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### **Work-Life Balance: A perspective from the Athletic Trainer Employed in the NCAA Division I Setting**

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*The purpose of our study was to gain the perspective of male and female ATs employed in the Division I setting, regardless of marital status, to evaluate factors and strategies used to maintain WLB. The study was aimed at gaining the perspectives of both genders, as although issues pertaining to WLB have been focused largely around female ATs, there is some evidence that it can impact both male and female ATs. A total of 42 (27 female-ATs and 15 male-ATs) ATs employed in the Division I collegiate setting volunteered. Our results indicate that work demands, communication, and control over work schedules negatively impact WLB for the AT, where in comparison supervisor support, support networks, and time away positively influenced WLB. Like coaches and sports informational professionals, ATs experience issues because of many of the organizational and structural factors related to the nature of the Division I setting. Many of those factors are not avoidable, however factors such as support from a supervisor, job sharing between co-workers, and prioritizing time away from the role of the AT appears to help stimulate WLB.*

**R**ole theory predicts that the multiple roles individuals fill as workers and family members (child, parent, spouse or partner) are in conflict with each other due to the limited amount of time and resources they have to spend on each role. Essentially, the time and energy spent in one role imposes time and energy away from the other roles. Role theory also predicts that the consequences of work-family conflict (WFC) may include decreased marital or job satisfaction, reduced job performance, and intent to leave one's profession (Anderson, Coffey, & Byerly, 2002; Boles, Howard, & Howard-Donofrio, 2001; D. S. Carlson & Kacmar, 2000; Hammer, Bauer, & Grandey, 2003). A successful career in sport habitually necessitates long

nontraditional hours, which can make achieving a balance between work and family problematic. These challenges in finding balance between work and family is evident in coaches (Bruening & Dixon, 2007; Bruening & Dixon, 2008; Dixon & Sagas, 2007; Pastore, 1991; Pastore, Inglis, & Danylchuk, 1996) and sports information professionals (Hatfield & Johnson, 2012). Mazerolle and colleagues (Mazerolle, Bruening, Casa, & Burton, 2008; Mazerolle, Bruening, & Casa, 2008) first reported that athletic trainers (ATs) employed in the collegiate clinical setting experience issues striking a balance between their work and family lives, due mostly to time demands associated with the role.

The term WFC is a connotation that covers only those individuals that have traditional family responsibilities, such as commitments to a spouse or child, and has thus excluded single or unmarried professionals. Because the stresses of WFC occur within sports organizations regardless of family or marital status, the term WFC has been replaced with the concept of work-life balance (WLB) (Mazerolle, Pitney, Casa, & Pagnotta, 2011). Work-life balance is used to describe an individual's actions meant to achieve balance between responsibilities associated with non-work roles such as spouse, parent, friend, etc. and demands of their professional lives. Work-life balance, most simply, is about individuals having a measure of control over when, where, and how they work as a means to help them meet the needs of their lives outside of the workplace.

Although a majority of the literature focuses on the construct as a product of organizational infrastructure and workplace policies and expectations, a model developed by Dixon and Bruening (2005) suggest that other factors interlace and contribute to WFC or WLB in the collegiate sports setting. In fact they contend that three main factors exist (organizational, sociocultural, and individual-level factors) that have the potential to shape organizational policy from the bottom-up. Organizational level factors fall into three main categories: job pressure/stress, work hours/schedule, and work culture (Dixon & Bruening, 2005). More pressure, longer hours, lower organizational support, and a non-family-friendly culture are associated with higher levels of WFC (Dixon & Sagas, 2007). Individual level factors consist of personal characteristics such as personality, values, coping skills, support systems, and gender and have the potential to impact an individual's feelings of conflict (Dixon & Bruening, 2005). Sociocultural level factors relate to social meanings, norms, and values associated with work and family and these factors often relate to gender, particularly when evaluating perceptions of work and family social norms (Dixon & Bruening, 2005). Researchers have contended that American society is largely grounded in traditional gender roles of the female as the domestic caretaker and the male as the wage earner (Pastore et al., 1996).

Dixon and Bruening (2007) found that individual-level attitudes and behaviors related to WLB are often constrained by policies or cultural norms at the organizational level in the sport industry. For example, coaching mothers did not feel they could bring their children to work in order to fulfill job responsibilities due to policies enacted by their athletic directors (Dixon & Bruening, 2007). Additionally, athletic directors indicated that "face time" is an important measure of job commitment, resulting in mothers spending more time at work just to "show their faces" when the tasks they were working on could have been completed at home allowing time to balance personal obligations (Dixon & Sagas, 2007). This phenomenon of the workplace and environment shaping the worker has been labeled as a top-down process (Kanter, 1977).

The creation of formal workplace policies is important for the fulfillment of WLB for the working individual, but just as important are personal strategies that can be utilized by individuals. Time away from professional role is a common recommendation made by WLB

experts as it may help revitalize and stimulate professional commitment (Mazerolle & Goodman, 2011; Mazerolle et al., 2011; Mazerolle, Pitney, & Goodman, 2012). Professional commitment for ATs has been linked to spending time outside of the workplace engaged in exercise, hobbies, and family activities (Pitney, 2010). Rejuvenation was also found to occur when the AT was able to interact and connect with peers in a professional manner such as conferences or workshops (Pitney, 2010). However, this time spent away from the professional role needs to be defined by the individual themselves in order to achieve the full rejuvenating benefits.

The capacity to efficiently manage and balance one's personal life with work responsibilities has correlated with increased job satisfaction, decreased perceived burnout, and decreased intentions to leave a profession (Mazerolle et al., 2008). Athletic trainers, along with other professionals working in the sport industry are at risk for work-life imbalance. Absence of time for family or personal commitments secondary to an inability to balance work and home life has been linked to those in the athletic industry (Capel, 1990; Mazerolle et al., 2008; Mazerolle et al., 2008; Pastore, 1991). The literature has identified insufficient staffing, long work hours, travel, lack of control over work schedule, and work overload as characteristics associated with WLB conflicts (Babin & Boles, 1996; Dixon & Bruening, 2005; Scriber, 2005).

Consequently researchers have begun examining possible strategies and organizational policies to help reduce the incidence and influence of work-life imbalance. At this time however, there is little known about the individual strategies utilized by male and female ATs employed at the Division I clinical setting to avoid work-life imbalance. The Division I collegiate clinical settings possess unique professional challenges to the AT trying to maintain WLB due to the multiple roles being fulfilled. For example, long road trips, extended nights away from home, high pressure to win, supervision of athletic training students, infrequent days off, high athlete-to-athletic trainer ratios, athletes on scholarship, and extended competitive seasons are a handful of the role strains face by ATs employed in the Division I setting (Hendrix, Acevedo, & Hebert, 2000; Malasarn, Bloom, & Crumpton, 2002). More disconcerting is the relationship that exists between fulfillment of WLB for the retention of ATs in the Division I setting. Several publications in the athletic training literature have postulated that the demands and expectations placed upon the AT in the Division I setting make it very challenging to achieve equity between professional responsibilities and personal interests and family obligations (Goodman et al., 2010; Kahanov & Eberman, 2011).

The purpose of our study was to gain the perspective of male and female ATs employed in the Division I setting, regardless of marital status, to evaluate factors and strategies used to maintain WLB. The study was aimed at gaining the perspectives of both genders, as although issues pertaining to WLB have been focused largely around female ATs, there is some evidence that it can impact both male and female ATs.

## Method

### *Purpose*

In this exploratory study, our purpose was to gain a better understanding of WLB strategies utilized and barriers experienced from female and male ATs currently employed in the Division I clinical setting. A qualitative lens was used to address the exploratory purpose of the study as it provided the most flexibility and the opportunity to explore the experiences of female and male ATs as it relates to WLB and athletic training. Previous literature has capitalized on the qualitative paradigm to evaluate experiences of WLB in the Division I setting (Goodman et al.,

2010; Mazerolle et al., 2011), which further facilitated our rationale to use the method; beyond the recommendation of Creswell (Creswell, 2006) regarding understanding an individual's experiences regarding a particular construct. Our study was approved by the University of Connecticut Institutional Review Board before participant and data collection was initiated by the lead authors.

### *Participants*

Participants were purposefully recruited using convenience and snowball sampling procedures (Pitney & Parker, 2009). Male and female ATs employed in the Division I clinical settings were recruited as the aim of our study was to acquire a holistic picture of issues facing ATs employed in the collegiate setting regarding WLB. A total of 48 (27 female-ATs and 21 male-ATs) ATs employed in the Division I collegiate setting volunteered. Participants marital status included a total of 23 single ATs (14 females, 9 males), 11 married ATs (6 females, 5 males) and 14 married with children ATs (7 females, 7 males). The average tenure as an AT was  $11 \pm 7$  years with a range of 3-32 years ( $11 \pm 7$  yrs female,  $11 \pm 7$  years male). They were all full-time employees in the Division I setting. All but two participants had their master's degree and of the remaining participants one had their bachelor's degree and the other had their doctorate. Table 1 highlights the demographic information.

Table 1: *Participant Demographics*

	Females (n = 27)	Males (n = 21)
<b>MARITAL STATUS</b>		
Single	14	9
Married	6	5
Married with children	7	7
<b>YEARS OF EXPERIENCE</b>		
Average tenure	11 ± 7yrs	11 ± 7yrs
Tenure range	3-31yrs	3-32yrs
Mode	8yrs	4yrs
<b>HIGHEST DEGREE</b>		
Bachelors	0	1
Masters	26	20
Doctorate	1	0

### *Data Collection*

Data collection was conducted online via QuestionPro™ (Seattle, WA), a secure data tracking website designed expressly for research purposes. The interview guide was reviewed by two female ATs and one male AT employed within the Division I setting for clarity, content, and flow. Both females were full-time and working clinically at the time of the review with more than five years of experience. The male AT had been working in the Division I setting for 7 years. Edits including grammatical edits, rewording of a few questions, and additional question

resulted from this review. Prior to data collection, the study was piloted with 3 female and 3 male ATs ( $n = 6$ ) who represented the categories of marital/parenthood status including single, married, and married with children. The purpose of their review was to evaluate the clarity and flow of the interview questions. This step was necessary as with online data collection, there is not an opportunity for direct follow-up and therefore piloting can reduce the chance of misinterpretation of questions. No changes were made to the interview guide upon completion of pilot testing. The questions asked of each participant were derived by borrowing from previous published work in athletic training regarding WLB (Mazerolle et al., 2008; Mazerolle et al., 2008; Mazerolle et al., 2011; Pitney, Mazerolle, & Pagnotta, 2011), retention in the workplace (Goodman et al., 2010), and parenthood in athletic training (Kahanov, Loeb sack, Masucci, & Roberts, 2010).

### *Data Analysis and Credibility*

A general inductive process described by Thomas (Thomas, 2006) was utilized to analyze the textual data. Transcripts were initially evaluated by reading them in their entirety to gain a sense of the data. "Read-throughs" continued multiple times and during second and third "read-throughs" data was assigned labels. These labels were descriptors of main thoughts and findings of transcripts. Data was organized into more specific dominant themes to reduce redundancy of categories and to help articulate findings which pertain to the research agenda, after categories were assigned.

We employed 3 data credibility strategies to ensure trustworthiness: 1) member checks, 2) peer review and 3) multiple analyst triangulation. The peer review was completed by an athletic training scholar with experience in qualitative methods and strong knowledge in WLB and retention of ATs. The peer helped establish credibility by reviewing all data collection procedures and final themes. Two researchers, independently, completed the data collection procedures as outlined above to establish multiple-analyst triangulation.

## **Findings and Discussion**

Our results indicate that work demands, communication, and control over work schedules negatively impact WLB for the AT, where in comparison supervisor support, support networks, and time away positively influenced WLB (Figure 1). Organizational and structural factors appear to be the most influential on WLB, however individual-personal factors such as family values and parental needs also have an instrumental impact on WLB for the AT. Our findings expand on what is currently known about WLB in the sporting world (Dixon & Bruening, 2007; Hatfield & Johnson, 2012) in that it can be challenging to fulfill due to working conditions which demand long work hours. As suggested by the Role Theory, time is a limited resource, and when it becomes monopolized by one role it can be difficult to engage and/or fulfill responsibilities in other roles (Allen, 2001; Barnett & Gareis, 2006).

### *Negative Influences*

One of the central themes that emerged from analysis was the demand placed upon the AT in the Division I setting. Hours worked is consistently reported as the major contributor to issues with WLB among those working in the sports industry and collegiate setting (Dixon & Bruening, 2007; Hatfield & Johnson, 2012; Mazerolle et al., 2008). Our sample was no different, reporting hours worked per week as a major stimulus to work-life imbalance. Take for example

this discussion regarding factors influencing WLB by a single female AT [AH], “I have challenges with WLB, as people don’t understand why I work the hours I do. I work in a [clinical] setting that demands my time and attention.” Another quote by a married with children male AT highlights the hour requirements of the AT in the Division I collegiate setting, “work demands are enormous as the amount of time and effort [needed to do my job] limits home time and is often difficult to stay connected.” Actual hours spent working has been described in the literature as a major organizational/structural contributor to the occurrence of work-life imbalance within the sport industry, particularly for female coaches (Dixon & Bruening, 2007). In two separate studies examining WLB in the collegiate setting, the number of hours worked was reported as problematic for the AT (Mazerolle et al., 2008; Mazerolle et al., 2011). In both studies, the number of hours worked per week was reported as  $64 \pm 14$ , which highlights the impact hours, may have on time available outside of the workplace. One participant, a single female AT, illustrates the impact of work demands on WLB, sharing “yes, I have experienced challenges, mostly due to the amount of time expected at work. Difficult to have a life outside of work when you’re constantly ‘on-call’ and travel is considerable during the season.” Our findings can be transferred beyond just the AT in the Division I setting (Mazerolle et al., 2008; Mazerolle et al., 2011) as issues have been reported in sports informational professionals (Hatfield & Johnson, 2012) and coaches (Dixon & Bruening, 2005; Dixon & Bruening, 2007; Pastore et al., 1996); indicating the Division I setting is demanding and impacts.

Another negative influence of WLB, as described by our participants, was the work schedule of the collegiate setting, particularly the lack of control associated with daily schedules. Both female and male ATs in our study discussed the impact scheduling changes and the lack of control over schedule development can have on their abilities to find WLB. Flexible work schedules have dominated the literature as an organizational policy that can help facilitate WLB for the working professional (Baltes, Briggs, Huff, & Neuman, 1999; Gajendran & Harrison, 2007). However, ATs and other professionals in the collegiate setting (Hatfield & Johnson, 2012) are unable to capitalize on flexible work schedules due to staffing issues and hierarchical issues (Mazerolle et al., 2011) and the perceived need for face-to-face interactions (Dixon & Bruening, 2007). Several female participants discussed issues with changes to schedules, usually with minimal notice. For instance, one female AT shared, “there are times that practices/games/travel get changed or moved on a moment’s notice.” A male AT with 27 years in the collegiate setting discussed issues with scheduling, or a lack of control and its impact on his WLB, “schedules changes [are my biggest obstacle]. Schedules that accommodate everyone else but the athletic training staff.”

Another female AT discussed concerns with control and communication regarding practice and travel schedules saying “Coaches do not tell me the schedule for practices and travel ahead of time, so I am unable to plan things in my personal life such as vacations, dates, attending concerts, etc.” Coaches’ expectations and communication has been found as contributor to issues with WLB for the AT (Mazerolle et al., 2008; Mazerolle et al., 2011). As described by the previous quote, communication is key between the medical and coaching staff to allow for improved WLB. Interestingly, in a study by Dixon and Bruening (2007), the autonomy to complete work related tasks outside of the workplace was beneficial for the female coach. This autonomy, which would be considered a flexible work practice, has the potential to benefit employees and organizations equally by facilitating favorable job performance, diminishing job related stress (Baltes et al., 1999; Gajendran & Harrison, 2007), while concurrently helping entice and retain top talent (Blair-Loy & Wharton, 2002). This concept of

autonomy has proved to be necessary for the AT in the collegiate setting (Mazerolle & Goodman, In Press); however when communication is poor or when there is discord between the coach and the AT's family values or current family status it can impact fulfillment of WLB.

The demands of the collegiate setting also reflected the increased expectations placed upon the student-athlete and the requirements for training, which covered the day-to-day as well as the entire calendar year. One female AT with over 30 years of clinical experience described the demands of the setting as a "time encroachment", which seems to "[grow] more and more [each year]." Time was a major concern, but more so the timeframe of those hours which appear to extend beyond the "in-season" for the student-athlete. Take for example this comment from a single male AT regarding challenges in his current position,

Demands of the job [is one of my biggest obstacles] from a time standpoint. Scheduling is an issue, as usually it keeps the team in the practice facility throughout the day. Small groups for workouts spread out throughout the day do not leave enough time to get away. Also, new summer workout rules make the hours in June and July the exact same as they are November to April.

Another male AT, who is married with 8 years of work experience, shared a similar concern finding WLB and the demands of a collegiate AT. He stated,

Potential problems [with finding a balance working in the college setting] include the amount of coverage amongst all the sports that we are responsible for [providing medical coverage]. Every team is in-season the entire school year, even if they are not competing.

Employment in the collegiate setting can cause challenges finding a WLB, mostly due to the hours worked, but also due to scheduling changes that are often communicated at the last minute. Mazerolle and colleagues (Mazerolle et al., 2008) found comparable factors influencing WLB for the AT in the Division I setting, finding long work hours, inflexible work schedules as precipitating structural factors that cause work-life imbalance. As reported within other literature in the sports industry, especially coaching, WLB can be challenging to find because of the organizational and structural dynamics that are difficult to circumvent (Dixon & Bruening, 2007).

In the work-family model proposed by Dixon and Bruening, (2005) individual factors such as personality and family values are proposed as important factors that may contribute to a person's experiences of imbalance. It is important to note that in any given context individuals will differ in their experiences of WFC and ability to cope based on differences in their individual characteristics (D. Carlson, 1999; Dixon & Bruening, 2007). Therefore, it is essential that these individual characteristics are recognized. Comparable to female coaches in the Division I setting (Dixon & Bruening, 2007), our cohort valued both time spent at work as well as at home. In fact, many discussed the need to prioritize family and personal time over work. For example one male AT who was married with children discussed that once he had children "he had a reason to start working at being home more often and wasting less time being at work." Another male AT with children shared, "children come first. If a child is sick or needs to get picked up/dropped off, that comes first." If individuals perceive a work-family imbalance consequences include lower job satisfaction and commitment, high stress, and lower overall family well-being resulting from internal feelings of conflict (Anderson et al., 2002; Dixon & Sagas, 2007).

Parenthood or impending parenthood was important to our sample cohort of ATs, however many recognized the incompatibility that can occur with a role in the collegiate setting as an AT and the demands of a family. One female AT shared, “I believe that once we [my husband and I] have a family that I will end up giving up my professional career as an AT in the college setting to pursue a more ‘normal’ 9 to 5 job to better support my family.” Gender appeared to play more of significant role in regards to the assessment that parenthood and a career in the Division I setting is not feasible as only one male AT shared concerns about a setting change, he stated: “Once I am married and have a family, I may step away from the traditional setting.” This finding ties directly into the sociocultural factor implications described by Dixon and Bruening (2007) in which women typically have a more difficult time sustaining both family and work responsibilities due to gender norms in which women take on the majority of child rearing responsibilities. Departure from the Division I setting due to family responsibilities or concerns has been discussed previously in the literature (Goodman et al., 2010; Mazerolle et al., 2011), however some ATs opt to not have children because of the demands of the Division I setting, as one male AT who is married shared his thoughts about raising a family and being a Division I AT, “it does not provide a good environment for this [WLB and parenting]. I have chosen not to have kids to avoid this conflict.”

### *Positive Influences*

As organizational and structural factors can negatively impact WLB for the AT, it can also positively influence WLB, particularly when it boosts a supportive supervisor and a cohesive, supportive collegial work atmosphere (Mazerolle et al., 2012). Supervisor support has long been hailed an informal workplace strategy used to promote WLB for the employee, and in athletic training it has been consistently reported as crucial to it (Goodman et al., 2010; Mazerolle et al., 2011; Mazerolle et al., 2012). The majority of our participants discussed how “supportive” their supervisors were regarding personal and family time and the need to create WLB. One married female AT said her supervisor “constantly tells me it is all about balance.” Another married female AT shared, “my supervisor is very supportive of all of us and having a balanced life style.” Several of the male ATs, also mentioned the need to have a supportive supervisor. One male AT with one child, said this of his supervisor: “he believes in having a balance and it always okay with putting family first.”

Mazerolle et al. (2008) found that supervisor support helped create a degree of flexibility in the workday, particularly when the day is long. One AT highlighted the idea of integrating personal and family obligations during the workday, she shared: “my boss is very flexible with my hours. He encourages flex-time, such as taking time out of your day to workout, grab lunch, go home to walk my dog, etc.” Workplace integration, where personal and family obligations and responsibilities are allowed to spill over into the workday has been repeatedly identified by ATs as helpful for creating WLB (Mazerolle et al., 2011). Workplace integration is often viewed as a family-friendly policy that allows the AT to accommodate their personal/family needs with the demands that can be placed upon them while being needed to spend long hours at work (Mazerolle et al., 2012). Supervisors who advocate and recognize their employee’s needs, especially their families’ needs, are seen as supportive. This helps create a positive work environment as well as help achieve WLB.

Peer support has also been recognized as important for the AT to find WLB (Mazerolle et al., 2008; Mazerolle et al., 2011; Mazerolle & Goodman, 2011) specifically when staffing shortages are present (Mazerolle, Faghri, Marcinick, & Milazzo, 2010) or to help create



flexibility in work schedules (Mazerolle et al., 2011) as a means to establish WLB. A married female AT details the significance of peers on WLB,

Having supportive co-workers I feel is a godsend. When a staff as a whole helps each other out, we can take turns with coverage to allow everyone the chance to leave early, or get to a family event they might not otherwise have been able to go to [because of work demands]. Doing this [teamwork], I think eases the stresses of balancing life and work because you depend on others to help you reach that balance.

Co-worker support was a popular response amongst our sample group of ATs employed in the collegiate setting. Many described their peers as “amazing” and “great” in regards to helping find WLB. Another married female AT shared, “we work hard to support each other so that each one of us has time to get away to do the things we want and need to do (such as weddings, races, birthday parties, etc.).” A single female AT detailed her working relationships with her fellow peers,

[They are] huge [in helping me find a balance]. Having co-workers that can cover a practice for you when you have relatives in town, decide to take a vacation, need to go to a doctor’s appointment, etc. is huge.

Peer support along with supervisor support were positive organizational contributors to finding WLB in the collegiate setting. Furthermore, supervisor support of teamwork among the AT staff was essential to help create flexibility in the work schedule as well as reduce the amount of time needed to be at work. Take for instance this response by a single male AT about his supervisor,

He is very good with letting use take time off if and when we need it. He has a teamwork philosophy and if someone needs to take time off then one member of the AT staff can help out.

Support networks in the workplace may help reduce the burden and expectations placed upon the AT in the collegiate setting, as predominately they alleviate the burden of organizational contributors such as work schedules and time commitment (Mazerolle et al., 2008; Mazerolle et al., 2011). Support networks extended beyond the workplace and included family, friends, and spouses. Our sample group of ATs described their families and friends as “understanding and supportive,” “flexible,” and “provid[ing] moral support.” Similar to ATs, other healthcare providers utilize support networks as a means to create a balance between their demanding jobs and personal interests and family responsibilities (Chittenden & Ritchie, 2011). Like the findings presented by Mazerolle et al. (2011), our ATs valued support received from family and friends regarding the demanding nature of the collegiate setting, as one married female AT shared, “I couldn’t be an AT if I didn’t have a supportive and understanding husband, family, and friends.” Several other female ATs shared similar positive reflections on their support systems, which helped them maintain a healthy balance between their personal and professional lives. Spousal support has been identified as imperative for the female ATs with families to balance the rigors of the collegiate setting and the responsibilities and demands of motherhood and family life (Mazerolle & Goodman, 2011), which provides underpinnings for our findings related to support networks especially for our female participants.

Individual factors can also impact WLB, such as personal needs and interests (Dixon & Bruening, 2005), and thus for the AT having the chance to get away from the daily grind of the role of the collegiate AT can help create WLB and rejuvenation as it allows for engagement in activities that are viewed as rewarding and fulfilling. All of our participants referenced the need for time off and taking advantage of opportunities to “get away” when allowed to do so. Making priorities for personal interests and family obligations have been previously identified in the literature as important for the AT, regardless of employment setting to create WLB (Mazerolle et al., 2012). Several male ATs, regardless of marital or family status shared, “make sure you take advantage of your time off,” “take time off when you can,” and “do not come in on your scheduled days off, make sure you enjoy your time away, and if you need to go to a family event speak with your supervisor in advance to ensure you can go.”

Our female ATs also capitalized on personal time to help create WLB, specifically using time away to engage in leisure activities such as reading, having lunch with friends as well as taking the time to workout regularly. A single female AT shared her personal strategies for creating WLB, “taking time for myself [is important]. I make sure that I workout 5 times per week. I make sure that I plan to hang out with friends whenever I can, but at a minimum of once a week.” Like our other participants, another female AT who is married disclosed, “I have developed some hobbies and put some time aside for them every week. I plan for special family outings. I exercise regularly and eat healthy food to maintain my physical body.” As Role Theory suggests, we all engage in a variety of roles, all of which demand our time and energy, and despite some roles being less flexible or requiring more time than others it is important to allow for time in each to help create balance.

## Conclusions

Issues pertaining to WLB are evident in the Division I setting as documented by several published research papers (Bruening & Dixon, 2008; Dixon & Bruening, 2005; Dixon & Bruening, 2007; Hatfield & Johnson, 2012; Mazerolle et al., 2008; Mazerolle et al., 2011). Like coaches and sports informational professionals, ATs experience issues because of many of the organizational and structural factors related to the nature of the Division I setting. Many of those factors are not avoidable, however factors such as support from a supervisor, job sharing between co-workers, and prioritizing time away from the role of the AT appears to help stimulate WLB. Although our findings represent a small number of ATs working the Division I setting, they are very comparable to the existing literature in AT as well as the sport industry and therefore very meaningful and useful.

Though traditional flexible-work practices such as working from home may not be an option for the AT in the Division I collegiate setting, it does not mean that there are no other viable options that supervisors can take advantage of to help their employees find a balance. Allowing ATs to bring their children to work occasionally if there is an issue with day care or encouraging the AT to leave work when they do not have to be there are practical ways in which organizations can implement some flexible-work practices for the ATs they employ. It is important to understand that there are individual factors that will impact an ATs ability to achieve WLB, therefore it is essential to have open communication to enhance policies that could enhance WLB.

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