

Work-family fit within college coaching

Timothy Ryan, The University of Memphis

Michael Sagas, Texas A&M University (Advisor)

**Management/Leadership
Session 2**

**Thursday, May 29, 2008
8:30 AM - 8:55 AM**

**Presentation (25-minute)
Abstract 61**

Over the past three decades, the intersection of work and family has received considerable research. Part of the reason has been the increase of non-traditional families, dual-earner partners, and the transformation of gender ideals (Dixon & Bruening, 2005, 2007; Greenhaus & Powell, 2006). Because of this, organizational scholars have attempted to aid practitioners by exploring individual, structural, and social factors that affect a family man or woman's work life, or a worker's home life.

The incongruence of work and family role demands and the conflict that arises has been termed work-family conflict (Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985), and it has been a dominant theme of work-family research (Barnett, 1998; Greenhaus & Powell, 2006) as the consequences of work-family conflict can affect both a workplace and a home (Eby, et al., 2005). Emerging work-family research has started to examine the beneficial and enriching ways that one role may enhance another role. Work-family enrichment attempts to focus on the positive interdependence and spillover between work and family roles (Greenhaus & Powell, 2006). However, within sport management, there is a gap in this area of research as little to no research has examined these potentially positive aspects of multiple role membership. One of the aims of this study, therefore, was to expand work-family research into the sport context.

Sport provides a fertile area for work-family research. Findings suggest that coaches are especially prone to work-family conflict, as their work frequently entails practices in the afternoons, non-balanced work schedules, moderate to heavy travel, and weekend and holiday obligations (Nance, 2005; Sage, 1987). As these responsibilities often conflict with prime family time, it is not surprising to see coaches at all levels leave the coaching profession to spend more time with their family (Sagas & Cunningham, 2005).

In spite of the high stress and potential for work-family conflict, many coaches find their jobs satisfying (Drake & Hebert, 2002; Sage, 1987). Additionally, anecdotal observation suggests that many coaches and athletes have had a parent who was a coach and have been able to share family experiences via sport. Conversely, many coaches are able to share their coaching experiences with members of their family and enrich their family life. Likewise, because support from a family may lead to more positive work attitudes and satisfaction and acceptance at work (Greenhaus & Powell, 2006), the family role may enhance the coaching role. Indeed, coaching, and sport in general, may allow an expansion on the understanding of the positive benefits from participation in both roles. Unfortunately, while this positive spillover between work and family may be beneficial to understand for sport managers, little is known about the factors that affect enrichment from one role to another, especially those unique to sport.

The examination of the intersection between work and family for small college coaches was conducted via an online questionnaire to explore variables that affect coaches' work-family fit. Specifically, the work variables of autonomy, supervisor support, and working hours were hypothesized to be related to all or some of the work-family variables of work-family conflict (WFC), family-work conflict (FWC), work-family enrichment (WFE), and family-work enrichment (FWE). Likewise, family variables such as spousal support, spousal working hours, spouse job-type, number of children, child sport involvement, and child sport attendance were hypothesized to be related to all or some of the same work-family variables.

Ecological theory was used to explain and predict the expected relationships between work and family factors with the work-family interface variables. In ecological theory, various individual, process, time, and context characteristics have an additive or interactive effect on the work-family interface (Grzywacz & Marks, 2000). In this way, a coach's work-family fit is determined by the way a coach interacts with the work and family environments. The more positive interactions, experiences, and/or resources an individual will have with the work (or family) environment, the more beneficial the fit. Conversely, the more negative the interactions are associated with conflict.

A total of 1408 NAIA coaches were sent the link to the online survey with information gathered from 628 (45%) surveys. Four contacts were completed as recommended by Dillman (2000), with 601 (43%) retained for analysis. Confirmatory factor analysis results suggested that the fit for coaches and their work-family interface is best explained by four work-family dimensions-WFC, FWC, WFE, FWE. Structural equation modeling (SEM) was used to explore the effects of three work factors on the four work-family variables: supervisory support, autonomy, and hours worked. Multiple regression was used to examine the effect of family variables on the work-family constructs.

2008 North American Society for Sport Management Conference (NASSM 2008)

SEM results suggest that supervisory support correlates with lower conflict and greater enrichment as significant pathways linked supervisory support with WFC ($\beta = -.25, p < .01$), FWC ($\beta = -.12, p < .05$), and WFE ($\beta = .16, p < .01$). Additionally, significant pathways linked autonomy in the workplace with lower WFC ($\beta = -.10, p < .05$), FWC ($\beta = .14, p < .01$), and WFE ($\beta = .16, p < .01$). Coach working hours was negatively linked to as significant pathways linked supervisory support with WFC ($\beta = -.09, p < .05$). In the family domain, spousal sport support, like supervisory support, was correlated with lower conflict and greater enrichment variable (WFC, $\beta = -.15, p < .01$; FWC, $\beta = -.25, p < .01$; WFE, $\beta = .15, p < .01$; FWE, $\beta = .48, p < .01$). No other family variables were significantly related to the work-family variables within the multiple regression analysis.

Using ecological theory, the work-family fit is discussed with the analogy of pants. It is suggested that the coaching environment will provide problems with fit due to coaching pressures, work schedules, and travel. As with pants that do not fit, several options are available. First, one may change the person in the environment. Second, a person may abandon the environment (pants) they are in. Or, finally, minor alterations may be done to either the individual or the environment. For managers, it is suggested to look for alterations in the environment that benefit the coach while being cognizant of the coach's home environment. Results suggest that the coaches' primary role senders have a significant impact on the coach's work-family experience. Additionally, a suggested implication is that supervisory support should be expressed during the hiring process as supervisors relate concern to the well being of the coaches' families during the time of hiring and moving transition, and continue throughout a coach's tenure. They can encourage and support those coaches, and reduce the pressure on them. With this support, it is suggested for managers that coaches be given autonomy.