The Invincible Summer: Resilience in Experienced NCAA Division I Female Coaches

A Thesis
SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF
UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA
BY

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IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS
FOR THE DEGREE OF
MASTER OF SCIENCE

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April 2016

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

My thesis would not have been possible without the guidance of my advisor and committee chair, Dr. Nicole M. LaVoi, who enthusiastically offered her expertise throughout every step of the research process. My committee members, Dr. Diane Wiese-Bjornstal and Dr. Jo Ann Buysse, were also enormously kind in lending me their time and valuable feedback.

Megan Kahn of the Alliance of Women Coaches generously disseminated information about my study to her organization, which was critical for my study's recruitment. I am also thankful for the myriad of coaches who replied to my call for participants with messages of support and encouragement. Additionally, I cannot understate my appreciation for the coaches who served as participants in my pilot and final studies, many of them generously offering me their time and insights while at the height of their sports' respective competitive seasons—an incredibly busy time of year.

Further, I am grateful for the invaluable mentorship of the Occidental College kinesiology faculty—especially Dr. Marci Raney and Dr. Melinda Houston—without which I would never be here today. Finally, I owe a special thanks to my housemates Taylor Mikkalson, Melissa Cabak, Tess Wasowicz, Lauren Votava, and Laura Werking for supplying endless encouragement, laughter, and good company every step of the way as I completed this project.

DEDICATION

First, my thesis is dedicated to my parents for their unwavering support, compassion, and encouragement. I love you.

My thesis is also dedicated to the teammates and coaches whom I have had over the years. Many of the most valuable lessons I have learned about resilience came from them. Thank you, thank you, thank you.

AUTHOR'S NOTE

The title of my thesis comes from Justin O'Brien's English translation of Albert Camus's 1952 essay "Return to Tipasa." I selected an excerpt of this quotation as the title of my thesis because—in addition to being one of my all-time favorite quotations—I believe it embodies the essence of what it means to be resilient:

 "In the middle of winter I at last discovered that there was in me an invincible summer."

ABSTRACT

Using an ecological-resilience integrated theoretical framework (Fletcher & Sarkar, 2012; Galli & Vealey, 2008; LaVoi & Dutove, 2012), I identified and explored resilient qualities that enable female intercollegiate coaches to thrive and sustain lengthy careers in intercollegiate coaching. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with current female NCAA Division I head coaches who had at least 20 years of cumulative experience in the coaching profession (N=8). Data was analyzed using interpretative phenomenological analysis. Results showed that work-family balance struggles, the time commitment of the coaching profession, financial challenges, and career-threatening situations emerged as the prominent types of adversities eliciting the resilience process in female coaches. Additionally, coaches identified resilient responses to adversity in cognitive, behavioral, and emotional domains. Finally, coaches' abilities to be resilient were developed by factors on individual, interpersonal, organizational, and sociocultural levels. Practical and theoretical implications of these findings were discussed.

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION AND LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

Resilience is a term used to describe positive adaptation that occurs despite the

presence or risk of adversity (Luthar & Cicchetti, 2000). Adversity refers to physical or

psychological stressors that have the potential to interfere with normal functioning (Wang

& Gordon, 1994). Unlike the positive adaptations that occur in the similar concept of

stress-related growth, resilient adaptations have the specific benefit of inoculating an

individual to similar adversities in the future (Joseph & Linley, 2005; Richardson, 2002;

Sheldon, Kasser, Smith, & Share, 2002). For example, a resilient individual who

experiences a romantic breakup may develop better coping abilities so that he or she can

better deal with another romantic breakup in the future. Resilience has been studied in

several performance domains, including business organizations (Gittell, Cameron, Lim,

& Rivas, 2006), military institutions (Reivich, Seligman, & McBridge, 2011), and

educational settings (Reis, Colbert, & Hebert, 2004). Because resilience is a function of

the context in which it occurs, recently researchers have also begun to specifically

examine resilience in sport. While researchers have focused on resilience in athletes

(Fletcher & Sarkar, 2012; Galli & Vealey, 2008), resilience may additionally be a salient

quality in coaches because coaches face a variety of work-related and context-specific

stressors (Durand-Bush, Collins, & McNeill, 2012; Frey, 2007; Thelwell, Weston,

Greenlees, & Hutchings, 2008). Coaches' abilities to handle these myriad stressors may

have an impact on athletes' psychosocial outcomes (Price & Weiss, 2000), as well as

their own psychosocial outcomes and career trajectories (Frey, 2007; Kelley, 1994;

Kelley & Gill, 1993; Vealey, Udry, Zimmerman, & Soliday, 1992). Female coaches in

particular could be an especially worthwhile population in which to study sport resilience

given their workplace minority status and the complex and multiple barriers they face

related to their gender (LaVoi & Dutove, 2012).

Literature Review

Resilience

Early resilience researchers sought to identify resilient qualities of people who

thrived in the face of adversity (Richardson, 2002). The seminal research study in this

domain was a longitudinal study by Werner (1982), who examined and identified

qualities of young people who managed to thrive despite growing up in high-risk

environments. Later, Rutter (1985) and Garmezy (1991) identified resilient qualities of

individuals, such as easy temperament, self-efficacy, self-esteem, and humor, by studying

populations of at-risk youth. This wave of research produced an exhaustive list of

qualities associated with resilience, known as protective factors (Richardson, 2002).

However, more recently resilience researchers shifted away from examining resilience as

an innate aspect of individuals' personalities, towards conceiving resilience as a capacity

developed over time as people interact with their environments (Reich, Zautra, & Hall,

2010).

Richardson, Neiger, Jensen, and Kumpfer (1990) proposed a model to explain

resilience as a complex, interactive process. According to this model, resilience is a

dynamic process that involves the enrichment of protective factors (see Figure 1). The

model begins at a point in time ("biopsychospiritual homeostatis") where an individual is

well-adapted physically, mentally, and spiritually to a given set of circumstances. This individual is regularly confronted with both internal and external forms of change ("life prompts") that disrupt their biopsychospiritual homeostasis. To cope with these life prompts, the individual cultivates resilient qualities ("protective factors") so that future similar life prompts become less likely to be disruptive to their biopsychosocial homeostasis. When unprotected life prompts occur and biopsychosocial homeostasis is disrupted, an individual's world paradigm is changed and they may eventually react in a variety of ways ("reintegration"). Individuals who experience growth and strengthen their protective factors are said to undergo "resilient reintegration." Some individuals may turn down opportunities for growth and return to homeostasis ("reintegration back to homeostasis"). Others may give up some motivation, hope, or drive in response to the life prompt ("reintegration with loss") or resort to destructive behaviors such as substance abuse ("dysfunctional reintegration").

For example, a well-adjusted adolescent (thus at biopsychosocial homeostasis) might experience the death of a grandparent (life prompt). The adolescent is upset by the death and grieves the grandparent (disruption). If this adolescent is resilient, however, he or she may eventually develop better coping skills (protective factors) as a result (resilient reintegration), which in turn could help him or her deal with the death of another grandparent in the future. Alternatively, the adolescent could become depressed (reintegration with loss) or become involved in drug abuse (dysfunctional integration) in response to the event.

The Resiliency Model (see Figure 1) underscores the importance of individuals'
social and environmental contexts in building resilience, as these factors may influence
responses to adversity and, in turn, the development of protective factors (Galli &
Vealey, 2008; Richardson et al., 1990). It also highlights the critical role of exposure to
adversity in resilience development, which is well-supported in the general psychological
literature: Individuals without exposure to adversity have limited opportunities to develop
resilience (for a review see Seery, 2004). However, resilience is best understood within
the context of the specific social and environmental domains in which it occurs (Fletcher
& Sarkar, 2012; Galli & Gonzalez, 2014). For example, an individual may exhibit
resilience differently in work or school environments. Thus, in order to best understand
resilience, it is imperative to investigate it within specific contexts—including, for
example, sport.

Sport Resilience

Sport is one domain in which resilience has been examined. In addition to sport
being one of the most valued, popular, and culturally relevant institutions in North
American society (Hughes & Coakley, 1991), sport serves as an especially intriguing
context to study resilience because facing adversity is an inherent aspect of participation
(Galli & Gonzalez, 2014; Luthar & Cicchetti, 2000). For example, sport is a highly
evaluative, achievement-oriented environment where the consequences of losing are clear
(Hughes & Coakley, 1991; Luthar & Cicchetti, 2000). The prominent and accepted role
of adversity in sport is embodied by Hughes and Coakley's (1991) sport ethic, which is a
widely accepted a set of criteria defining what it means to be a real athlete. The sport

ethic consists of four beliefs, all of which imply that adversity, and specifically

overcoming adversity, are central to sport: Being an athlete involves (a) making

sacrifices, (b) striving for distinction; winning establishes distinction and losing is only

part of the experience of learning how to win, (d) accepting risks and playing through

pain, and (d) refusing to accept limits in the pursuit of possibilities. Due to the

widespread nature of adversity in sport, researchers began to study sport resilience

specifically, which was defined as "the role of mental processes and behavior in

promoting personal assets and protecting an individual from the potential negative effect

of stressors [in sport]" (Fletcher & Sarkar, 2012, p. 675).

Early sport resilience studies identified psychosocial factors that predicted

performance in sport tasks after initial failure in the same tasks. The first research on

sport resilience consisted of a pair of studies conducted by Seligman, Nolen-Hoeksema,

Thornton, and Thornton (1990) that highlighted the role of explanatory style. Explanatory

styles consist of optimism and pessimism. Optimists habitually explain bad events by

unstable, specific, and external causes, while habitually explaining good events by causes

that are stable, global, and internal (Seligman et al., 1990). Pessimists do the opposite.

The first study, which relied on questionnaires and self-ratings, found that swimmers'

explanatory styles and coaches' judgments of swimmers' resilience after defeat predicted

the number of unexpectedly poor swims each swimmer would have over the season. In

the second study, swimmers were asked by their coach to swim two time trials in their

best event separated by a full recovery period. To impose defeat, swimmers were told

their first time was several seconds slower than it actually was. It was found that

swimmers with an optimistic explanatory style for negative events performed at least as well on their second swim as their first, while pessimists' performances declined. The authors concluded that explanatory style could potentially be an important and significant component of sport resilience.

Martin-Krumm, Sarrazin, Peterson, and Famose (2003) expanded on Seligman et al.'s (1990) findings by further exploring explanatory style as a psychological factor affecting sport resilience. It was found that adolescent basketball players who exhibited an optimistic explanatory style performed better on a task after initially perceiving failure than those with a more pessimistic style, providing more evidence that an optimistic explanatory style could help protect athletes against adversity. Mummery, Schofield, and Perry (2004) further added to this line of research by finding that swimmers who improved their performance throughout an age-group national championship meet had higher perceptions of physical endurance, but lower perceived social support.

More recently sport resilience researchers have shifted away from identifying factors predicting performance in sport tasks after initial failure, towards studying how resilient characteristics are acquired by and manifested in athletes. Galli and Vealey (2008) conducted the first study to investigate specifically the thoughts, beliefs, emotions, and behaviors related to resilience in athletes. Using Richardson et al.'s (1990) resiliency model as a conceptual framework, they conducted semi-structured interviews with ten elite athletes from a variety of sports about their experiences responding to athletic adversity such as injury, burnout, and performance slumps. Based on the general

dimensions that emerged related to athletes' resilience experiences, the authors proposed

a preliminary conceptual model of sport resilience (see Figure 2).

In Galli and Vealey's (2008) model, athletes respond to sport adversity—which

may occur acutely or over an extended period of time—with cognitive and behavioral

coping strategies, unpleasant emotions, and/or mental struggles. These sundry responses

are referred to as "agitation," which is affected by athletes' personal resources and

sociocultural factors. Agitation eventually led to positive outcomes such as learning,

gaining perspective, and motivation to help others, which in turn strengthened athletes'

personal resources. Like Richardson et al.'s (1990) resiliency model, Galli and Vealey's

(2008) preliminary conceptual model of sport resilience supports the idea of resilience as

an ongoing set of interactions between an individual and his or her environment. Taken

together, these two models highlight the importance of personal resources such as

personality characteristics, sociocultural influences like social support, and prior

experiences with adversity as being critical in resilience development. Recent findings by

Machida, Irwin, and Feltz (2013) supported this interactionist, dynamic model of

resilience.

Criticizing the linear stage framework of Galli and Vealey's (2008) preliminary

conceptual model of sport resilience, Fletcher and Sarkar (2012) used grounded theory to

explain the relationship between resilience and optimal sport performance in Olympic

gold medalists. Their resultant model suggested that psychological resilience is best

represented as an overarching concept that includes stressors, cognitive appraisal and

meta-cognitions, psychological factors, and facilitative responses (see Figure 3). Stressors

included competitive, personal, and organizational adversities. Athletes responded to these stressors with challenge appraisals (viewing a stressor as relevant to one's goals and within one's available resources) and meta-cognitions (evaluating one's own thoughts as opposed to evaluating the environment), which in turn led to facilitative responses. Psychological factors such as positive personality, perceived social support, motivation, confidence, and focus influenced challenge appraisals and meta-cognitions. Moreover, follow-up research with a subsample of the same participants showed that prior experiences with adversity were critical in the athletes' growth and development (Sarkar, Fletcher, & Brown, 2015). Thus, like Richardson et al. (2002) and Galli and Vealey (2008), Fletcher and Sarkar (2012) illustrated that context, as well as exposure to adversity, social support, and other personal resources such as personality, are influential in athletes' resilience development.

Resilience Research: Relevance for Sport Coaches

Notably, all sport resilience studies to date have focused on resilience in athletes, including a recent line of research examining team resilience (Morgan, Fletcher, & Sarkar, 2013; Morgan, Fletcher, & Sarkar, 2015), but no researchers have investigated resilience in coaches. Resilience may be a particularly salient construct to study in coaches because coaches face substantial workplace stressors which can lead to consequences such as burnout depending on personal coping ability. For example, in the first study on the qualitative nature of coach stress, Frey (2007) showed that National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) Division I coaches experience a range of demands from many different sources, such as their athletes, themselves (i.e., self-

imposed pressure), and the long hours required by the profession. Thelwell et al. (2008), Olusoga, Butt, Hays, and Maynard (2009), and Durand-Bush et al. (2012) confirmed that coaching is a particularly stressful profession for coaches of elite athletes.

It is important that coaches adequately manage stressors because otherwise stressors may increase the likelihood of burnout and, in turn, leaving the profession (Frey, 2007; Vealey et al., 1992). Several studies—albeit dated—have noted coaches' responses to stress, highlighting the importance of cognitive perceptions of stress (Frey, 2007; Kelley, 1994; Kelley & Gill, 1993; Vealey et al., 1992) and emotional regulation (Durand-Bush et al., 2012; Frey, 2007) in preventing burnout, curbing attrition, and enhancing coach effectiveness.

While research on stress management for coaches exists, to date research on resilience in coaches is non-existent. Resilience is different than stress management because it involves an individual rebounding from adversity in a manner where he or she benefits and is better equipped to deal with a similar adversity in the future, whereas stress management simply entails coping with stress. Because coaching is a stressful profession and psychological factors have an important role in the relationship between coach stress and burnout, it may be worthwhile to study coaches' experiences of resilience to determine the adaptive mechanisms that help coaches flourish in the face of an inevitable variety of adversities they encounter over the course of their coaching careers. Moreover, as coach emotional exhaustion was shown to affect athletes' psychological outcomes (Price & Weiss, 2000) and coaches suggested that their negative responses to stress could be projected onto their athletes (Olusoga, Butt, Maynard, &

Hays, 2010), coach resilience could have implications for athletes' experiences. Examining coaches using a resilience framework is also timely given the recent increased attention given to positive psychology in the general psychological research (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000). Furthermore, female coaches are a particularly relevant population in which to understand resilience.

Resilience Research: Relevance for Female Coaches

In addition to general coaching stressors, female coaches face unique workplace challenges as a result of their gender, suggesting that resilience could be a particularly salient quality to help them sustain long and/or successful careers. Scholars have long documented that sport is a male-dominated institution that serves to maintain masculine hegemony and preserve male power (Bryson, 1987; Messner, 1988; Stangl & Kane, 1991). One manifestation of this phenomenon is the well-documented decline in female coaches of women's collegiate sports that has occurred over the past several decades (Acosta & Carpenter, 2014; LaVoi, 2015). When Title IX was passed in 1972, over 90% of women's intercollegiate teams were coached by women (Acosta & Carpenter, 2014). In 2014, 43.4% of coaches of women's intercollegiate teams were female (Acosta & Carpenter, 2014). Relatively low numbers of women in intercollegiate coaching places many of them as statistical minorities or "tokens" in workplace environments (Kanter, 1977; LaVoi, 2016). As workplace minorities, female coaches are at the highest risk for a variety of negative outcomes, including sexual harassment, wage inequality, and stereotype threat (Bergeron, Block, & Echtenkamp, 2006; Hatzenbuehler, 2009; Kanter, 1977; LaVoi, 2016). Additionally, women have a higher tendency than men to find

coaching issues stressful and may be particularly susceptible to burnout (Kelley, Eklund, & Ritter-Taylor, 1999; Vealey et al., 1992).

In light of the obstacles facing women in coaching, LaVoi and Dutove (2012) used Bronfenbrenner's (1977) ecological systems theory to develop a model to summarize the documented barriers and supports affecting the trajectories of female coaches' careers (Figure 4). The model was divided into four proximally located levels. These levels were not exclusive but instead were dynamic and interactive. The first, most proximal level consisted of individual or intrapersonal factors, such as personal, biological, and psychological factors—including the trait of resilience. The second level was composed of interpersonal influences. This level highlighted the role of significant others (i.e., colleagues, romantic partners, friends, and family) in promoting or inhibiting female coaches. The third level contained organizational and structural elements, such as organizational policies (e.g., overemphasis on winning) and professional opportunities (e.g., limited incentives, low pay). The fourth, most distal level included sociocultural variables, or norms and cultural systems. These norms and cultural systems included gender stereotypes associated with traditional femininity. LaVoi and Dutove's (2012) ecological model thus demonstrated that female coaches face diverse, complex, multidimensional barriers and supports that operate interactively. Moreover, this model is a developmental model and therefore indicates that over time, changes occur in the levels that impact female coaches. These interactions between the individual and his or her environment over time are similar to those involved in Richardson et al. (2002), Galli and Vealey (2008), and Fletcher and Sarkar's (2012) resilience models.

Therefore, resilience may be an exceptionally salient quality for female coaches because it represents a package of psychological characteristics necessary in order for them to navigate successfully and respond to the substantial career-related adversities that they face. Two studies to date have investigated psychological responses to stress in female coaches, and both supported this assertion. First, Moosbrugger (2009), who used a qualitative case study design to explore how one female Division III intercollegiate field hockey coach sustained for over 30 years a career in the coaching profession. It was found that the coach's individual characteristics were among factors that played a key role in the sustenance of her career. These characteristics are similar to those identified by Galli and Vealey (2008) and Fletcher and Sarkar (2012) as important in sport resilience development (e.g. determination, positivity). Additionally, in a study of female coaches' experiences of stress and self-regulation strategies Durand-Bush et al. (2012) highlighted the importance of coping abilities (a resilience quality) to help female coaches successfully navigate and withstand the demands of their profession. Thus, female coaches who successfully evade burnout and remain in their profession for an extended period of time are arguably likely to be especially resilient.

Understanding how experienced female coaches developed and maintained resilience in the face of career-related adversity, then, could be a fruitful pursuit in order to help curb female coach turnover and burnout. Combatting these employment trends is important because in addition to improving female coaches' psychosocial outcomes, having women represented in sport leadership positions is valuable for girls and women whom they coach. For example, Lockwood (2006) showed that when girls and women

have a scarcity of female role models in visible leadership positions, they may devalue their own abilities and self-perceptions. Additionally, Hums, Bower, and Grappendorf (2007) noted that a lack of female role models such as coaches may inhibit female athletes from realizing their sport career aspirations or potential. However, no study to date has investigated resilience in experienced female coaches, even though research by Moosbrugger (2009) and Durand-Bush et al. (2012) taken in the context of sport resilience literature (Fletcher & Sarkar, 2012; Galli & Vealey, 2008) suggest that this group may be inherently resilient.

Theoretical Framework

Combining aspects of Galli and Vealey's (2008) and Fletcher and Sarkar's (2012) sport resilience models with LaVoi and Dutove's (2012) ecological model yields a unique and instructive theoretical framework from which to examine resilience in female coaches. Moosbrugger (2009) provided support for integrating this research as she found that the strategies used by a female coach to sustain her career were analogous to the skills an athlete uses to perform and thus highlighted the potential applicability of sport resilience to female coaches in particular.

Specifically, superimposing LaVoi and Dutove's (2012) ecological model over Fletcher and Sarkar's (2012) resilience model while incorporating parts of Galli and Vealey's (2008) model provides a relatively seamless integration of the sport resilience and female coach bodies of literature, which helps forward a more complete understanding of the resilience process and its development over time in female coaches. The psychological factors from Fletcher and Sarkar's (2012) model as well as Galli and

Vealey's (2008) personal resources are analogous to LaVoi and Dutove's (2012) individual ecological level. According to LaVoi and Dutove's (2012) model, these psychological factors would also interact with factors from the interpersonal, organizational, and sociocultural levels, which are analogous to Galli and Vealey's (2008) sociocultural influences. Thus, LaVoi and Dutove's model can be placed around the center of Fletcher and Sarkar's (2012) model to combine all three models.

The resultant theoretical model can be further adjusted by adding a bidirectional arrow between challenge appraisals/meta-cognitions and facilitative responses to reflect Galli and Vealey's (2008) finding that resilient outcomes can improve future responses to adversity. Finally, changing Fletcher and Sarkar's (2012) model's outcome from "optimal sport performance" to "career maintenance" completes a theoretical framework from which to study (a) the resilience process and (b) resilience development in female coaches (see Figure 5). This framework indicates that when faced with stressors, resilient female coaches respond positively which, in turn, helps them sustain their careers. The ability of these coaches to respond positively to stressors is developed over time in an interactive, dynamic process influenced by factors on individual (including, most proximally, challenge appraisals and meta-cognitions), interpersonal, organizational, and sociocultural levels. Coaches' facilitative responses to stress also affect these factors.

Significance of Study

This study will serve as an extension and replication of Sarkar and Fletcher's (2014) exploration of resilience in individuals who thrived in high-pressure work environments, which is the only study to date examining resilience in workplace

exemplars. This study will serve to fill gaps in the literature in several ways. First, it includes the first qualitative investigation of stressors specifically facing female coaches in the NCAA system. Additionally, no study to date has examined coaches' positive responses to adversity in-depth. By being the first study to examine resilience in sport coaches, this research will constitute a novel contribution to the general resilience, sport resilience, and coach stress literatures. This contribution is twofold as this study will explain (a) how resilience in sport coaches is developed and (b) how resilience in sport coaches is manifested in the form of facilitative responses to adversity.

Furthermore, this research will serve as the first sport psychology study beyond case study-level to specifically investigate exemplar, experienced female coaches. Moosbrugger's (2009) case study is the only existing research in the sport psychology domain about women who have successfully sustained coaching careers for a prolonged period of time. This research will therefore not only help elucidate how experienced female coaches sustain their careers but also provide new insights into their lived experiences and psychology.

Finally, this study will provide a novel framework from which to study resilience in female coaches. In addition to serving as a valuable tool for aspiring female coaches, this framework could be used in future research on resilience in various coach populations.

Purpose

The purpose of this study was to identify and explore resilient qualities that enable experienced female intercollegiate coaches to thrive and sustain lengthy careers in

intercollegiate coaching using an ecological-resilience integrated theoretical framework. Specifically, I sought to answer the questions: (a) What adversities elicit the resilience process in female intercollegiate head coaches?, (b) What individual, interpersonal, organizational, and sociocultural factors are involved in the development of resilience in female intercollegiate head coaches?, and (c) What facilitative responses to adversity do experienced resilient female intercollegiate head coaches describe?.

CHAPTER TWO: METHOD

Research Design

Research on little-known phenomena and exploring novel, ignored, or marginalized populations is best suited to a qualitative methodology (Marshall & Rossman, 2011). Resilience has never been studied in female coaches and female coaches are a workplace minority. Moreover, quantitative research methods often fail to capture complex narratives of personal experience (Marshall & Rossman, 2011). Thus, a qualitative methodology was used in this study. Specifically, in-depth interviews were selected in order to best capture the individual lived experience of participants in their own words (Creswell, 2003; Marshall & Rossman, 2013).

This study's design was an extension and replication of research by Sarkar and Fletcher (2014) exploring resilience in individuals who thrived in high-pressure work environments because Sarkar and Fletcher's (2014) research is the only study to date examining resilience in workplace exemplars. Like Sarkar and Fletcher (2014), this study's philosophical orientation was based in interpretivist epistemology and ontological realism as the researcher sought to explore the meanings participants attributed to their experiences (Schwandt, 2000). An interpretative phenomenological approach (IPA) was used in this study. IPA is a form of qualitative analysis with the goal of exploring in detail the participant's view of the topic under investigation (Smith, Jarman, & Osborn, 1999). IPA was deemed appropriate for this study because this study sought to explore individuals' subjective experiences and how they make sense of their personal worlds (Sarkar & Fletcher, 2014; Smith & Osborn, 2003). Additionally, IPA is typically used in

studies with purposive samples (Sarkar & Fletcher, 2014). IPA emerged from the

phenomenological approach, which seeks to explore, describe, and analyze the meaning

of individual lived experience (Marshall & Rossman, 2011). In the phenomenological

approach, the researcher attempts to make sense of participants trying to make sense of

their world, in a two-part interpretation with hermeneutic influences (Smith & Osborn,

2003).

Participants

Because the overarching purpose of this study was to identify and explore

resilient qualities that enable female intercollegiate coaches to thrive and sustain lengthy

careers in intercollegiate coaching, a purposive sample was used consisting of women

who are both currently head coaches of women's teams in Division I NCAA-sponsored

sports and have at least 20 cumulative years of coaching experience at any level. Division

I coaches were specifically selected because since Division I is the most elite,

competitive, and highly visible segment of intercollegiate athletics (NCAA, n.d.), it is

possible that Division I coaches face different, more numerous stressors compared to

other intercollegiate coaches. This possibility seems especially likely given that Thelwell

et al. (2008) found that elite British coaches reported a greater variety of stressors

compared to the number of stressors that Frey (2007) found Division I coaches faced.

While it is likely that coaches across all NCAA Divisions deal with stress, Frey (2007)

established that Division I coaches face a variety of stressors, whereas no research to date

has specifically catalogued stressors in NCAA Division II or III coaches. A minimum of

20 years of coaching experience was deemed enough to define coaches as sufficiently

"experienced" to participate in this study. This number was selected because it was long enough to suggest that coaches successfully behaved resiliently and developed resilience over the course of their careers, but short enough as to allow a sufficient diverse sample size to be obtained.

For these reasons, a purposive sample of eight NCAA Division I head coaches was used. As Reid, Flowers, and Larkin (2005) noted that 10 participants was at the higher end of most recommendations for IPA sample sizes, a sample size near this number was selected. The sample consisted of coaches who coached in eight different sports (cross-country/track & field, field hockey, Nordic skiing, rowing, soccer, softball, swimming & diving, volleyball). The average age of the eight participants was 53 years (range = 40-60 years, SD = 6.5 years). Each participant had, on average, 31 years of total coaching experience (range = 21-38 years, SD = 6.0 years), including 23 years of experience as a Division I head coach (range = 8-36 years, SD = 9.5 years). The participants represented seven different institutions from five athletic conferences. In terms of geographic regions, the West, Midwest, Northeast, and Southeast were represented.

Procedure

Following institutional ethical approval, a recruitment email was sent to a database of female coaches describing the purpose and nature of the study as well as participation criteria. Of eligible respondents, eight were selected based off of maximizing the number of sports, geographic regions, and institutions represented in the sample. Potential participants were then contacted to set up a mutually convenient time

for a phone or in-person interview. Once the interview was arranged, participants were emailed an informed consent form, which they signed and returned before the start of data collection. Semi-structured interviews were then conducted over the phone or in-person by the researcher.

Instrument

A semi-structured interview guide was developed for use in this study. The guide was designed so that the participant could guide the direction of the course of the interview because a goal of IPA is to understand how participants make sense of their worlds (Smith & Osborn, 2003). This approach permitted participants to express their experiences in their own words, in line with IPA (Brocki & Wearden, 2006).

Sarkar and Fletcher's (2014) interview guide was an appropriate model for the one used in this study because it aimed to understand resilience exhibited over the course of the careers of participants, whereas sport resilience study interview guides (i.e., those used by Galli and Vealey [2008] and Fletcher and Sarkar [2008]) tended to be oriented around sport participation as an athlete in such a way that rendered them inappropriate and not applicable for use in the present study. Thus, an interview guide was developed by modifying and integrating questions from the interview guide used by Sarkar and Fletcher (2014) with the frameworks of Galli and Vealey (2008), Fletcher and Sarkar (2012), and LaVoi and Dutove (2012). Specifically, questions used by Sarkar and Fletcher (2014) were grouped into five sections based on the stages (stressors, levels of influencing factors, facilitative responses) of the ecological-resilience integrated theoretical framework. First, the interview guide opened with open-ended questions

regarding the participant's career background and personal development. Next,

participants were asked to describe adversities that participants faced over their careers.

Participants were then asked questions about their responses to these adversities. In the

fourth section, questions addressed the outcomes of these adversities. Finally, participants

were asked to provide advice for current aspiring female coaches on how to develop and

sustain their careers. Four pilot interviews were conducted using this procedure to gain

experience with the interview process and identify any potential issues with the interview

guide's structure or content. The interview guide was slightly changed based on the pilot

interviews in order to be less repetitive and flow more cohesively; specifically, the order

of the questions was altered, the wording of several questions was adjusted, and three

questions were deleted.

The final interviews ranged in duration from 34 to 65 minutes (M = 51 minutes,

SD = 11 minutes). Interviews were digitally recorded and transcribed verbatim yielding

75 pages of single-spaced text. Participants were provided pseudonyms after the

interviews concluded.

Data Analysis

Consistent with Sarkar and Fletcher (2014), the author analyzed interview

transcripts in accordance with the principles of IPA (Smith et al., 1999; Smith & Osborn,

2003). As IPA follows an idiographic, primarily inductive approach (Callary, Rathwell,

& Young, 2015), the first step of the analysis entailed a close reading of the first

transcript with initial insights recorded as annotations in the left margin (Smith et al.,

1999). For the second step, the initial insights were translated into emergent themes at a

higher level of abstraction and annotated in the right margin of the transcript (Smith &

Osborn, 2003). Themes were selected and labeled based on the prevalence and richness

of the initial data from which they were extracted (Smith et al., 1999). Next, themes were

examined to determine conceptual links between them. Related themes were then

grouped together (Smith & Osborn, 2003). Throughout the process of clustering

emerging sub-themes into superordinate themes, the transcript was continually reviewed

to verify that the author's interpretation was true to what participants stated (Smith et al.,

1999). This process was repeated for each transcript. Superordinate themes from the first

participant informed later analysis, while the author was simultaneously open to finding

additional themes (Smith et al., 1999). After analysis of each transcript was completed, a

list of themes for the sample was created based on patterns established across

participants. Furthermore, a secondary researcher with vast experience in qualitative data

analysis and coach research coded the transcript independently in accordance with the

same procedure. This researcher's list of themes were used to inform this study's final

themes. Final themes were included in the final results of the study if they were (a) richly

illustrated in the data and (b) evoked by at least half of the participants. This was in order

to ensure that final themes accurately conveyed participants' shared views of the topic

under investigation (Smith et al., 1999).

Researcher's Role

Particularly in qualitative research, it is important to identify the personal values,

assumptions, and biases of the researcher as she serves as the primary data collection

instrument. The researcher's role can present both strengths and limitations (Creswell,

2003). In the present study, the researcher was a former NCAA Division I athlete and advocate for female coaches. Additionally, the researcher was a research assistant at the Tucker Center for Research on Girls & Women in Sport, a research center dedicated to developing and promoting scholarly inquiry related to how involvement in sport affects the lives of girls and women. The researcher's experience in the intercollegiate athletics world as an athlete and researcher positioned her to have an enhanced awareness, knowledge, and sensitivity to the experiences of female intercollegiate coaches. However, her interest in sport feminism may have biased her interpretation of the study's results. Several steps were taken to create as objective of a study as possible.

Trustworthiness

With the aim of producing a trustworthy study, the researcher followed seven criteria proposed by Creswell (2003):

1. Triangulation of data: Data from the existing body of literature on general resilience, sport resilience, and coach psychology were used to make sense of the themes identified in the present study.

2. Rich, thick description: Findings were conveyed thoroughly to ensure the reader's complete understanding.

3. Bias: The researcher acknowledged the strengths and limitations of her role in the research.

4. Discrepant information: Perspectives counter to the major themes identified in the study were presented and discussed.

5. Prolonged time in the field: The researcher had an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon under study due to having spent years involved with intercollegiate athletics as an athlete and researcher.

6. Peer debriefing: Several colleagues reviewed the study to improve its accuracy.

7. External auditor: At the conclusion of the study, an external auditor was consulted for feedback.

CHAPTER THREE: RESULTS

The results derived from the data analysis procedures represent the collated interview responses from all eight participants. Four themes emerged in response to the first research question, four superordinate themes and 11 subordinate themes emerged in response to the second research question, and three superordinate themes and 8 subordinate themes emerged in response to the third research question. For a list of all superordinate and subordinate themes, see Figure 6. Drawing directly from the experiences of the participants, each theme will be illustrated by direct quotations from the transcripts. Some direct quotations that illustrated this study's themes were excluded from this write-up in order to protect participants' confidentiality because they included sensitive information that would expose participants' identities. Specifically, since there are very few female Division I head coaches with the requisite experience for participation in this study in many of the participants' respective sports, many important contextual details included in the data had the potential to expose participants' identities. Because protecting the participants was a top priority of the researcher, care was taken in selecting only direct quotations that would not compromise their confidentiality.

Adversities

In regards to the first research question (What adversities elicit the resilience process in female intercollegiate head coaches?), four themes emerged: Work-family balance struggles, time commitment of the profession, financial challenges, situations where they felt that their careers were in jeopardy. Coaches also described 13 adverse situations that did not fit into any of these superordinate themes and also did not reach

criteria inclusion but nonetheless provided rich insights and illuminated the fact that all coaches experienced adversities, some similar in nature and others unique to that particular coach (see Figure 7). The four superordinate themes for research question one are below.

Work-Family Balance Struggles

Experienced female coaches described challenges related to balancing their careers with their family lives. While these challenges arose regardless of whether coaches had children, coaches found raising children while coaching particularly difficult. According to Claire (a Nordic skiing coach),

I think the biggest challenge for me personally as a coach is just balancing the energy it takes to put into coaching with having a family and a real life. I always feel like this time of year that I just don't have a life; I have a 16-year-old daughter and I'm married so it's a challenge when we're on the road and busy and my life gets so wrapped up around the women on my team and how they're doing and what's going on and the fact that we don't have any snow and where we're gonna train and… It's really hard to just, like, go home and be mom and have time to unwind and be a normal person.

Time Commitment of the Profession

Participants also noted the long, irregular hours required by the coaching profession. Sarah (a rowing coach) said,

I always joke around that you feel like you work at the postal service because there's never a point where you're like 'oh, everything's done, cool!' you know?

Like there's always something that you could be doing to get better. And if that

drives you to be better, that's great. But if it drives you to be just plain busy, it's

really not helpful.

Financial Challenges

Experienced female coaches reported facing financial challenges over the course

of their careers. These struggles were often compounded by raising children and

supporting a family, or by perceived gender inequity. Maggie (a volleyball coach) said,

It was hard when I was an assistant and the eldest was born… And we had no

money whatsoever. So we were just trying to make things work financially with

raising a child. That was one of the times I would have wanted to get out [of the

coaching profession].

Josie (a softball coach) said,

What I have been paid, I would say contract, money, there's no question that—it's

factual—that men make more. The raises I've gotten I've gotten because I had to

go in and complain that they paid somebody else more money.

Career-Threatening Situations

Several coaches described facing at least one situation over the course of their

career where they felt their career was in jeopardy. Most—but not all—of these situations

involved athletes submitting complaints about the coaches, which were later determined

to be unfounded, to the athletic administration. Sarah said,

I got investigated by the university, I got officially investigated… So that was,

like, a whole thing. The general council was involved, and they found it was

totally without merit—but I never got an apology, I never got anything. So that's

one of those things where I'm like, 'what?' and I've had maybe a handful of stuff

like that where you're like 'no, seriously?' but the more I find with other coaches,

everyone has stories like that, where some kids come in and they feel persecuted

by you and God help you because there's nothing you can do so you just have to

document really well.

Factors Related to Resilience Development

Four superordinate themes emerged in response to the second research question

(What individual, interpersonal, organizational, and sociocultural factors are involved in

the development of resilience in female intercollegiate head coaches?). These themes

were consistent with the study's theoretical framework.

Individual

The first superordinate theme corresponded with the individual level of this

study's theoretical framework drawn from LaVoi and Dutove's (2012) ecological model

for women coaches. The individual level is the first, most proximal level of resilience

development and consists of personal, biological, and psychological factors. Five

subordinate themes emerged at this level: Sense of self, view that challenges are a

learning opportunity, coaching experience, confidence, and miscellaneous personality

characteristics.

Sense of self. Coaches described having a clearly defined sense of self as

important to the resilience process. Bailey (a cross-country and track & field coach) said,

"For young female coaches going into coaching I would say that some of the best advice

I would give from my years is to have a good sense of who you are and what you want."

Lily (a soccer coach) elaborated,

> I think anytime you have to cut a player from the team or dismiss an employee or
> make a really, really tough decision, it challenges your leadership and you have to
> be in charge of your own philosophy and if you have a philosophy, it can't just be
> a philosophy—you have to put those things into action every day. So I don't think
> there was one specific time that has shaped that but I think I try to live through
> what my philosophy is on a daily basis.

View that challenges are a learning opportunity. Coaches reported viewing challenges as a learning opportunity, and that this view allowed them to respond positively to adversity. Josie stated,

> By doing and failing you grow. By facing problems yourself head on. It's better
> you get a D if you're doing your own work than cheat and get a B. It's those
> adverse situations… It's better to go up to the plate, swing, and miss than to not
> go up to the plate. Or to go up to the plate, not swing and just hope for a walk. It's
> better to pitch a game and get hit and lose than to blame the umpire.

Shannon (a field hockey coach) described relishing this learning process, saying

> I've really taken that growth mindset to my coaching career of 'you can get
> better.' With hard work, you can improve, with hard work you can have skill
> acquisition, with hard work you can be fit, with hard work, you can be fast. And
> another reason I love the sport of hockey—I think this has got me coaching as
> long as I have—is that the sport has evolved so much. Rule changes, technical and

tactical changes. It's a game that you have to really have to evolve as a coach, technically and tactically, to be as successful as we've been. And I've loved that challenge. I think if it hadn't been challenging, I probably wouldn't still be coaching.

Coaching experience. According to coaches, having experience in the coaching profession helped them be more resilient later on in their careers. Bailey said,

Once you've lived through things, you're experienced, and then you get better at handling them the next time... You coach this long, you have bad things happen. You know, we've had an athlete die, we've had cancer, we've had kids being assaulted, we've had kids arrested and I'm certain early on I probably didn't have the skills to be all that I can be for [the athletes] and now just off of experience and maturity I know how to reach out differently or reach out to the kids or the parents more, whatever may be the case.

Furthermore, several coaches stated that experience in the coaching profession specifically helped them foster confidence which, in turn, allowed them to be resilient. Maggie said,

I think in some ways this is what experience provides. I feel more confidence. I still like getting input, but probably feel more confident in terms of the decisions I make and going forward with them. I certainly learned so much about coaching and understanding the players that best fit our program and having a better sense of what we're doing. Again, time away, or time spent, helps you do that.

Confidence. Regardless of its origin, confidence was an important quality related to resilience for several coaches. Lily said,

> I think resilience comes with confidence. I think it's easy to be resilient if you feel good about what you're doing. I think the less prepared you are and the less confident you are the less resilient you're probably going to be because you just don't feel great about what you're doing and you just don't have that confidence.

Miscellaneous personality characteristics. Coaches identified a number of different miscellaneous personality traits that they found to help them be resilient. Although these traits did not fit into any of these superordinate themes, they illustrated the fact that coaches indicated a diverse variety of personality characteristics enabled them to be resilient. A comprehensive list of these traits can be found in Figure 8.

Interpersonal

The second superordinate theme corresponded with the interpersonal level of this study's theoretical framework. The interpersonal level is the second most proximal level of resilience development and highlights the role of significant others (i.e., colleagues, romantic partners, friends, and family) in promoting or inhibiting female coaches. At the interpersonal level, three subordinate themes emerged: Family upbringing, mentors, and trusted friends.

Family influence during formative years. Some coaches described family socialization experiences during childhood that helped teach them to be resilient later in life. Hardworking, determined parents were mentioned as being especially influential. Tina (a swimming coach) stated,

The family, the way we were brought up, we're all hard workers and hard work is intrinsically reinforcing I think. It's just the way I was brought up… My dad just took pride in never missing work, never being late for work. When I think of my father that's one of the things that I think of: He's a hard worker. He had his Monday through Friday job, he always owned rental properties, and he and my brother would work on the rental properties every Saturday. I think it was just that work ethic that he modeled and I had four older brothers and an older sister and they all ended up going into the trades. I just think that was the mentality that we were brought up with.

Mentors. Coaches had mentors—often their coaches when they were athletes or coaches for whom they assisted earlier in their careers—who informed their coaching philosophies and to whom they turned for guidance throughout their careers. According to Lily, "I do think that you have to surround yourself with great people that help mentor you through the tough things."

Trusted friends. Coaches felt that having trusted friends helped them respond positively to challenges. Josie said,

I have a very small circle of confidants, if you will. And I think—like all challenges in your life—if you've done a good job of surrounding yourself with good people who care about you, who can challenge you, who can give you feedback, then at times where you struggle, they're there for you. And I was certainly buoyed by their support.

Some coaches also described receiving similar support from their spouses which also facilitated resilience. Bailey explained,

> [My husband is] connected to my life very well and I think that it's more difficult when people pick partners that can't relate to their sport. Falling in love may not be all about who you pick, but there are so many colleagues that their spouses don't get what we do. And I think it's very difficult to have a spouse that doesn't understand what we do. So I feel like I got lucky and made a great life choice... I don't understand when colleagues have partners who can't be a part of their sport because they can't understand or don't have the background, they're not a sport person or whatever, and don't have the luxury I have in doing what I did.

Organizational

The third superordinate theme corresponded with the organizational level of this study's theoretical framework. The organizational level is the third most proximal level of resilience development and contains organizational and structural elements, such as organizational policies and professional opportunities. Two subordinate themes emerged at the organizational level: Balanced staff and feeling supported by athletic administration and colleagues.

Balanced staff. Coaches stated that having a staff that balanced their weaknesses facilitated resilience. Maggie said, "Hire a staff that is a reflection of your weaknesses, not of your personality in terms of your life. So be introspective enough to know what you aren't any good at and then hire to that."

Feeling supported by athletic administration, colleagues. Coaches described feeling supported by their athletic administration and colleagues as helpful to resilience development. Ways coaches felt supported included feeling that they could trust their athletic administration, having a sense of camaraderie with their colleagues, and being provided adequate resources to run their program successfully. Shannon stated,

> I just think that your work environment's so important. You spend a lot of time at work and it's nice to know that you have support from other coaches. When we have games, we have the men's basketball coaches out there, the crew coaches out there because the crew athletes are out there and the crew athletes are out there because the crew athletes date our women. Just so much support and camaraderie, you walk into the office—you know my office isn't, like, away from anybody, our offices are all in one big area. We really interact, you go to lunch together, play basketball, it's just… It adds to the enjoyment of what you do every day. And I think if you enjoy what you do every day, you're gonna keep wanting to do it.

Sociocultural

The fourth superordinate theme corresponded with the sociocultural level of this study's theoretical framework. The sociocultural level is the final, distal level of resilience development and includes sociocultural variables, or norms and cultural systems. One subordinate theme emerged at the sociocultural level: Culture of childhood community.

Culture of childhood community. Some coaches cited the culture of their childhood communities when describing how they developed resilience. In particular, urban, blue-collar and small, rural communities were mentioned. For example, Josie said,

Where did I get [a positive attitude towards adversity] from? I think I got it from my blue-collar background, my upbringing. I was a blue-collar kid from Flint, Michigan which is a blue-collar town. You know Flint now because of the water crisis but Flint was, you know, a massive hub for the automobile industry; my parents are first-generation immigrants from the Middle East, we were raised with the belief that we were self-determining people, we were never victims, we did not blame people.

Facilitative Responses to Adversity

In response to the third research question (What facilitative responses to adversity do experienced resilient female intercollegiate head coaches describe?), three superordinate themes emerged: Cognitive responses, emotional responses, and behavioral responses.

Cognitive Responses

The first superordinate theme involved positive cognitive strategies coaches used in response to adversity. Four subordinate themes emerged at this level: Embrace adversity, focus on positive aspects of challenges, do not take challenges personally, and stay true to oneself.

Embrace adversity. The way coaches cognitively framed adversity was common across this unique sample. Coaches reported embracing adversity and even having positive feelings in response to it. Josie said,

> Is adversity good for everybody? I think it is. You get to a point where you're so far along in your life working where you call it retirement. But if you're working in this industry, you will face adversity every day and it's how you look at it that makes you who you are in my opinion.

Furthermore, according to Shannon, "Every year is different, every team is different. The challenges, strengths, weaknesses—I just love the challenges of every day and I think I'd get very bored with a nine-to-five-office-type job."

Focus on positive aspects of challenges. Coaches described finding and focusing on the positive aspects of challenging situations. For example, Claire stated,

> I guess as much as I've had challenges in my life I've been fortunate for the most part that those things have made me stronger, better, and more human… I think that's why I say now that I think I'm a better coach than I used to be.

One popular way that coaches found silver livings to their adversities was by keeping perspective and reminding themselves that their situations could be worse. In other words, coaches in this sample often chose to frame their adverse situations as "half full" rather than "half empty." Maggie said,

> I always said this: I'm not a single mother working a minimum wage job. And as difficult as this profession is, that alternative? Those women have it so much harder. It's not like I had to clock in at 8 o'clock. I remember how stressful the

mornings were getting the boys ready for school, daycare, and trying to get that all done—that was hard. It's like juggling, and I can't even imagine what it would be like to do that as a parent and have to be at school at the exact right time.

Do not take challenges personally. Similar to self-regulation, coaches did not involve their egos when facing challenges. Coaches chose to frame obstacles in a "big picture" way rather than attribute them to personal shortcomings or attacks. Shannon said,

Don't personalize things. Don't personalize a loss. The reason I've been able to hang around as long as I have is I don't take things too personally. I don't let my ego get attached to my wins. I don't get too high and I don't get too low. I don't let my ego get attached to when we're winning and I don't let my ego get attached to when we're not winning. It's not a reflection on me, it's sometimes you just have better teams and sometimes you just keep working hard to have those good ideas. But if you get your ego involved, that's where I think you get yourself in trouble a lot of the times, quite honestly.

Stay true to oneself. Coaches described staying true to themselves and their coaching philosophies as helping them respond positively to adversity. Maggie summarized this approach, saying "Be authentic, be true to yourself."
Additionally, Lily said,

I'd just say that… You stick true to who you are. I would say that as long as there's situations where there's a high degree of integrity and honesty involved, then you're more often than not going to get through the worst of things—if there

is honesty, if there is integrity, if you are paying attention to what's happening around you. If you have those two things, I think you can get through just about anything.

Behavioral Responses

The second superordinate theme involved positive behaviors coaches engaged in in response to adversity. Two subordinate themes emerged at this level: Talk to someone and take action/adapt.

Talk to someone. Coaches indicated that talking to trusted others about their struggles helped them to respond positively to adversity, highlighting the salience of the interpersonal level of the ecological-resilience integrated model. Among these trusted others were spouses, friends, fellow female coaches, staff, and professional counselors. Bailey stated,

Honestly without [my longtime friend who is also a female coach], and I know she would say this about me, I don't know if either one of us would have continued to progress [in the coaching profession]. Because you had to have someone that you could say 'can you believe they said that?!' or 'could you believe that?' so the support group or veterans or colleagues that understand you—I have been very lucky.

Take action/adapt. Coaches reported responding to challenges by taking action and/or adapting to the circumstances. This approach is embodied by the following quotations by Maggie and Lily. According to Maggie,

It transcends a lot of parts of my life that I have the mentality of 'this didn't work, what next?' Meaning, like, in coaching it never goes as planned, there's always an issue—a sprained ankle, or, you know, things happen and you just have to adapt and move forward. It has helped me in difficult situations to have that 'it's time to go into game plan' mode. We gotta figure this out and move forward.

Lily said,

I don't think I've been pushed to the brink of quitting, I've been more pushed to the brink of fighting harder.

Emotional Responses

The third superordinate theme involved positive emotional strategies coaches used in response to adversity. Two subordinate themes emerged at this level: Self-regulate and pick your battles.

Self-regulate. In the face of adversity, coaches controlled their negative feelings by staying calm and/or avoiding emotions altogether. Bailey described the former approach, saying "Just be patient and persistent and not let the stuff get to you. Let it roll off your back and you're gonna be so much more effective. And that's what I really try and do." In terms of the latter strategy, Tina said

In hindsight, I think at some point—this is more personal, for me—but when my husband lost his job, I had a one-year-old child and all of the sudden I'm the main breadwinner… I feel like I went into autopilot. I just did my job and I think I'm just the kind of person that whatever I do I'm gonna do to the best of my ability so I just acted, you know, I just did everything to the very best. I think about it

now—I used to get up at I don't even know what time, maybe 4:30 or 5:00, to

breastfeed him before I'd leave to go to morning practice, then go coach practice,

then get back home and get him… Now I'm just like Jesus, how the hell did I do

that?

Pick your battles. Coaches also noted the importance of being selective about

when to use their emotional resources. Specifically, coaches advocated for using

emotional resources only for issues that they could control and that were consequential.

According to Claire, "I think the more you can understand where other people might be

coming from and sort of learn which battles to fight and which ones to let go, people can

be more successful."

Conclusion

Overall, emergent themes demonstrated multiple—and often multifaceted—

adversities, developmental factors, and facilitative responses related to the resilience

process in female coaches. Examining these themes in the context of existing research

can help provide further insight into their meaning and significance.

CHAPTER FOUR: DISCUSSION

The purpose of this study was to identify and explore resilient qualities that enable female intercollegiate coaches to thrive and sustain lengthy careers in intercollegiate coaching using an ecological-resilience integrated theoretical framework. Results of the interpretive phenomenological analysis performed using the ecological-resilience integrated theoretical framework (Fletcher & Sarkar, 2012; Galli & Vealey, 2008; LaVoi & Dutove, 2012) showed that work-family balance struggles, the time commitment of the coaching profession, financial challenges, and career-threatening situations emerged as the prominent types of adversities eliciting the resilience process in female coaches. Additionally, coaches identified seven main resilient responses to adversity: Embrace adversity, focus on positive aspects of challenges, talk to someone, take action/adapt, self-regulate, do not take challenges personally, and stay true to oneself. Finally, coaches' abilities to be resilient were developed by a variety of individual, interpersonal, organizational, and sociocultural factors. In general, this study supported the ecological-resilience integrated theoretical framework because themes emerged that specifically addressed each component of the model, except for meta-cognitions. This research has a number of implications for women in intercollegiate coaching, especially when taken in the context of previous research.

Adversities

Implications

The adversities identified by female NCAA Division I coaches in this study had both similarities and differences with those found in existing research. Prior qualitative

studies of coach stress were conducted by Frey (2007), Thelwell et al. (2008), and Durand-Bush et al. (2012). Frey (2007) found that coaches' most prominent sources of stress were interpersonal/personal, task-related, and sources that would lead to coaches quitting. The present study's findings seem relatively compatible with this finding, as work-family balance struggles, the time commitment of the coaching profession, financial challenges, and career-threatening situations fit into these categories.

However, demands on coaches identified by Thelwell et al. (2008) and Durand-Bush et al. (2012) seemed to contrast more substantially with those found in this study. Thelwell et al. (2008) found six general dimensions of demands faced by coaches: Performance related – athlete, performance related – coach, organizational – environmental, organizational – leadership, organizational – personal, and organizational – team. In the present study, emergent themes regarding challenges identified by experienced female coaches fit into the organizational – personal and organizational – leadership domains, but the remaining four dimensions were unaccounted for. Furthermore, Durand-Bush et al. (2012) found that coach demands fell into external and internal categories, which was inconsistent with this research as emergent themes in this study were all external demands. Thus, the present study represents a unique contribution to the qualitative coach stress literature as participants in this study described were different from those in previous research.

The present study's apparent greater consistency with Frey (2007) relative to Thelwell et al. (2008) and Durand-Bush et al. (2012) could be due to the environments in which the participants of each study worked. Participants in Frey's (2007) study were

Division I NCAA coaches (like the women in the present study, although Frey's [2007] participants were male and female). Meanwhile, Thelwell et al.'s (2008) study involved male and female elite British coaches, and Durand-Bush et al.'s (2012) participants were female Canadian coaches at the development and high performance levels. As different countries and sport associations have different athletic working environments, it is feasible that differences between these studies' findings were due to these factors. The present study therefore suggests that researchers and practitioners examining resilience in coaches should examine it relative to the specific working environment in which they operate, as different work environments may involve different adversities that elicit the resilience process. This finding is consistent with Lazarus and Folkman's (1984) suggestion that the stress process entails a dynamic interaction between a person and environment as well as Robbins, Gilbert, and Clifton's (2015) research confirming that this interaction occurs in Division II coaches at Historically Black College/Universities.

Moreover, it was also notable that work-family balance struggles emerged as a theme in this portion of the present study. Thelwell et al. (2012) did not mention these challenges as a demand identified by coaches, and only one coach out of ten in Frey's (2007) study specifically did. However, half of the coaches interviewed by Durand-Bush et al. (2012) mentioned work-family balance as a substantial stress in their careers. As Durand-Bush et al. (2012) and the present study involved female coaches, whereas Thelwell et al. (2012) and Frey (2007) interviewed male and female coaches, it is possible that work-family balance is an especially salient challenge for female coaches relative to their male counterparts. Existing literature on work-family balance in female

coaches, which has been shown to be multilevel in nature (Dixon & Bruening, 2007), supports this finding (for a review, see Bruening, Dixon, & Eason, 2016). Nonetheless, this study shows that, although stressful, balancing a family with a coaching career at the NCAA Division I level is possible for women.

Another noteworthy finding of this study was that while all other existing qualitative research on coach stress found that internal factors (e.g., self-imposed expectations or pressure) were among major demands faced by coaches in any environment, such factors did not emerge as a major adversity eliciting the resilience process in experienced female coaches. This finding is notable but unsurprising as the coaches in the present study were selected as resilience exemplars due to their long tenures as workplace minorities in a demanding profession. Thus, this study's participants' internal qualities may have enabled them to respond positively to struggles as opposed to presenting a challenge in and of themselves.

Limitations

One limitation of this study was that recruitment was blind to race and sexual orientation and the only demographic data collected were coaches' ages, number of years of head coaching experience, and number of years in the coaching profession. Race and sexual orientation could be relevant to this research as past literature shows they have the potential to affect the resilience process. In the US, women of color are invisible and silenced in sport due to subjugation based on their race and gender (Bruening, 2005; Carter & Hawkins, 2011; Carter-Francique & Olushola, 2016). Additionally, sport is one of the most hostile institutions towards lesbians (Krane, 1996; Lenskyj, 1992; Norman,

2016). Numerous structural practices limiting lesbian coaches' abilities to full be

themselves and develop professionally result in lesbian coaches feeling unsupported by

their organizations (Norman, 2013). Since no measures in the present study were taken to

ensure diversity of participants in terms of race and sexual orientation, it is therefore

possible that the sample was a homogenous group in these regards. Thus, although no

participants mentioned race or sexual orientation as related to their experiences of

resilience, it cannot be verified that their experiences would hold true for coaches of all

races and sexual orientations. It therefore may be worthwhile for future research to

examine resilience in female coaches with an intersectionality lens—such as the

Ecological-Intersectional model (LaVoi, 2016)—in order to determine the roles, if any,

race and sexual orientation play in the resilience process for female coaches.

<h3 style="text-align:center">Factors Related to Resilience Development</h3>

The factors related to resilience development found in this study overall fit

remarkably well in their respective stage of the ecological-resilience integrated

theoretical framework. In particular, they lent support for including LaVoi and Dutove's

(2012) ecological model when examining female coach resilience development because

factors emerged from every level of the ecological model (individual, interpersonal,

organizational, and sociocultural). Furthermore, factors were relatively consistent with

those found in Moosbrugger's (2009) case study of one experienced Division III female

head coach as Moosbrugger (2009) identified individual, interpersonal, and

organizational factors that helped the coach in her study sustain a 30+ year career. In

addition to fitting well in this study's theoretical framework, most of the factors in

Moosbrugger's (2009) study—such as individual factors of determination, persistence, experience, positivity, and interpersonal/organizational factors of having a supportive spouse, colleagues, staff, and workplace—also emerged in the present study.

Challenge appraisals, originally from Fletcher and Sarkar's (2012) grounded theory of psychological resilience and optimal sport performance in athletes, were clearly present in this study of experienced female intercollegiate coaches. According to Fletcher and Sarkar (2012), challenge appraisals in sport resilience occurred when athletes believed stressors provided them with opportunities to gain an edge over their competition, such as by viewing adverse situations as learning opportunities. Challenge appraisals were represented in this study in the form of the individual-level subordinate theme "view that challenges are a learning opportunity."

However, one aspect of the theoretical framework that was notably absent from this study's findings was meta-cognitions (Fletcher & Sarkar, 2012). In Fletcher and Sarkar's (2012) study, meta-cognitions represented awareness and control of one's thoughts. In the present study, no coach specifically mentioned monitoring and/or reflecting on her own cognitions as a part of the resilience process. This finding is especially curious as Durand-Bush et al. (2012) showed that female Canadian coaches used self-evaluation strategies to manage stress, which is similar to athletes' use of meta-cognitions in the resilience process, yet no research exists that would suggest or explain why female coaches in the NCAA system would *not* rely on such an approach. While it is possible that coaches in the present study used meta-cognitions to help achieve some of their facilitative responses to adversity (such as "focus on positive aspects of challenges,"

"take action/adapt," "self-regulate," and "do not take challenges personally"), their failure to specifically articulate the role of meta-cognitions is intriguing.

One possible explanation is related to the age and career tenures of the population in this study. Participants in this study were 40-60 years old, had been coaching for 21-38 years, and were still currently coaching. In contrast, participants in Durand-Bush et al.'s (2012) study ranged in age from 26 to 55 years and had 5-25 of coaching experience. Additionally, Fletcher and Sarkar's (2012) participants—former Olympic champions— had an average of 7 years of senior international sport experience. It is possible that coaches in this study failed to mention meta-cognitions as among factors that helped them to develop resilience because extended time in their career field allowed them to internalize the meta-cognition process and they therefore no longer need to consciously monitor and change their thought patterns in order to respond resiliently to challenges. This study's theoretical framework would support this possibility because it is a developmental model thus indicating that over time, changes occur in the individual, interpersonal, organizational, and sociocultural levels that impact female coaches. However, future research is required to determine the role of meta-cognitions earlier in the careers of resilient female coaches.

Facilitative Responses to Adversity

Results from this study indicated that resilient female coaches' facilitative responses to adversity fell into cognitive, behavioral, and emotional categories. This finding was similar to Frey's (2007) finding that Division I NCAA coaches used cognitive, behavioral, and emotional strategies to manage stress. This result and support

for it in Frey (2007) suggest that the theoretical model used in this study could be modified to specifically include these three types of facilitative responses to adversity. See Figure 9 for a revised version of the ecological-resilience integrated theoretical framework that highlights the tendency of female coaches' facilitative responses of adversity to fall into one of these three categories, as well as the conspicuous absence of meta-cognitions from the resilience process in this group of experienced female coaches.

Another notable result from this section was that emergent themes related to coaches' facilitative responses to adversity fell more frequently in the cognitive category compared to the behavioral or emotional categories, suggesting that the resilient female coaches exhibit a variety of resilient cognitive responses. Taken together, these findings indicate that interventions aimed at increasing retention of women in the coaching profession could benefit from (a) teaching them productive cognitive, behavioral, and emotional responses to adversity and (b) emphasizing the importance of resilient cognitions.

One way to meet these goals could be to borrow techniques from cognitive behavior therapy (CBT), which emphasizes modifying patients' cognitions, emotions, and behaviors. CBT is based on the cognitive model, which states that individuals' thoughts—especially their deep cognitions (referred to as "underlying beliefs")—determine how they feel and act (Beck, 2011). However, the applicability of CBT techniques to boost female coach resilience is purely speculative because one limitation of this study was that potential interrelationships between participants' responses to adversity were not investigated. Although the ecological model portion of this study's

framework included a variety of cognitions, behaviors, and emotions as developmental factors related to resilience, this study did not specifically address how resilient responses themselves could potentially interact. Responses to adversity were coded separately and, in turn, the emergent superordinate themes of cognitive, behavioral, and emotional responses to challenges were categorized independently. For example, coaches described staying true to themselves (cognitive), taking action/adapting (behavioral), and selectively picking their battles (emotional) as facilitative responses to adversity, but it was not explicitly explored whether focusing on staying true to themselves led them to selectively pick their battles and then take action and adapt to circumstances, or if these responses occurred independently.

Nonetheless, research suggests that coaches' cognitive, behavioral, and emotional responses to adversity are likely to be interrelated. In addition to recent neuroscience research supports the existence of a dynamic, interactive relationship between cognitions and emotions (for a review, see Dolcos, Iordan, & Dolcos, 2011), CBT and its underlying theory are well-established (Beck, 2011). Furthermore, the framework of CBT provides a conceptual basis for the apparent absence of meta-cognitions as a factor related to resilience development in this study. According to the underlying theory of CBT, individuals' core beliefs about themselves and their world determine their automatic thought patterns, which affect their behavior and emotions. Thus, coaches in this study may have not cited using meta-cognitions in the resilience process because their resilient cognitions are automatic due to productive core beliefs that they've developed from decades in the coaching profession. It therefore seems worthwhile to further examine

interrelationships between coaches' facilitative responses to adversity, especially using a cognitive behavioral lens. Combining underlying theory of CBT (Beck, 2011) with the ecological-resilience integrated model may provide a strong framework from which to investigate these potential interrelationships (see Figure 10).

<center>**Conclusion**</center>

The present study's findings suggest that an ecological-resilience integrated model highlighting cognitive, behavioral, and emotional facilitative responses to adversity is an appropriate framework from which to study resilience in female coaches. This framework indicates that when faced with stressors—which are diverse but most notably include work-family balance issues, time commitment struggles, financial challenges, and career-threatening situations—resilient female coaches exhibit productive cognitive, behavioral, and emotional responses. The ability of these coaches to respond positively to stressors is developed over time in an interactive, dynamic process influenced by factors on individual (including, most proximally, challenge appraisals), interpersonal, organizational, and sociocultural levels. Coaches' facilitative responses to stress also work to foster resilience over time.

Practitioners and researchers should consider this model when assessing how to retain women in the coaching profession, especially at the NCAA Division I level. CBT techniques in particular hold promise as a potential avenue to promote resilient responses to adversity in female coaches. However, future research is needed to explore the role of intersectionality in coach resilience, resilience in female coaches in different environments (such as the NCAA Division II and III levels), whether and how early-

career female coaches rely on meta-cognitions to respond positively to adversity, as well as the potential interrelationships between resilient cognitive, behavioral, and emotional responses to adversity.

In addition to a novel theoretical model, this study provides several unique contributions to the literature. First, this study represents the first scientific research on exemplar, experienced female coaches. Thus, its findings may be meaningful to aspiring female coaches who wish to develop or enhance resilience. Moreover, as the first qualitative study on stressors specifically facing female coaches in the NCAA system, it adds new insights to the qualitative coach stress literature. Finally, this study was the first to examine resilience in sport coaches. These contributions, along with the ecological-resilience integrated model, have the potential to help foster resilience in female intercollegiate coaches and, in turn, keep them in the profession.

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APPENDIX
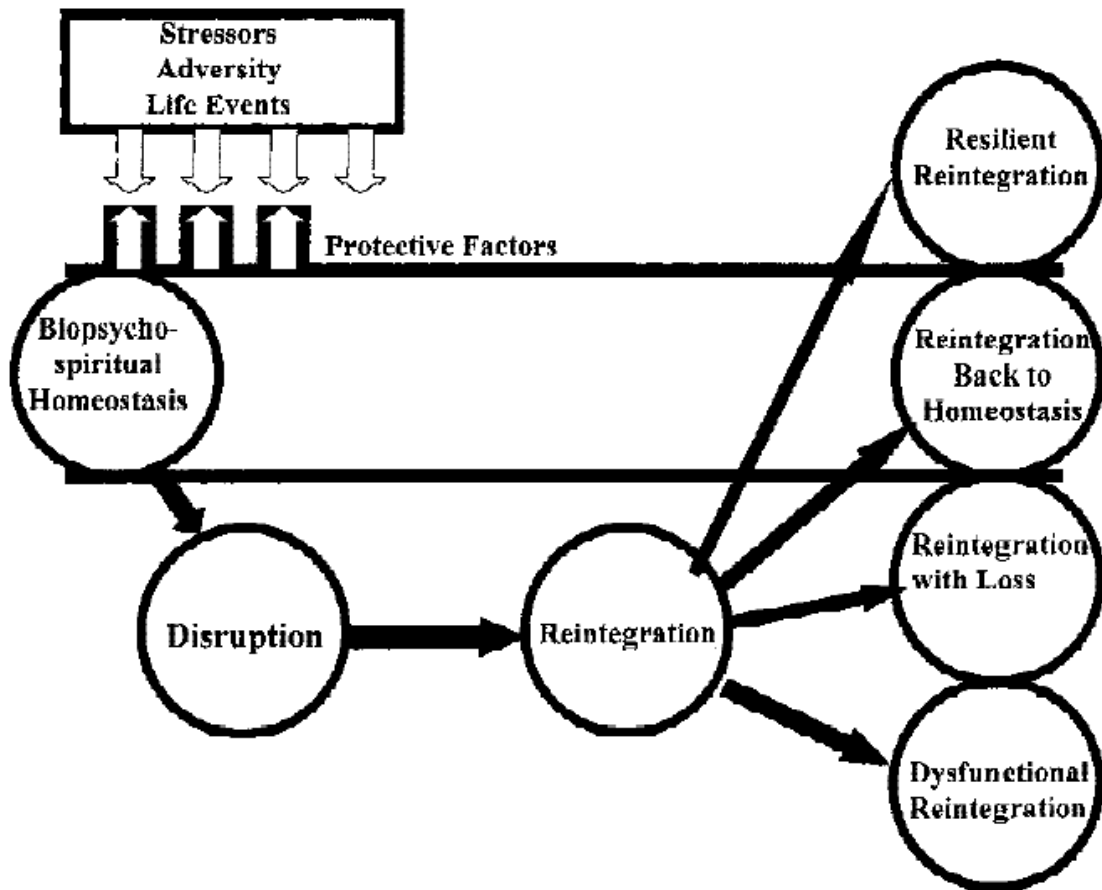
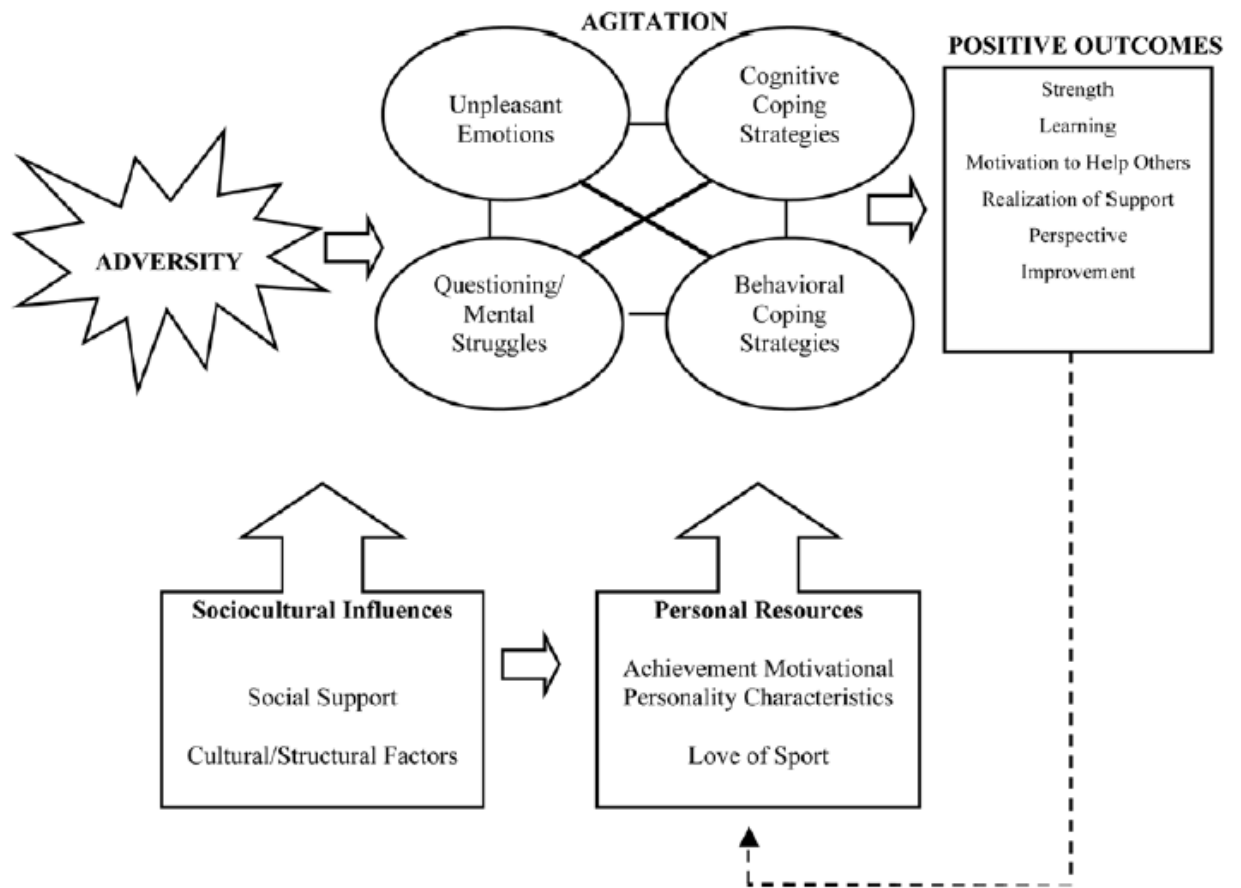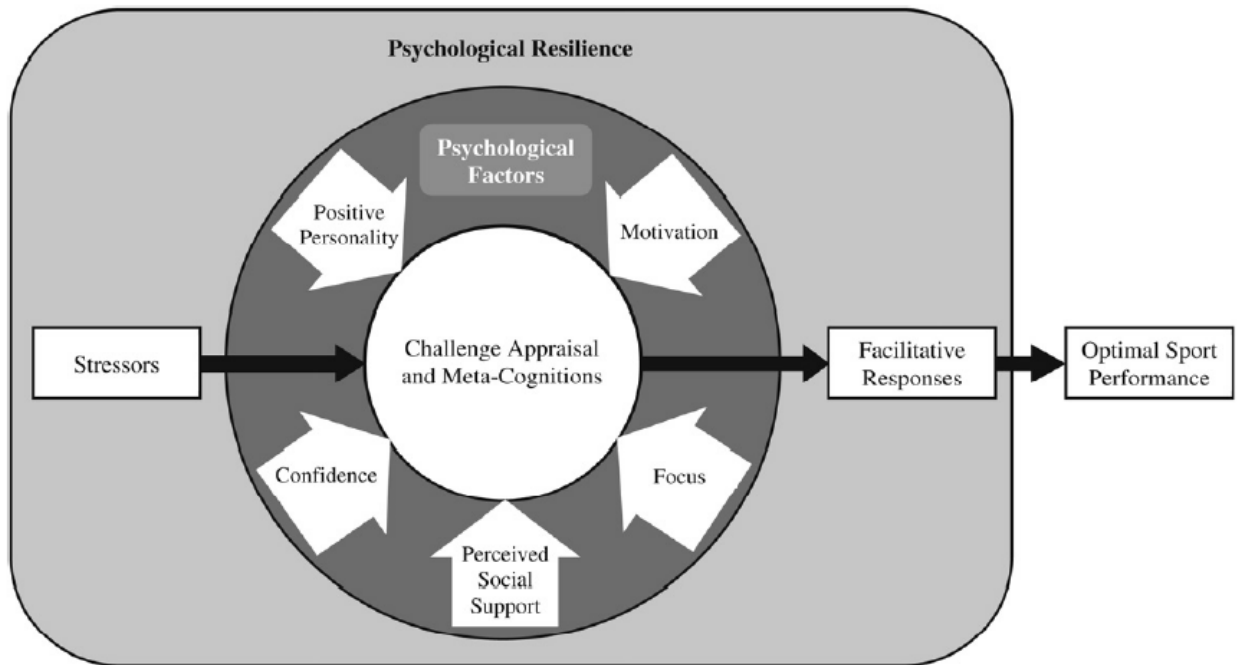*Figure 1.* Richardson et al.'s (1990) resiliency model (Richardson, 2002).

Figure 2. Galli and Vealey's (2008) preliminary conceptual model of sport resilience

Figure 3. Fletcher and Sarkar's (2012) grounded theory of psychological resilience and
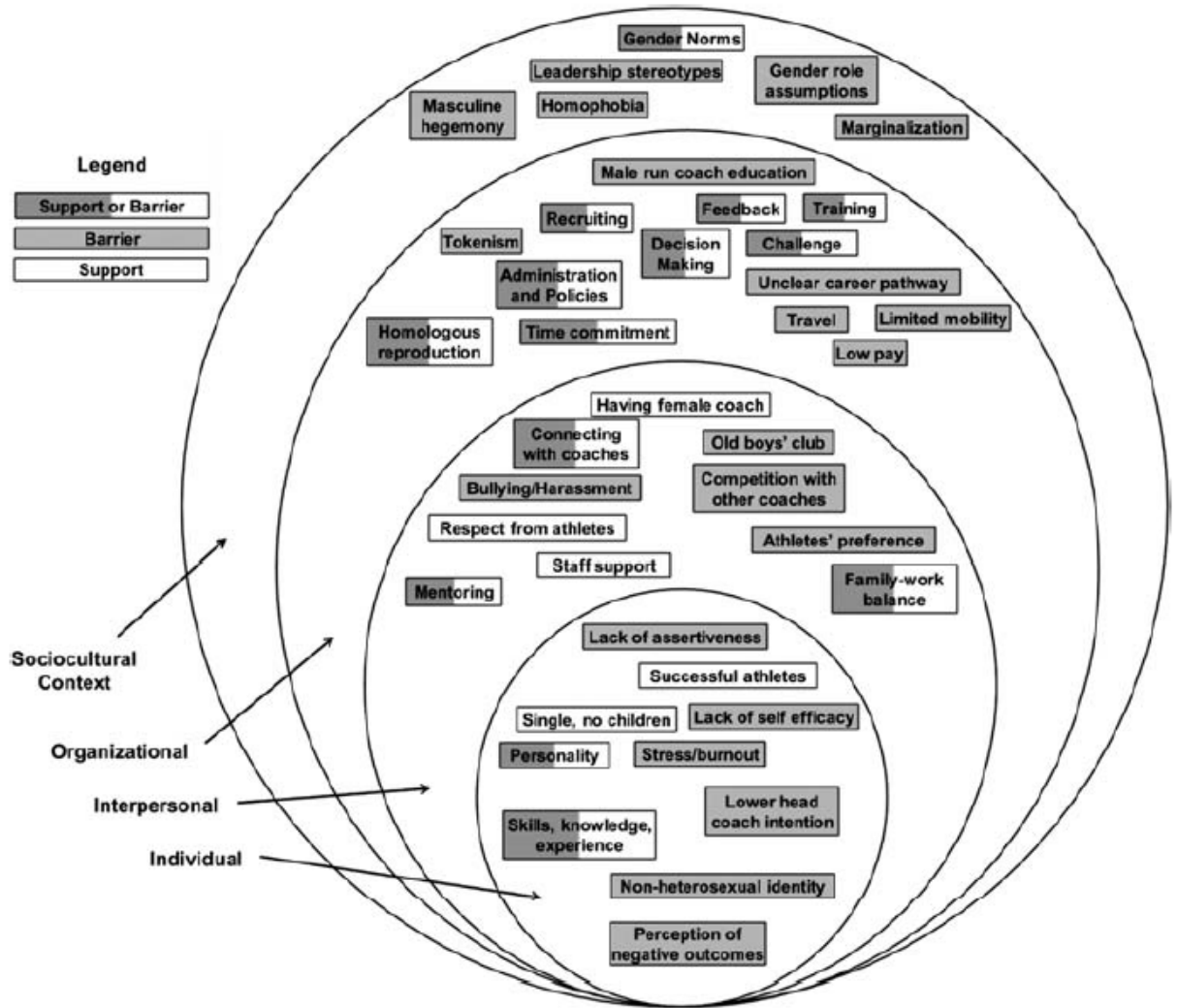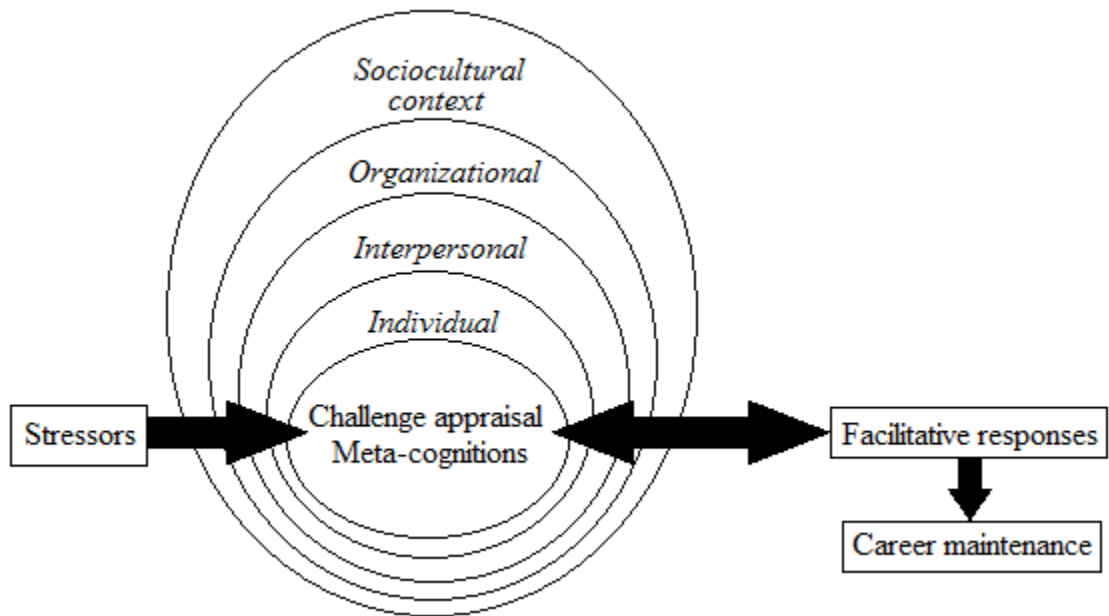
optimal sport performance.

Figure 4. LaVoi and Dutove's (2012) ecological model of barriers and supports for

female coaches.

Figure 5. An ecological-resilience integrated theoretical framework.

Adversities	Factors related to resilience development	Facilitative responses to adversity

‣ *Work-family balance struggles*
‣ *Time commitment of the profession*
‣ *Financial challenges*
‣ *Career-threatening situations*
	‣ *Individual*
	  • Sense of self
	  • View that challenges are a learning opportunity
	  • Coaching experience
	  • Confidence
	  • Miscellaneous personality characteristics
	‣ *Interpersonal*
	  • Family influence during formative years
	  • Mentors
	  • Trusted friends
	‣ *Organizational*
	  • Balanced staff
	  • Feeling supported by athletic administration, colleagues
	‣ *Sociocultural*
	  • Culture of childhood community
		‣ *Cognitive responses*
		  • Embrace adversity
		  • Focus on positive aspects of challenges
		  • Do not take challenges personally
		  • Stay true to oneself
		‣ *Behavioral responses*
		  • Talk to someone
		  • Take action/adapt
		‣ *Emotional responses*
		  • Self-regulate
		  • Pick your battles

Figure 6. Superordinate and subordinate themes in response to each research question.

Adversities eliciting resilience in female intercollegiate coaches (*n*)
Having no other female coaches as role models, colleagues (2)
Fatigue (2)
Physical demands of profession (2)
Lack of respect from athletic administration (2)
Athlete went into cardiac arrest (2)
Recruiting (2)
Dealing with parents of athletes (2)
Not getting credit for coaching achievements (1)
Losing athletic facilities (1)
Operating with a small staff (1)
Other coaches cheating (1)
Deciding whether to kick players off of teams (1)
Lack of maturity early in career (1)

Figure 7. Miscellaneous adversities that elicited the resilience process in female coaches.

Personality traits related to resilience in female intercollegiate coaches (*n*)
Competitive (3)
Self-belief (3)
Positive (2)
Stubborn (2)
Driven (2)
Compassionate (1)
Decisive (1)
Extraverted (1)
Goal-oriented (1)
Honest (1)
Intrinsically motivated (1)
Persistent (1)

Figure 8. Miscellaneous personality traits that coaches said helped them to be resilient.

Sociocultural context

Organizational

Interpersonal

Individual

Stressors

Challenge appraisal

Facilitative responses
• *Cognitive*
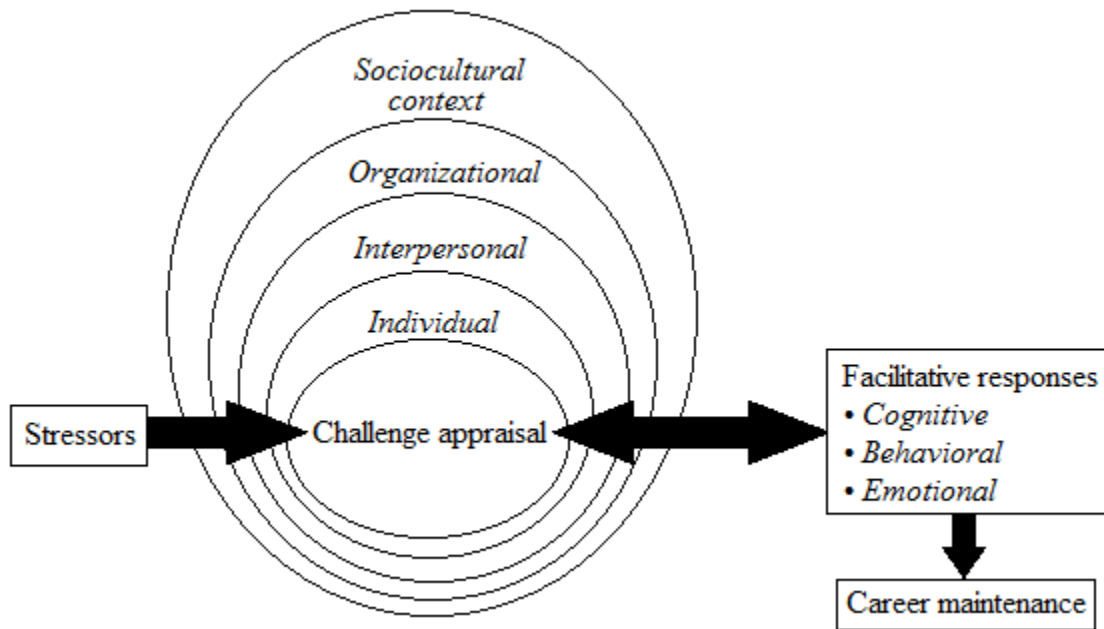• *Behavioral*
• *Emotional*

Career maintenance

Figure 9. A revised ecological-resilience integrated theoretical framework.
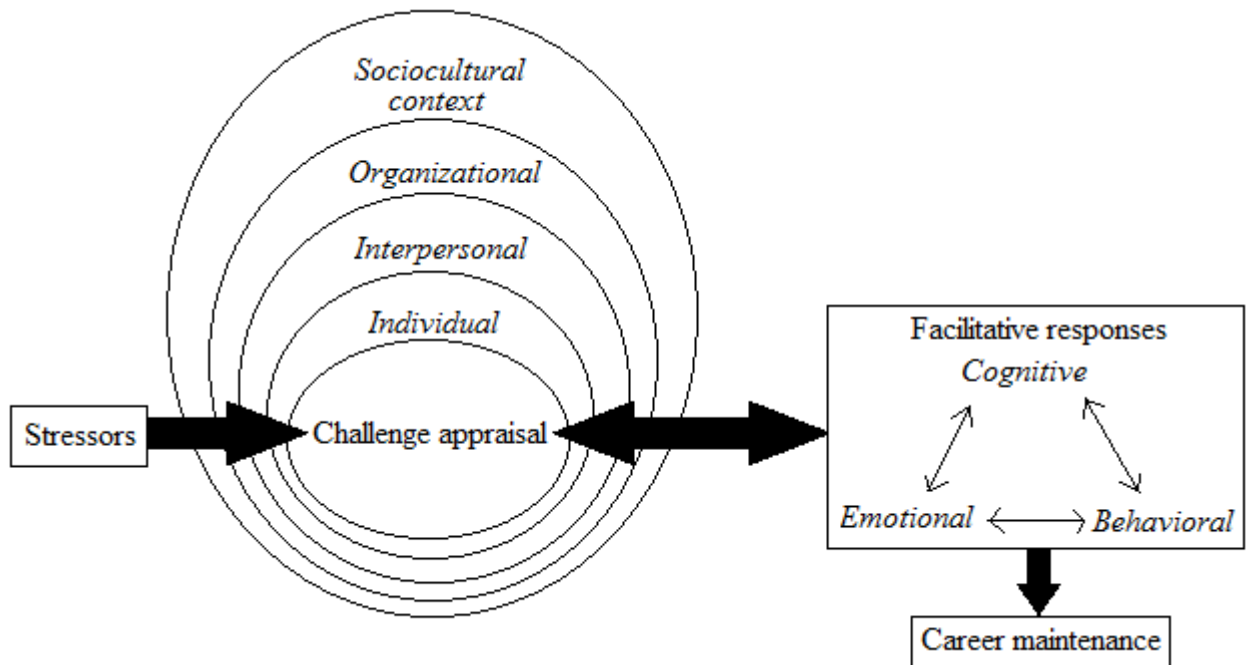
Figure 10. A proposed ecological-resilience-cognitive-behavioral integrated theoretical

framework.