Work-Family Outcomes Over Time: Utilizing Ecological Momentary Assessment to Gain Insight into the Work-Family Interface

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Introduction
In the broader management literature, scholars have long sought to understand the ways in which men and women perceive, experience, and balance the pressures stemming from work and family (Greenhause & Beutell, 1985; Kahn et al., 1964). The literature suggests that when work (family) roles demand levels of time, energy, and attention from an individual that causes them to be unable to attend to family (work) responsibilities, the individual may suffer from work-family conflict (Greenhaus & Powell, 2003). Over a prolonged period, it is expected that work-family conflict can lead to a number of negative outcomes for individuals, including increased levels of job burnout and dissatisfaction (Dixon & Sagas, 2007; Netemeyer et al., 1996), reduced levels of overall life quality (Greenhaus & Parasuraman, 1999), and increased levels of distress and dissatisfaction in both the work and family life role (Frone et al., 1997). In contrast, studies suggest that when individuals report higher levels of balance between work and family life they also report higher levels of personal well-being (Greenhaus & Powell, 2006), increased work and family role functionality (Carlson et al., 2006), and increased intentions to remain with their current employer (Williams et al., 2000). As a result, organizations and managers have a strong incentive to understand men and women who experience tension as they seek to balance work and family responsibilities.

Background and Framework
In sport management, scholars continue to seek more detail about the ways in which the culture of sport influences work-family conflict outcomes (Dixon & Bruening, 2005), especially among coaches. Research suggests that the job demands of coaches are related to experiences of stress, which affects their mental and physical well-being (Wang & Ramsey, 1998). In general, the sport industry demands long working hours that include nights and weekends, equates sacrifice to commitment (Dixon & Bruening, 2005), is frequently scrutinized by fans and media (Rynne, Mallett, & Tinning, 2006), and highly values facetime interactions (Dixon & Bruening, 2005). All of these influences converge to create an environment that is often unfavorable for work-life balance. Consequently, examining the work-family interface from the context of the sport industry may be particularly insightful. Previous research in sport management suggests that both women and men experience high levels of work-family conflict (Schenewark & Dixon, 2012), that men and women cope with this tension in fundamentally different ways (Graham & Dixon, 2017; Bruening & Dixon, 2007), and that different combinations of age and work experience (i.e., cohort effects) can have a strong influence on the amount of conflict a person experiences (Dabbs, Graham, & Dixon, 2016).

However, less is understood about the ways work-family conflict may vary within an individual over time in a real world setting. Often quantitative studies examining the work-family interface utilize scales and questionnaires that emphasize global, summary, or retrospective self-reports of experiences related to work and family. At times, these studies do not adequately capture the dynamic experiences of work-family conflict that take place over time and across situations. Naturally, a qualitative approach to understanding the work-family interface addresses some of the nuances experienced by individuals working in sport, and past studies have certainly provided the foundation for understanding the work-family interface in greater depth (e.g., Bruening & Dixon, 2007; Dixon & Bruening, 2005). Yet, even in these instances, the transferability and generalizability of the findings may have limitations across situations and context. Furthermore, even with the insight garnered by in-person in-depth interviews, global and retrospective reflection are utilized by interview respondents to demonstrate their experiences with work and family. Therefore, a greater understanding of the dynamic day-to-day variations experienced by individuals working in sport is needed to enhance our understanding of the work-family interface.
Study Purpose, Methodology, and Method

This in progress study aims to provide this perspective by utilizing Ecological Momentary Analysis (EMA) as a methodology for examining work-life balance (Stone & Shiffman, 1994). EMA tracks the experiences of participants over time, and has been utilized in many contexts, including studies on smoking cessation, experiences of pain, mood, anxiety, and alcohol consumption (see Thiele et al., 2002). EMA in general has many methods for collecting data (e.g., journaling, daily questionnaires, personal interactive diaries, physiological monitoring, etc.). Regardless of the specific data collection method, the aim of the chosen data collection technique is to focus on collecting data repeatedly, over multiple days, in real time (or close to it), and in the research participant’s normal environment (Shiffman et al., 2008).

For the purposes of this study, high school varsity coaches with at least one child living in the home were invited to participate in the study. Coaches were asked to complete a minimum of two questionnaires per day, over a ten-day period. The instrument consisted of questions in regards to work-family balance, conflict, and enrichment and were sent at random times throughout the ten-day period. Survey items were adjusted to assess the ebb and flow of their efforts to balance work and family over time with the goal of capturing the changes in their feelings about work and family as they lived their lives. To this end, traditional work-family scales (e.g., Carlson, Kacmar, & Williams, 2000) were adjusted to reflect the goal of measuring their perceptions of conflict, balance, and enrichment with only the moment they were taking the survey in mind. For example, one question focusing on perceptions of work-family conflict reads, “Thinking about this moment only, I feel that my work is keeping me from my family activities.” Once data collection is complete, multilevel modeling will be utilized to measure the variability among participants over the ten-day period.

Expected Findings

Data is still being collected; however, this study expects to contribute to the literature by finding significant within-subject variability. That is, the authors expect to see variations on reported levels of balance, conflict, and enrichment from day-to-day, as well as within daily reports. It is expected that when individuals reflect on their feelings of conflict, for example, they will not report feeling high levels of conflict from morning to night, every single day of the ten-day period. Instead, the study expects to reveal that individually perceived levels of conflict will vary and fluctuate for participants based on the time of day, the ancillary activities also taking place, the previous levels of conflict reported, as well as other potential factors (e.g., sport coached, in-season vs out-of-season). The same type of within-subject variation is also expected to be seen for levels of perceived balance and levels of perceived enrichment. Furthermore, it is expected that these within-subject levels of variability will show a pattern that is predictable.

Conclusion and Contribution

Previous work examining the work-family interface in sport have focused on explaining the experiences of work-family conflict, balance, and enrichment. To this end, studies have relied on participant reflection, memory, and past experiences. This study will contribute to the literature by providing insight into the daily lived experience of balancing work and family. By utilizing an EMA methodology and capturing participant responses multiple times each day over a period of time, this study expects to show that levels of balance, conflict, and enrichment vary in a meaningful pattern, which when measured over time, can give insight into the work-family interface.