predicts that individuals who experience prolonged conflict between their competing roles will seek methods for reducing the conflict or reducing the felt strain between the roles (Allen, 2001; Barnett & Gareis, 2006; Kahn et al., 1964; Kanter, 1977). Sometimes those methods involve adjusting the time or effort involved in the roles such that they are in less direct conflict with each other. For example, one might quit working to devote more time to family and reduce the constant strain. Other methods involve changing one's attitudes toward the conflict rather than reducing the conflict itself (e.g., decide to feel less guilty about the lack of time spent with one's children). Thus, the time spent does not decrease, but negative feelings about that time do.

Role-theory-based scholars have argued that seeking out and relying on organizational supports is also a method of coping with and reducing role conflict (Allen, 2001; Dixon & Sagas, in press; Greenhaus & Powell, 2003). If the organization provides family benefits such as family leave or on-site day care, the individual can rely on these as sources of support for reducing strain in the same way as he or she might rely on a spouse or partner or family member (Allen; Dixon & Sagas). As presented in the section that follows, the coaches noted that they used a variety of methods to reduce strain or conflict. They employed approaches in which they relied on both their own and organizational resources.

Individual Approaches

Stress Relief. The coaches ($n = 27$) identified a range of tactics they employed to individually cope with the stress they feel as Division I head coaches and mothers. Sometimes these methods involved forms of escape ($n = 4$): "The best thing for me is to get a massage (Jamie, rowing coach). "I have to admit—a couple beers at night have done the trick some nights better than anything else!!" (Liz, basketball coach). "Although I will say, retail therapy does help after a loss!" (Katie, volleyball coach).

More often, their coping mechanisms involved some sort of task to relieve their minds of their stress. For example, two mothers engaged in manual labor like cleaning or yard work. "When I get stressed . . . I get more organized. I usually need order to feel better. So I clean off my desk, clean the house" (Jessica, softball coach). Another said, "I also love being outside and working in the yard" (Melissa, volleyball coach). Five of the coaching mothers said they relieved stress by playing with their children. "I try to play games with my children and we like to sing/dance a lot so it makes for fun times. This allows me to escape for a little while" (Cassie, soccer coach).

> It's such a relaxing time when I come home and I put everything aside and just focus on the girls. Playing with them, watching movies, reading, being crazy, dancing, etc., is about the most relaxing activity in the universe and recharges me for the stressful things I have to deal with. (Trish, tennis coach)

These individual management methods involved functional activities that served both as productive uses of time (cleaning or spending time with children) and as escape. The most popular choice for daily reduction of felt stress, however, was exercise ($n = 9$). And, as one participant stated, taking care of oneself needed to be a priority as a coaching mother:

> First I go to yoga and make it [a] priority to get there three times a week, two if we're traveling on [a] road trip. It does mean that I leave some things unfinished at work, but in the end I am more productive for taking time for me. As mothers, wives, and coaches . . . we do an awful lot of nurturing, and if I don't really make a point of it, I don't find time to nurture myself. (Norah, volleyball coach)

Other escapes included time with spouse or partner ($n = 4$), sleep ($n = 2$), and church ($n = 1$). The coaching mothers were aware of a need for some type of outlet for the demands and pressures of multiple roles. It was quite intriguing that these responses matched well with the women's self-described driven personalities (Dixon & Bruening, 2007). Even their methods of coping with stress involved something productive.

Self-Awareness. Knowing what makes oneself work was another key coping mechanism ($n = 8$). One coach admitted that her growing awareness of her individual reaction to stress helped her get through her difficult moments and a good night's sleep helped get her back on track:

> I try to get through the day as best I can without snapping, then go to bed at night and wake up the next day with a new perspective. I try to avoid interactions with athletes and my assistant coaches when I'm feeling stressed because I don't want them to see it, or be a victim of it! (Jamie, rowing coach)

Another coach explained that both she and her husband have grown to understand her need to spend some time on a day off organizing herself for the week ahead in order to lessen her stress level. "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). Like cleaning or playing with the children, these responses revealed that managing role conflict entailed not just reducing the conflicting roles, but changing one's perspective on the conflict.

Organization and Time Management. Although having flexible work hours was considered a structural support, individuals also made personal choices about how to use the hours in a day to spend both quality time at work and with family. Thirteen of the participants acknowledged how they had learned to better manage their time and to be creative with scheduling to make sure both work and family obligations were met. "[In the] summer I hire a babysitter for the kids . . . work full days Monday, Tuesday, [and] Wednesday and take Thursdays and Fridays off" (Katie, volleyball coach). Time management mechanisms were used not to change perceptions but to reduce the conflict by maximizing time spent in each realm.

Sacrificing Aspects of Work. Seventeen of the coaches made the decision to sacrifice some aspect of their jobs to have more time for family. Typically, travel for recruiting or other professional activities took a back seat at some point so that the women could be home more:

> I do feel like I neglect my career in the area of professional development. I don't attend as many clinics, workshops, conventions, work certain camps for recruiting, etc. because that requires travel, and I would rather not leave my family for even more time than I already do. (Delaney, soccer coach)

They also discussed the internal conflict that arose for driven personalities who were trying to do it all but realizing they could not. These women knew that other coaches, their competitors, were doing more, but that they had to sacrifice aspects of their work to increase their level of family satisfaction. "[I know] that my male counterparts aren't in this situation" (Norah, volleyball coach).

It was interesting that the mothers were constantly finding ways to increase their time with their families. Although they revealed that they sometimes sacrificed family time on a Sunday to prepare for the week, for the most part they reported that work already took a large time priority, and it was family time for which they needed to fight. It seemed that the coaching mothers knew that they would complete their coaching work (i.e., recruiting, practices, tactical planning) because of the more immediate nature of the rewards and penalties for work behavior, but they absolutely had to be more deliberate about carving time for family lest coaching duties become all-consuming.

Support Networks: Family and Friends. Although most of the women did not have family in close proximity (n = 25), many of them (n = 19) still relied on members of their family for child care support. Whether it was only in emergency situations (e.g., both parents traveling on the same weekend, an unexpected NCAA tournament appearance, a child's illness) or for special circumstances (e.g., a preseason tournament abroad, extended road trips), family became an important source of coping as a practical support for child care. One coach even revealed that she regularly used extended family regardless of the cost or travel involved. "We always fly a family member in for the weekend when I am on the road" (Delaney, soccer coach). It is interesting that in the case of child care during nontraditional hours (i.e., nights and weekends), the coaches reported that the responsibility and expense was almost always that of the individual, not the organization.

Support Networks: Staff and Assistant Coaches. One of the first places the coaches began to describe how the support of a family-friendly culture could help them balance work and family, or simply remain sane, was with other athletic department staff or their assistant coaches. Five of the coaching mothers discussed how they played an integral role in creating this part of their work culture, because they hired and set expectations for their own staff. For instance, "My first assistant is the recruiting coordinator and she makes sure to schedule me [only] for the [recruited athletes] who must see the head coach. She is also integral in (my son's) life. She is his Aunt Laura" (Bailey, volleyball coach). "I usually don't share my feeling with the guilt, except with my two assistants. They are great about it. One of my assistants is also a mother. So, we try to help each other out" (Melissa, volleyball coach).

> My assistant coach also plays a pivotal role in helping alleviate undue stress. She covers for me often so I can spend time with my family. Her demeanor with me and the team helps tremendously so I don't feel guilt when I do step away to be with my family. (Deirdre, softball coach)

Staff served both as work support and personal support. Both types of support assisted the participants in the daily struggle to balance their multiple roles.

Another source of staff support came from other members of the athletic departments at the various institutions at which the coaches worked. Four of the coaching mothers related how other sport coaches and athletic department personnel played a role in supporting them, particularly from a personal standpoint. "There are a few other coaches in the department with young children, and we communicate with each other about 'kid' things and how to juggle everything during the busy times of the year" (Delaney, soccer coach). "I do talk fairly often with another female coach, no kids but married, when I need another ear" (Beth, tennis coach).

> We share space with another coaching staff in another sport and we have a great time and work AWESOME together, so that is the best place of support! I do have a wonderful Stress control counselor that works in sports psychology with my team. She and I have gotten close and she is a great resource to stay plugged in with. (Lindy, volleyball coach)

It was important to recognize that although these supports were at work, they were not provided as organizational resources. Individual coach effort sought and maintained these relationships. They were not part of any formal organizational support system for working parents. The coaches emphasized, though, that the number of working mothers in a department and the support provided by coworkers were instrumental in creating a more family-friendly atmosphere in which they felt comfortable discussing their children at work, even bringing them to campus on occasion.

Organizational/Structural Supports and Resources

Flexibility With Hours. Use of time was identified as an individual tactic that some coaches used to their advantage. The structural coping mechanism related that the individual use of time built a fairly high level of flexibility into the coaching profession. The coaches' views of work hour flexibility varied from being a support to making work seem never ending. The following section reflects the positive views of flexibility.

Eleven of the coaching mothers expressed being pleased with the flexibility that they had in their positions as head coaches and the flexible workday the profession of college athletics afforded them. "I have a lot of flexibility [with my time] being a head coach and I like that" (Lindy, volleyball coach). "I love my job and think I am a better mother because of it. I have a lot of freedom and flexibility and know this suits me better than a typical nine to five job" (Katie, volleyball coach).

The women referred to the nontraditional nature of work schedules in college athletics as the basis for flexibility and how, as head coaches, they could take advantage of the autonomy they had in setting their own schedules. "As with all coaches, our hours are nuts. So I will come in late mornings to spend time at home, or am able to leave during the day" (Liz, basketball coach).

One coach shared how she chose to use flexibility to schedule practices at a nontraditional hour of the day to allow her to be able to be at home earlier in the evening when other teams typically practice:

> We train in the morning in season and out of season. I went to this about 3 years ago and LOVE IT! In Season: I am up at 5:30 a.m. for "Quiet Time." My husband is up and leaves the house around 6:00 a.m. I get my daughter up at 6:15 a.m. to get her ready and catch the bus at 7:00 a.m. Then I get ready

> and get my son ready. I drop him off at the nanny's and head into work. We practice from 9:00 a.m.–12:00 p.m. (Lindy, volleyball coach).

Despite this example of a solution, the coaches who responded to the questions posted on how home interfered with work and work interfered with home (*n* = 15) all agreed that the hours kept by their peers are "nuts" and although the off-season or summer might allow some coaches more flexibility and family time, they all acknowledged that there were times when this was not possible. Thus, their individual attempts at managing their time, although making their jobs workable for them, did little to change the overall time-intense culture of sport.

Family-Friendly Policies. Very few of the family-friendly environments that the coaching mothers described had set policies or benefits offered by the university. Only four examples of actual written policies were discussed. Those that were mentioned ranged from including family on road trips to daycare assistance. These policies were outlined by the participants. "Games begin this week, so now we will add travel into this equation. My husband and son will make almost every trip with us. We charter so that helps . . . charters were already in place" (Liz, basketball coach). "I just signed up for a (child care) benefit with my school that is for emergencies and they come into the home" (Delaney, soccer coach).

These two examples demonstrated organizational support in the realm of child care. It is interesting that other coaches were surprised that athletic departments offered such benefits, and some expressed that these kinds of benefits would make a tremendous difference in their own struggle for balance. These policies also indicated that organizational resources can be made available if organizations were truly willing to commit to work–family balance.

The coaching mothers (*n* = 6) also agreed, however, that they probably underutilized the benefits that were available to many university employees, such as maternity leave. They argued that maternity leave was not an option for them; they simply could not take 6 weeks off from their team. This finding suggested that perhaps athletic departments need to think through the benefits that would be most helpful for their specific job situations, rather than offering a myriad of family-friendly benefits that realistically no one could use. Two of the mothers also shared the negative experiences they had when athletic administrators were unaware of family-friendly benefits and expressed uncertainty as to "how to handle a pregnant coach." Administrators who had a lack of awareness of policies and benefits or a lack of knowledge as to what policies and benefits are most applicable detracted from family-friendly policies being set in motion and successfully used.

Family-Friendly Culture. In addition to the support the coaches received from their assistant coaches and other coaches and support staff in their departments, the department administration played a large role in the establishment of a family-friendly culture. Ten of the participants discussed the family-friendly culture in their department, whereas only 2 shared examples of overtly non-family-friendly cultures. In these 10 schools, the participants said that administrators provided them with work support mechanisms and sometimes even personal support to help them in the balancing act. "I'm very fortunate to have a senior women's administrator who always has her door open for me to vent about ANYTHING. She is totally supportive, understanding, and if nothing else acts as my shrink!" (Jamie, rowing coach).

> My direct supervisor is the department "counselor," and we've worked closely for a long time. I know I can go to him if I need to talk out some stressful situations that I may be going through with my team. I probably wouldn't go to him for stressful motherhood issues, but I could if really needed. (Delaney, soccer coach)

> My administrator has been incredibly supportive by getting me away from my office if I am there too long, and saying I should take time away while the athletes are away . . . good for the family and mental health. I've taken this advice and feel focused and rejuvenated after a break. (Cassie, soccer coach)

These administrators provided the basis for a family-friendly culture that seemed to permeate the department and provided a valuable support system for the coaching mothers in trying to maintain balance. In fact, the culture created in these departments was seen as more important than actual policies for achieving work–family balance (Allen, 2001; Clark, 2001).

Beyond the day-to-day understanding and availability of the administrators, there were also steps taken that made the women feel more comfortable in their work environments: "They have always allowed me to do the administrative work on my own time and wherever I need to do it from" (Trish, tennis coach). "My administration is extremely supportive. If I can't be in the office, they just ask that I stay in touch through e-mail and by cell phone" (Katie, volleyball coach).

> My son and husband travel with us and our travel coordinator knows to make crib arrangements on the road. I am very fortunate, I know. We also have private offices so I can bring my son in if I choose to. (Liz, basketball coach)

The example that stood out the most, however, was one institution with the ultimate of family-friendly cultures:

> The entire coaching staff of females (and many other administrators) all had kids at the same time. We had something like 50+ kids under 5 at one point. Everyone was really supportive of each other and accommodating. All of us coaches try to get our kids into the same activities and share child care, etc. when possible. It's a great working environment. (Trish, tennis coach)

It is important to note that at the time this coach spoke of, the athletic director was a female, a rare occurrence at a Division I institution. The coach further speculated that "things will probably change now that we no longer have a female AD" but indicated that the transition so far had gone smoothly.

As the conversations continued about the culture of individual institutional work environments, it became apparent that as much as administrators might have assisted in the creation of a family-friendly culture, the women themselves played a role, as well. Only one mother shared how family never entered the conversation when she was hired. "I had no idea how supportive they would be. I was single when I took the job, so it was not discussed before I was hired" (Katie, volleyball coach).

But three of the mothers specifically related how they were forthright in the hiring process that family would be an important aspect of their happiness in their coaching role. They felt that this candidness went a long way in reinforcing the need for a family-friendly culture. “From the day I was interviewed, I made it clear that my family would be a part of the package” (Liz, basketball coach). “I was hired with the understanding that my husband and I would be starting a family” (Trish, tennis coach).

> I was hired here with the knowledge that I had a 1-year-old daughter. I asked the other coaches on my interview if the administration was understanding of having children. Everyone answered in the same manner that this school is very family-oriented and that has made working here less stressful in certain situations. (Melissa, volleyball coach)

One can see how the women expressed a desire for a family-friendly culture. Based on these interviews, however, it was difficult to assess if the women actually influenced the nature of their departments or if they were drawn to departments that were already family friendly.

Three other participants also made some attempt to establish a more family-friendly culture by bringing their children to their workplace from time to time. They made the point to have family be a visible extension of who they were as coaches and as women. “Often I take [my son] into my office, he has a box of toys he plays with which allows me to see him more, give him a different scene” (Jessica, softball coach).

Two of the coaches shared their experiences of having their children with them even beyond office time. “Of my four children, two went through a season at every practice and match as infants” (Katie, volleyball coach). “The children do not come with me on team trips . . . however, last year was different because I had my youngest at the end of August and was nursing her so [I] had to travel with her” (Cassie, soccer coach).

In these situations, there was no other way for the women to balance work and family. Both women relayed how that experience had led them to appreciate the culture of their workplace as fairly family friendly. It served to improve their administration’s understanding of the coaching mothers’ individual struggles and their efforts at achieving work–family balance.

One additional way that the participants ($n = 5$) assisted in the creation of family-friendly environments, at least in their opinion, was to do their jobs well. They felt that the times when they needed to be with their families rather than at work or bring their children into the workplace were not questioned because their teams were successful. For instance, one of the soccer coaches who was just coming off a NCAA Final Four appearance stated, “I feel that [my institution] has been extremely supportive and after 10 years, I have kind of figured out what it takes to run a program effectively” (Jennifer, soccer coach). And another coach directly referred to her win–loss record as a factor in her ability to influence the culture of her department:

> My team does quite well, so I often think if we weren’t winning their attitudes might be different. The two seasons I am most proud of were when I had a newborn with me, had 20-plus wins and won conference. I thought I proved a lot to my administration. (Katie, volleyball coach)

It was quite interesting that success bought these coaching mothers respect and flexibility. Only after they had proved themselves worthy in their work were they "allowed" freedom in their role management.

Discussion

The antecedents of work–family conflict and their consequences function at multiple levels (Dixon & Bruening, 2005), and it is very clear that these antecedents largely work in a top-down fashion, with higher level factors shaping and constraining lower level attitudes and behaviors (Dixon & Bruening, 2007). The mechanism for consequences of work–family conflict, however, is less clear. The consequences are mostly felt at the individual level, with an impact on both families and work. Many consequences were negative, with coaching mothers feeling that their work performance suffered to the point that they contemplated leaving the profession. Children felt the absence of their mothers, even thinking that their mothers were not returning to the household or that their mothers did not care about them. Furthermore, attempts at balancing dual-career families placed considerable strain on the marriage or partner relationships of coaching mothers. In addition, these mothers experienced tremendous amounts of guilt and exhaustion from their dual roles. There were also some positive consequences such as coaches feeling more balanced and whole as mothers filling dual roles. Several of the mothers felt that coaching enhanced their parenting and that parenthood enhanced their coaching.

Although most consequences manifested themselves at the individual level, there were consequences at the organizational level, as well. For example, potential additive effects of turnover could impact organizations with narrowing of labor force and lack of female role models in coaching. It was clear, even from this relatively small number of participants, that women were leaving the coaching profession to spend more time with their families. It does not appear that they have become less competitive or that they have not attempted to build support networks for themselves in order to stay in coaching. Instead, the structure and culture of coaching create a situation that is extremely difficult for managing career *and* family. For sport, this type of culture functions to assure that only the most "dedicated" coaches survive, serving to narrow the coaching ranks to only the most committed and seemingly productive individuals. Yet one must question the long-term impact on the profession, for both men and women, of a culture that is so single-minded and that leaves little room for any interests other than work. Furthermore, one must question the ultimate impact on both the quality of life and job satisfaction in a work climate that constantly presses for more and longer hours at the perpetual expense of family (Hewlett & Luce, 2005; Hochschild, 1997; Rapoport et al., 2002).

The negotiation of role strain and attempts to reduce conflict also operates at multiple levels. The negotiation essentially originates at the individual level, however, with individuals seeking out resources for managing their conflict. Role theorists (e.g., Allen, 2001; Barnett & Garies, 2006; Greenhaus & Powell, 2003) have argued that organizations can provide resources for management of conflict, and the coaches noted how family-friendly administrations aided in reducing work–family conflict. The coaches seemed to navigate most negotiations at the individual level through family, friends, child care, and staffing, however, often hoping that these individual negotiations would emerge into collective cultures or actions.

As argued earlier, one of the values of the emergent approach is in allowing us to understand more about the collective social and organizational norms in a specific culture. A few findings from this study highlight norms and values of the coaching culture. First, it is clear that this culture places a premium on winning and performance above all other potential outcomes, including the health and well-being of its employees. The coaching mothers worked very hard to remove family considerations such that their personal and team performance did not suffer. They were willing to sacrifice their own psychological and personal health, enduring great stress, guilt, and exhaustion such that their performance did not suffer. While this is not unique to coaching, it is different from some professions in which work performance would be clearly secondary to family or personal well-being (Boris & Lewis, 2006). The coaching culture clearly values hard work, long hours, and a visible presence at the workplace. The mothers consistently cited these characteristics as "the nature of coaching." These characteristics highlighted the strength of the coaching culture that mothers did little to question the "facts" about the coaching profession, but instead tried to work within these facts as best they could to find work–family balance.

Another value of the emergent approach is that it can highlight potential avenues for change by exposing sites of resistance to organizational or social norms that can become "leverage points for change" (Rapoport et al., 2002, p. 48). The findings demonstrated some of these leverage points. Although the coaching mothers accepted certain aspects of the coaching culture, they were willing to fight against other aspects and, in some cases, win. For example, the mothers accepted the overall working hours norm, but they were constantly challenging the norm of office face time. They questioned whether physical presence at the workplace should be the main measure of job commitment and assert that their performance was not linearly related to the amount of time spent at work (cf. Rapoport et al., 2002). In many cases, they had successfully negotiated alternate work arrangements (e.g., working from home or bringing their children to work), signaling at least small change in the organizational culture. Autonomy and the ability to manage one's own time was one of the most desired aspects of the coaching profession and one that coaches believed allowed them the best opportunity for achieving work–family balance. For coaching mothers, maximizing this autonomy seemed to be one of the strongest leverage points to advocate for change in the coaching system. The similar examples of benefits and cultures that are family friendly demonstrate that individuals can impact organizational change and organizations can adapt and become truly family friendly. One must believe that such a change would benefit all coaches with families—not just women.

Individual behaviors, however, do not always necessarily emerge into collective behavior or action (Kozlowski & Klein, 2000; Messner, 1992; Rapoport et al., 2002). In spite of small incremental changes, such as the ones we highlighted, the findings from this study demonstrated that at this point individual attempts at changing the work or social culture appear, for the most part, to be just that—not collective but individuals managing their own conflict through self-created support systems and singular work-structure negotiations. For example, the women noted the role of personal strategies for child care. When organizations did not provide child-care support for nontraditional hours, the individuals spent their own resources finding that support (e.g., relatives, nanny). This exemplifies an individual-level negotiation that works within the assumptions of the existing system, doing little to actually question or change the norms of the dominant culture.

There might be several reasons why the individual-level behaviors do not strongly emerge into collective changes in organizational or social behavior. First, there are strong structural and sociocultural barriers that prevent sweeping change (Kanter, 1977; Knoppers, 1992). Blinde, Taub, and Han (1994) argued that sport, although personally empowering, is not an effective vehicle for promoting change in gender roles or gender consciousness. Women in sport are often busy pursuing their own personal success in a highly competitive world, which leaves little time for advocacy or collective action (Crosset, 1995). The coaches in this study had precious little time between their already competing demands, without adding the concern of attempting larger-scale organizational or social change.

Second, it is rare to have enough women coaches "collectively" act to achieve change. In our study, 33 of the 41 coaches were the only coaching mother in their entire department. Thus, not only did they not feel supported in their attempts to manage dual roles but there was also a strong pressure to accept the existing culture, not ask for "special" exceptions. Furthermore, many of the coaches who did not agree with the system simply exited, leaving fewer advocates for change. For collective action to emerge, the coaching mothers would need to organize and share experiences (Rapoport et al., 2002). This is quite difficult. In fact, some of them did not even attend their own coaching conventions because of home and family responsibilities. It is interesting, however, that the participants in this study have expressed that this research has already helped them develop their social networks, not only for support but also for potential change (Hewlett & Luce, 2005). Given the design of the snowball sample, many of the participants knew other participants and were stimulated to talk about their experiences beyond the context of the focus groups. Also, others who chose to share their identities made connections with the members of their individual focus groups as a result of the study.

Finally, it appears that work–family conflict in coaching is viewed largely as a women's issue (Garey, 1999; Hewlett & Luce, 2005; Rapoport et al., 2002). For any change to occur, it must move beyond this definition to be viewed as a family issue, just as applicable for coaching fathers as it is for coaching mothers. The women in the study whose husbands or partners also worked in athletics shared how the concerns they had over managing work and family were multiplied with the dual athletic career factor. Some of the mothers even discussed the difference that having male coaches and administrators with young children made in the culture of their departments, especially when the wives or partners of these men worked outside the home. It is becoming clearer that one cannot assume men do not deal with work *and* family issues, that male coaches and administrators can work more because they have someone at home to take care of the children, or that it is in the best interest of any coach or their family to consistently work 70–80 hours a week (Hochschild, 1997). The sociocultural expectations associated with face time in athletic departments can impact male employees, as well.

Limitations and Future Directions

Several limitations, based on methodological choices, are apparent in this two-part study. First, because of the number of participants and the unique nature of the sample (Division I coaching mothers), some demographic and personal information could not be presented in the findings in order to protect the identities of the participants. We presented the demographic data only in aggregate form and provided only the sport of each coach rather than their institution or conference affiliation in order to protect the anonymity of the participants. Because of the rapport and trust established between us and the participants as we protected their confidentiality, however, we were able to collect data that was personal, reflective, and critical.

Second, there were both benefits and limitations to the use of online focus groups. The benefits were that we were able to attract a larger and more geographically diverse sample than we would have been able to garner for in-person groups. In addition, the asynchronous nature of the focus groups also allowed for the study to fit into more coaches' schedules than an in-person design in which they would have had to commit to participating at a certain time. This method would be useful with any population who is spread across a geographic area and has strict time constraints but has an interest in participating in a specific study. A latent benefit was that the participants themselves began to build their own network for support and social change through their participation. They were able to gain a sense that there were other mothers out there in similar situations, which provided a forum for encouragement, humor, and networking.

The limitation of this approach was that there was somewhat uneven participation in the groups. As indicated in the response rates (Appendix A), although every person responded to some questions, not every person responded to every question, and the participants required frequent prompting to respond to questions, unlike in-person focus groups in which, ideally, the participants are rarely interrupted or prompted by a moderator (Burton & Bruening, 2003). But what makes focus groups "more valuable many times over than any representative sample" (Fontana & Frey, 1994, p. 365) is that even those participants who responded less frequently still made contributions, and their views were reflected in the results.

Based on the findings of the study, future inquiry is needed to dig deeper into the individual experiences of the coaching mothers and into the organizational cultures specifically related to work–family conflict. First, we recommend individual interviews with these same coaches to better understand how they manage the day to day, how they respond to gender roles at work and at home, and what organizational/structural positives and negatives they experience. We have also highlighted the need to examine work–family conflict as a family issue, not simply a women's issue and, with that, recommend studies that focus on coaching fathers and on the spouses or partners of the coaches as a means to investigate the sociocultural level of work–family balance. For instance, how is family experienced differently for men and women? What role do the spouses or partners take in home and family responsibilities? How do their views on gender, work, and parenting influence the way their family operates? Second, we recommend future investigations focus on the policies and culture in athletic departments to target understanding the nature of structural/organizational practices related to work and family. This longitudinal investigation would serve the line of research well by identifying more impacts at the organizational level, what is working at individual institutions, and areas to target for change.

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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 the 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 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%)

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