

“A Strong Woman of the Lord”: Performing Gender at the Intersection of Sport and
Evangelical Christianity

By

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Abstract

With the passing of Title IX women and girls began participating in athletics at all levels. Female Christian athletes were no exception as their entrance into the sports world mirrors their non-evangelical counterparts. Despite a large body of literature on the intersections of sport and Christianity as well as sport and gender, few scholars have examined the significance or impact of female Christians' athletic participation. Therefore, this study focuses on how female Christian athletes in the largest and longest standing sports evangelical ministry, the Fellowship of Christian Athletes (FCA), negotiate and perform gender as women and Christians. Through a content analysis of *FCA Magazine* between the years 1970 and 2013, I argue that male and female athletes are presented with gender complexity "on the field." However, in their "off the field" roles as parents and spouses they most often conform to traditional gender norms. Female athletes in particular are encouraged to perform femininity and fulfill traditional gender roles in order to shore up heterosexuality. I analyzed interviews conducted with 22 female athletes and staff in FCA. I argue that these women are challenged with performing femininity, while at the same time not placing too much emphasis on their outward appearance. Despite these challenges female athletes in FCA are able to find acceptance and empowerment through their participation in sport. Finally, I analyze the inter-role conflict my interviewees experience as they fulfill their various responsibilities as wives, mothers, athletes, and paid laborers. One of the major strategies deployed by female staff and athletes in FCA is multitasking. Although multitasking can be stress inducing, these women engaged in positive forms of multitasking by combining their work and athletic pursuits with family, personal, and spiritual time, allowing them to find fulfillment despite the inter-role conflict they experienced.

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Values Clarification

For this project I am utilizing feminist standpoint theory as my methodological approach. This approach requires that as a researcher, I acknowledge my own biases and take into consideration how my own identities and experiences influence my work. Even though I attempted throughout this project to constantly question my own assumptions and be critical of my own perspective, feminist standpoint theory makes it clear that it is impossible to remove ourselves from our work. Instead of this being seen as a negative, I argue, along with other feminist standpoint theorists, that our experiences impacts our research in positive ways leading us to ask questions and reveal valuable insights that otherwise would be left unexplored.

I come to this research project as someone who grew up in a Christian home and community, where women were respected, but not looked to as official leaders within the church or home. I currently do not claim the identity of Christian, but because of my background I am familiar with evangelical values and language. I also grew up an athlete and still claim the identity of athlete. My parents have always been very supportive of my athletic pursuits. I distinctly remember my mom petitioning my high school principle so that I could travel with a nearby school's cross country team, because my school did not have a team. I went on in compete as a scholarship college athlete in cross country and track. I've continued to compete in running and triathlon events.

Another important aspect of myself that I bring to this project is my close proximity to the LGBT community. I very much value the identities and aspirations of those in the LGBT community, and believe their loves and dreams are just as legitimate as others and even pleasing to God.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

My dissertation is situated at the intersection of sport, gender, and evangelical Christianity. Despite the public censure and scientific arguments made throughout history against women's participation in sport, women have found ways to engage in physical activity. However, with the passing of Title IX in 1972, women's athletics became institutionalized across recreational, educational, and professional settings, resulting in the widespread public participation of women in sport. Many feminists have hailed the immense athletic opportunities now available to girls and women alike as an unquestioningly positive development. Sports scholar Jane Granskog (2003) argues that sport facilitates the development of women's identity and fosters "embodied knowledge" that helps them cope with the continued objectification and sexualization of women's bodies in popular culture. (p. 23). Building on this idea, Brake (2010) argues in her study of Title IX that "by developing athletic skills and interests as girls, women can use sport as a way to cope with stress as they progress through the stages of life and navigate the competing demands of adulthood" (p. 5).

Despite these positive effects, some feminist and gender scholars have been more critical of women's participation in sport because it remains an institution grounded in patriarchal authority. Sport is structurally patriarchal in that most manager and executive positions continue to be occupied by men. Sport is also traditionally a domain where masculinity is valued and participants compete aggressively with one another without regard to safety or injury to self and others. For these reasons, one of the central feminist debates is whether or not women can alter the patriarchal structures inherent in sport or if women are simply "contributing to their own oppression by uncritically participating in this institution rather than attempting to transform it or construct alternative feminist sports structures" (Messner and Sabo 1990, p. 4). On one level,

women who participate in most sports are breaking traditional gender norms of Western society, which in turn disrupts patriarchal structures by simply detaching masculinity from men's bodies and bringing into question men's assumed physical superiority over women. However, there remains the question of whether this is enough to create gender equity within sports or if women should do more to alter existing sport structures.

Another part of the feminist debate centers on the pervasive sexualization of female athletes, which occurs in the media as a way of neutralizing women's success as athletes and make women's sports more appealing to men. In other words, despite the gains women have made in the sports world, or the superb athleticism displayed by female athletes, they are still viewed as women first and athletes second. One reason for this continued inequality is related to widespread homophobia within sports and popular culture. Homophobia manifests primarily through the pervasive stereotyping of female athletes as lesbian, requiring women to assert their actual or presumed status as heterosexual. How female athletes navigate the various gendered demands placed on them on the field as athletes and off the field as mothers and spouses is another large area of academic inquiry.

However, few scholars have addressed the role religion plays in women's negotiation of gender within sport or how Christian women's participation in sport can alter other patriarchal institutions such as the conservative, evangelical family and church. This is especially important to address in evangelical Christian communities where the gendered expectations for women as mothers and wives remain steeped in essentialist understandings of gender and homosexuality continues to be condemned as sinful. My study, therefore, investigates how evangelical female athletes perform and negotiate the gendered demands placed on them as Christian women participating in the masculine space of sport. I specifically focus on the Fellowship of Christian

Athletes, the largest and longest standing evangelical sports ministry, analyzing the text and images within their magazine, as well as interviews I conducted with 22 female athletes and staff members.

In order to provide some context for my study, I first give a brief history of gender roles within evangelical Christian traditions in the United States beginning with the eighteenth century. I then move to discuss how evangelical's engagement with sport in the nineteenth century has impacted gender roles within this religious subculture. Next, I describe how gender roles among evangelicals have changed with the influence of second wave feminism and the 1970s economic downturn. Finally, I will outline the pertinent scholarship on gender, religion, and work-family-leisure conflict as this was a major theme that emerged from my interviews.

Literature Review

Evangelicals, gender, and muscular Christianity. My project is especially salient in light of evangelical Christianity's long history with engaging in sport culture and the ways in which sport has been used to shape gender norms within this subculture. Protestant evangelical Christians are a specific religious group in the United States with a unique history. Although today there are a number of Protestant denominations that can be considered evangelical, historically this religious strain can be traced to New England Baptist sects of the eighteenth century. Evangelicals' construction of gender roles also has a specific history that has often mirrored or rejected the larger cultural expectations for women and men. Susan Juster (1994) argues that in the eighteenth century "Baptist women enjoyed unprecedented access to the formal channels of authority within the church. The sexual egalitarianism implicit in evangelical faith, with its emphasis on individual rebirth and its undifferentiated sense of community, translated

into a sharing of power between the sexes in the internal governance of the church” (p. 3). Because Baptists believed strongly in personal faith and emphasized emotionalism, which were seen as distinctly feminine qualities, these Baptists sects also downplayed church hierarchy making gender relationships more fluid (Juster 1994, p. 5) However, Juster (1994) argues that gender configurations changed after the American Revolution, at the end of the 18th century, when Baptists began to value masculinity over femininity as a way to conform to the newly founded patriotic order which was “quintessentially masculine in its conception of power, in the myths it told about its origins, and in its representation of ‘otherness’” (Juster 1994, p. 10). Because of this developing conception of America as masculine, rational and organized, Juster (1994) explains how disorderly conduct began to be seen as inherently female, therefore, causing women to be unfit for positions of power in the church.

Although at this time women began to be under more suspicion within the church, they were certainly not kept out of the church and in fact their numbers grew considerably. More than numbers, however, Protestant Christians by the early nineteenth century deemed religion to be inherently feminine and the world of business and money making inherently masculine (Douglass 1977; Bederman 1996). For most of the nineteenth century this gender arrangement was considered the norm and for the most part unquestioned by men and women alike. However, Bederman (1996), argues that after 1880, “the Victorian gender system had begun to lose coherence in the face of cultural reorientation connected to the growth of a consumer-oriented, corporate order” (p. 112). Bederman (1996) goes on to describe the emergence of The Men and Religion Forward Movement and the various strategies this group utilized to get more men into the church and therefore regain masculine authority. One of the main strategies this men’s group deployed was connecting religion to manly activities such as sports, business, or any other

masculine endeavor (Bederman 1996, p. 115). The Men and Religion Forward Movement was not made up solely of evangelicals, but also included more mainline Protestant denominations, however, Bederman's (1996) gender analysis of this Christian men's movement is an important piece of the history of Protestant Christians' reaction to drastic changes in society in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. It was these drastic changes that sparked the muscular Christianity movement in the United States in the latter half of the nineteenth century.

Muscular Christianity developed primarily as a reaction to the feminization of Protestant churches and their leaders. Ministers such as Thomas Wentworth Higginson advocated for muscular Christianity and its emphasis on male physicality and the development of manliness and godly character through physical exertion and sport. Also, many religious leaders were concerned with the spread of "nervous diseases" that were becoming more prevalent at the end of the nineteenth century with increased industrialization and urbanization. Lack of physical exercise was considered to be the main contributor to nervous diseases, and as Clifford Putney (2001) explains, urban clergy were thought to be especially susceptible because of cities' poor environment and lack of opportunities to exert their bodies. One member of the Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA) exclaimed that, "the saints must have stronger and more enduring bodies than they have to bear the burdens and heat of the day that soul-winning and earning their daily bread and butter cast upon their shoulders" (qtd. in Putney 2001, p. 54).

As an ideology, muscular Christianity in the latter half of the 19th century and early 20th century, was part of a larger shift in white, middle-class America's conception of masculinity. Not simply men's loss of control in the church, but other factors contributed to white male anxieties of masculinity, including the middle and lower classes' loss of agency because of their reliance on monotonous and repetitive industrial and clerical type work, the flood of immigrants

coming to the United States, fears of racial uprising, and women gaining political, social, and domestic power. Therefore, as a way to separate and define themselves as superior to, women, immigrants, and African Americans, white men began to focus on physical strength and athleticism. Another major aspect of muscular Christianity was evangelism. Male church leaders wanted more men in the church, therefore, the church catered to men and created all-male spaces in order to foster male spiritual growth.

Although the muscular Christianity movement was targeted at getting men involved in the church and developing manly character in men through sport, women also participated in physical activity in the nineteenth century. Men mostly played highly competitive and organized collegiate sports, however, women did participate in recreational games and calisthenics. Catharine Beecher and Dioclesian Lewis in the late nineteenth century developed highly popular calisthenics routines that were practiced by young women in primary and secondary schools (Verbrugge 2012). Proponents of women's education in the early 19th century, such as entrepreneur and philanthropist Matthew Vassar, believed women were just as capable of learning as men, and also just as capable as participating in physical exercise. Therefore, many of the first women's colleges, such as Mount Holyoke Seminary and Wellesley College, implemented physical training and exercise classes (Spears and Swanson 1983). Despite many advocates for women's participation in physical activity, there remained the belief that because of their biology women were unfit for strenuous activity. Patricia Vertinsky (1992) argues that in the late nineteenth century physicians "on both sides of the Atlantic promoted a theory of menstrual disability that contributed substantially to a deepening stereotyping of women as both the weaker and a periodically weakened sex" (p. 184). This pervasive belief that women's biology inherently limits their physical abilities continued into the twentieth century. Not until

after War World II and the passing of Title IX in 1972 did large numbers of women begin to participate in competitive athletics in colleges and high schools across the county.

Today, most evangelical Christians are unfamiliar with the movement of muscular Christianity despite the fact that remnants of this movement and its ideology are still with us today in the form of the Promise Keepers, the Boy Scouts, Athletes in Action, various localized Christian men's groups or sports ministries, and, the subject of this study, the Fellowship of Christian Athletes (FCA). FCA is an especially significant site of investigation because of its mission to grow its female staff in order to minister to the growing number of middle school, high school, and college aged female athletes.

Furthermore, FCA has contributed to the normalization of evangelical women's participation in sport. For example, big Christian universities such as Baylor and Liberty University boast well-funded and competitive women's teams. Liberty University, the largest evangelical academic institution in the world,¹ is openly committed to complying with Title IX and creating more opportunities for women to participate in sports.² Even smaller and less well funded Christian colleges across various evangelical denominations have no problem with women participating in sport.³ There is very little debate within Protestant evangelical churches

¹ <http://www.liberty.edu/aboutliberty/>

² "Liberty University Athletics is committed to conducting an athletics department that maintains compliance with Title IX. Since 2009, we have added three women's sports programs: Women's Lacrosse (2009-2010), Women's Swimming (2010-2011) and Women's Field Hockey (2011-2012). These additions have allowed for 61 new female participation opportunities and by 2013-2014, the growth in the programs will have allowed for a total of 80 new female participation opportunities" (<http://www.liberty.edu/flames/index.cfm?PID=24285>)

³ The NCCAA (National Christian College Athletic Association) includes both men and women's sports teams.

and organizations about women's participation in sport despite the gender and power implications that women's participation in sport may entail.

For the most part, scholars have overlooked the implications of evangelical women's participation in sport. Recent texts about the connections between Christianity and sport include William J. Baker's *Playing with God* (2007), which provides a cultural history of other religion's relationship with sport up until the 1990s. Another example is Ladd and Mathisen's *Muscular Christianity* (1999), which also covers the latter half of the twentieth century. However both of these authors' fail to investigate evangelical women's involvement in sport and how this has impacted the evangelical community and evangelical gender ideologies. These authors barely mention the emergence of women's sports and the popularity they have gained within society as a whole but also within evangelical communities. Other scholarship on the current relationship between Christianity and sport has also ignored the changing gendered landscape of college and professional athletics as well as the continued growth of fitness culture among women. Examples include Shirl James Hoffman's *Good Game* (2010) and Tom Krattenmaker's *Onward Christian Athlete* (2010), both of which either intentionally or unintentionally leave out Christian women's participation in sport. Watson and Parker (2012) who provide an overview of the existing scholarship on Christianity and sport argue that one of the biggest shortcomings of the available scholarship on Christianity and sport is the lack of attention to Christian women's participation in sport. In this way, my work aims to spark a conversation about evangelical female athletes and the unique position they occupy as athletes, women, and evangelicals.

To date, only one scholar has addressed contemporary evangelical female athletes at length. Annie Blazer (2015) in her forthcoming book *Playing with God: Evangelical Women and the Unintended Consequences of Sports Ministry* argues that evangelical sports ministries, such

as FCA and Athletes in Action, have become sites where Christian athletes reflect on their religious beliefs and practices. Blazer argues that this is especially true for female Christian athletes, whom she found through extensive interviews and fieldwork, have come to question issues of gender and sexuality because of their participation in sport. Blazer frames her findings in terms of embodied knowledge or embodied experiences, demonstrating that

“Female Christian athletes have used the practices, embodied experiences, and central narratives of sports ministry to reassess femininity, sexual desire, and marriage. Through reevaluating theological mainstays from within their tradition, women in sports ministry have expanded their understandings of orthodoxy, and their ability to do so demonstrates that the outcomes of religious engagement with popular culture are not predictable ahead of time.” (2015, n.p. forthcoming)

Blazer’s work is extremely important because it is the only study that provides a comprehensive investigation of the impact of Christian women’s participation in sport. Furthermore, Blazer’s work shifts the academic conversation around sport and Christianity away from simply offering a historical or ethical perspective on how these two institutions are intertwined. Instead, Blazer has opened up the conversation by examining how sport has shaped evangelical Christianity and this subgroup’s core beliefs about gender and sexuality. In this way, Blazer provides a new perspective on the ways in which gender roles within evangelical Christianity continue to evolve.

Twentieth century evangelicals and gender roles. Gender roles within the evangelical community have been in flux since this religious subgroup’s inception. Evangelical Christianity in the United States, as we know it today, did not exist until the mid-twentieth century as it developed in reaction to the fundamentalist movement of the early twentieth century. Susan

Gallagher (2003) explains how neo-evangelicals in the 1940s, such as Billy Graham, Charles Fuller, and Harold Lindsell were “dissatisfied with the theological and social isolationism that had come to characterize fundamentalism. Instead, they proposed a renewed emphasis on evangelism, a revitalized engagement with the ideas of contemporary society, and a return to social and political activism” (p. 8). Neo-evangelism continued to grow throughout the mid and latter half of the twentieth century, gaining in numbers as well as political and intellectual weight through its growing number of periodicals. Gallagher argues that part of evangelism’s strength is that it is not only “effective in establishing a market niche but because at the heart of this religious subculture is the mandate to be ‘in’ but not ‘of’ the world” (p. 5). In other words evangelicals historically and currently are called to participate in the world at the same time they are expected to change and evangelize to the world.

Evangelicals’ religious stance of engaging with the world and society is important to consider because it has forced them as a group to address important societal issues such as feminism, gender, and family life. These issues in particular came to the forefront in the 1970s when the United States suffered an economic down turn forcing many women to enter the job force in order to help support their families. Because of this necessity, evangelicals were forced once again to consider and wrestle with women’s role in the family and even church.

During this time, Biblical feminism, women reinterpreting the scriptures in a more egalitarian manner, developed alongside the 19th century women’s rights movement and experienced a resurgence in the 1970s and the second wave of feminism. Biblical feminists debated with the well-respected evangelical leadership over the interpretation of scripture as it related to women, family roles, and women’s church leadership. However, in the 1970s, some of the most influential neo-evangelicals, such as Harold Lindsell, Susan Foh, and James Dobson,

stood by the belief that men and women were created differently, and therefore, ordained by God to hold different roles within the family and the church (Gallagher 2003). However, with the influence of third wave feminism in the 1980s and the continued economic strain on the family, even those neo-evangelicals that insisted on essentialist notions of gender, which is utilized to maintain gender hierarchy in the home and church, began to soften their stance on gender norms. As women's paid work continued to be necessary, the language of partnership became more widespread and evangelical Christians began to focus more on the practicality of day-to-day living. Also, the dichotomy of gender essentialism versus gender egalitarianism began to break down as "a growing number of gender-essentialists evangelicals would argue that acknowledging men's authority within families was not incompatible with an experience of family characterized by partnership." (Gallagher 2003, p. 57). In particular, James Dobson, arguably the most prolific evangelical commentator on gender and family, began to emphasize mutual love and respect between partners and resistance to "materialistic culture by prioritizing family over career" (Gallagher 2003, p. 58).

Gallagher (2003) and Bartkowski (2001) in their studies of evangelical family dynamics and gender roles both utilize Ann Swidler's idea of the "cultural tool kit" (Swidler 1986). Gallagher shows that within the cultural tool kit of evangelicals remains gender essentialism, rooted in biological difference, as well as gender egalitarianism springing from practical economic considerations and mutual respect. In a similar vein, Bartkowski (2001) argues that religion serves as a cultural resource that constrains and empowers simultaneously. In particular, his study of evangelical self-help literature looks at how "everyday experiences provide evangelical couples with an array of tools they can use to fashion meaningful gender identities within their homes" (Bartkowski 2001, p. 13). His main argument is that gender roles within

evangelical family structures, as demonstrated through literature, are not as strict or clear cut as once expected, instead there remains room for negotiation within evangelical families. Also, evangelicals have begun to place a higher priority on fathers being actively involved and emotionally engaged in family life (Bartkowski 2004).

Despite these shifts in evangelical gender ideology, research has found that evangelical women still do more housework and female-typed labor within the home than non-evangelical women (Bartkowski & Ellison 2002). This work is on top of their added responsibilities for paid labor and community involvement outside the home. Because of these findings, scholars such as Ammons and Edgell (2007) have called for a more thorough examination of how religion and family interact because we must “understand more fully how cultural frameworks shape understandings of who is morally responsible for caretaking and financial providing if we are to understand not only the structural constraints that shape available choices but also how the choices we make reproduce or challenge traditional understandings of gender, work, and family life” (p. 819). In this way, Chapter 4 investigates how the structure of FCA as an evangelical non-profit, as well as the conservative gender ideologies that inform their values and belief system, shape the types of conflict and the coping strategies used by female staffers and athletes.

Gender, evangelicals, and work-family-leisure conflict. The study of work-family conflict and inter-role conflict has become a major area of investigation over the past three decades. Inter-role conflict happens when “role pressures from the work and family domains are mutually incompatible in some respect. That is, participation in the work (family) role is made more difficult by virtue of participation in the family (work) role” (Greenhaus & Beutell 1985, p. 77). Role conflict for women has particularly been of interest to researchers in sociology and

gender studies because of the influx of women into the job market in the past 50 years and because women continue to be viewed as natural caretakers and homemakers (Steinberg et al., 2008). Therefore, women who work outside the home not only work for pay, but are also more responsible for the “second shift” of unpaid labor inside the home (Hochschild 1985; Lachance-Grazela & Bouchard, 2010; Lincoln 2008). Because of these two shifts of labor that women manage, researchers have been interested in how women as mothers and wives negotiate their roles as paid and unpaid laborers and how they relieve the conflict that fulfilling these two roles often creates (Mennino & Brayfield, 2002; Moen & Sweet, 2003.)

More recently, scholars have examined the ways that sport or leisure engagement effects inter-role conflict, particularly for women who engage in sports such as triathlon or endurance training that require large time and resource commitment (Hambrick, Simmons, & Mahoney 2013). On top of the “second-shift,” which for evangelical women is longer than non-evangelical women, athletics or fitness has been termed by sports scholars as a “third-shift” that women are encouraged to take on in order to meet traditional standards of femininity (Dworkin & Wachs 2009; Dworkin & Messner 2002). The third-shift is certainly voluntary, whereas the second-shift is often necessary work that women must perform. However, the discourse of health and fitness has become quite prolific within society, normalizing men and women’s participation in sport and fitness activities despite the added time and energy involved. Most of my participants were triathletes or endurance athletes. Both men and women often take up these sports in order to lose weight and maintain a low Body Mass Index (BMI). Although the endurance athletes I interviewed did not describe their motivation for training simply in terms of weight loss, many of them began training more intently for their sport after having children as a way of getting back into shape. Many of the athletes and staff members also spoke about the health benefits of

exercise and believed it should be a priority for everyone. Because of these values, evangelical female athletes are juggling their work or career along with their greater responsibility within family life and housework, as well as managing the third shift of their athletic training.

In their study of female Ironman participants, Hambrick, Simmons, and Mahoney (2013) found that women who trained for Ironman distance triathlons were considered the primary “caretakers and homemakers,” and in turn took on more of the household and childcare labor. Therefore, they “may have experienced more obstacles than their male counterparts as they attempted to balance family and work with Ironman training” (p. 193). Furthermore, “the athletes managed obstacles of financial and time commitments along with gender-related stereotypes through careful scheduling, flexibility, and role prioritization” (p. 193). Despite the strategies that female athletes have developed in order to continue participation in their sport, studies have found that female athletes with children often experience guilt and social criticism for being away from their children (Johns & Farrow 1996) and must find ways to integrate their identities as athletes and mothers (Palmer & Leberman 2009; Appleby & Fisher 2009). This was also the case with the Christian female athletes I interviewed. As a way of integrating their multiple identities, the female Christian athletes I interviewed deployed a form of multitasking that included combining social, personal, and spiritual time with their athletic training.

Theory

Gender as a social construct. One of the main theories my study draws from is the social construction of gender. To say that gender is a social construct means that gender is not an essential quality belonging to men and women because we are not born knowing how to perform masculinity and femininity. Rather these are characteristics and behaviors that we are taught by

our cultural and social surroundings. West and Zimmerman (1987) argue that gender is not simply an individual's achievement, but rather it is something one does within particular social structures and in relation to others who are also doing gender. Doing gender they argue is "situated doing, carried out in the virtual or real presence of others who are presumed to be oriented to its production" (p. 126). Because gender is not simply the property of individuals, it is instead an "emergent feature of social situations: both as an outcome of and a rationale for various social arrangements and as a means of legitimating one of the most fundamental divisions of society" (West & Zimmerman 1987, p. 126). While gender may seem natural or innate and even a set of particular characteristics that one can own, instead it is produced through social interaction and shapes those interactions in particular ways based on cultural assumptions or expectations.

Similar to West and Zimmerman, Butler (1990) developed the theory of gender as a performance, or gender performativity. With this theory Butler (1990) argues that acts and gestures enacted on the surface of bodies "are performative in the sense that the essence or identity that they otherwise purport to express are fabrications manufactured and sustained through corporeal signs and other discursive means" (p. 185). Therefore, the fact that gender is performative suggests that gender has no "ontological status apart from the various acts that constitute its reality" (p. 185). Gender is simply a repetition of bodily acts, but these acts have no original, because there is no "real" or "right" way to perform gender.

These theories of gender are important for my study primarily because keeping masculinity tied to men and femininity tied women, ultimately contributes to patriarchal authority and male domination within society. Drawing from feminist scholars such as Brownmiller (1984) and Banner (1983), Messner (2007) argues that,

“Cultural conceptions of femininity and female beauty have more than aesthetic meanings; these images, and the meanings ascribed to them, inform and legitimize unequal power relations between the sexes. Attempting to be viewed as feminine involves accepting behavioral and physical restrictions that make it difficult to view one’s self, much less to be viewed by others, as equal with men.”
(pp. 38-9)

In other words masculinity is most often valued over femininity especially within the realm of sport. Moreover, the athletic field is often used as an example of gender essentialism. For example, gender essentialism is upheld within popular discourse, where men are most often assumed to be superior athletes than women because of presumed fixed biological differences (Hargreaves 1994). One reason this appears to be the case is because within popular media only the best male athletes receive attention, making it appear that *all* men are better athletes than *all* women (Dworkin and Wachs 2009). On the other hand, essentialist notions of gender are also undermined within sport because of the fact that women are often seen performing masculinity and embodying masculine characteristics such as aggression, strength, and power (Heywood and Dworkin 2003).

These theories of gender are important in analyzing Christian female athletes because they both uphold and undermine essentialist notions of gender. Their undermining of gender essentialism occurs despite their insistence that men and women are innately different and their differences are a part of God’s design. In this way, my research points to one of the contradictions that female Christian athletes live with and navigate. My participants are not unique in navigating contradicting beliefs or ideologies within their lives. However, because gender is one of the central organizing schemas that Christians use to make sense of their

material and spiritual worlds, questioning these deep-set gender ideologies has the potential to upset or drastically shift the subculture's belief system.

Essential differences between men and women and gender hierarchy are foundational beliefs within evangelical Christianity and they have persisted because these ideologies are “the central metaphor for the ontological world view of this particular religious subculture” (Gallagher 2003, p. 174). This evangelical world view relies on two central organizing beliefs. First, the understanding that God is male. Evangelicals often explain male headship within the home by drawing a parallel to God's relationship with the church. Because God is male and head of the church, then the reasoning goes that men should be the leader of the family. Secondly, evangelicals rely on the belief of biological differences between men and women. This belief primarily relates to the understanding that women are designed to give birth and therefore hold primary responsibility in child rearing and homemaking (Gallagher 2003, p. 176).

Although my participants and the representations of Christian men and women within the *FCA Magazine* hold to these organizing beliefs, I argue that there also instances where Christian athletes push against this belief system. In this way, Christian athletes are both conforming to prescribed notions of gender and roles, as well as resisting these foundational constructions of gender.

Reproducing and resisting gender traditions and hierarchies. In order to analyze evangelical female athletes' gender performance and negotiation within the *FCA Magazine* in chapters one and two, I specifically draw from the work of gender and sports scholar Michael Messner. Messner (2007) points out that the study of sport and gender has moved away from simply analyzing how men and women bring their gendered experience to their sport. Instead

scholars, such as Messner (2007), argue that sport itself, as well as other parts of our culture, work to form masculinity and femininity in particular ways. This formation of gender has the potential to either reproduce or resist gender norms. Messner (2007) writes that,

“People are not passive dupes in gender systems; rather, we are active participants in creating gender. In the language of social theory, people exercise *agency* in the creation of everyday social life. Agency is often *reproductive*: when our actions are consistent with traditions and hierarchies, we help to reproduce those existing relations. Sometimes agency is *resistant*; when our actions disrupt existing gender differences or hierarchies, we contribute to changing existing gender relations.”

(p. 3)

The framework of agency within the production of gender in sport is a helpful model for understanding the gendered representations of athletes within the *FCA Magazine*. The authors and editors of the magazine as well as the athletes they represent, manifest agency in the creation of gender resulting in both reproductive and resistant narratives of gender and sexuality. More often both of these forms of agency are enacted within the same issue or even the same article therefore creating what I call athletic gender complexity. I argue that a resistant narrative is presented for both female and male athletes that works to “disrupt existing gender differences or hierarchies” (Messner 20007, p. 3). However, at the same time “traditions and hierarchies” of sexuality are reproduced and reinforced by the *FCA Magazine*, through the guise of inherent gender and sex difference.

Furthermore, in order to analyze women’s changing gender performances within the *FCA Magazine*, I investigate the representation of women as they enact both femininity and masculinity, as well as the representation of men as they also embody masculine and feminine

characteristics. Historian Joan Scott (1986) argues that in order to fully understand the construction of gender we must study both femininity and masculinity as they are constructed together. Although Scott is specifically addressing historians I believe her argument is valid for all scholars who study gender because masculinity and femininity are most often defined in relation to one another. In this way I investigate the ways in which men and women's gendered representations within the *FCA Magazine* changes over time in order to understand how femininity and masculinity are co-constructed within the literature of FCA.

Intersectionality. Another important theoretical framework I am using throughout my project is that of intersectionality. The concept of intersectionality was developed by legal scholar Kimberle` Crenshaw (1991) as a way to explain intersecting forms of oppression that black women experience. Crenshaw developed her theory as a way to address the intersections of race and gender, but she also insists that scholars need to examine other various identities and subject positions that people hold in order to understand "how the social world is constructed" (p. 1245). In regards to my investigation of the constructions and performance of gender, it is crucial to consider how race, class, and sexuality are influencing the ways in which gender is manifested within this particular evangelical sports community. I specifically deploy intersectionality in my analysis of the *FCA Magazine* by considering narratives of race and class as presented within the magazine. Intersectionality is also an integral part of the theory of empowerment that I develop and utilize to analyze my interviews with female athletes and staff in FCA.

Intersectionality is also important in defining traditional femininity and hegemonic masculinity, as I am situating these terms in their relation to race and class. The concept of

intersectionality necessitates that we examine how gender is informed by other vectors of power. Specially, when discussing normative gender such as traditional femininity and hegemonic masculinity I am doing so with the understanding that these forms of gender are infused with whiteness. Janell Hobson (2005) in *Venus in the Dark* demonstrates how throughout history black women have been removed from definitions of femininity, being viewed instead by a white supremacist society as masculine and grotesque. Angela Davis (1983) makes similar arguments in her analysis of the women's rights movement in the nineteenth century. Also, bell hooks (1992) in her analysis of the documentary film *Paris is Burning*, which shows the life of black gay ball culture in New York City, demonstrates how femininity and success are defined through whiteness. The black gay males in the film seek to embody "'womanness and femininity' [that] is totally personified by whiteness" because this type of feminine performance is most valued in our society (p. 147). Abby Ferber (2007) also demonstrates in her article "The Construction of Black Masculinity" how black men continue to be demonized within sports culture. Black men are most often seen as aggressive, violent, and needing to be controlled by the assumed superior, more civilized, and intelligent white man. With these representations of blackness and whiteness in popular culture and the sports world, it is impossible to offer a gender analysis without recognizing how race and white supremacy currently shapes our understanding of what it means to be a man or a woman.

Intersectionality is especially important to my project when analyzing how female Christian athletes receive empowerment through their athletic participation. The empowerment these women receive through sport is made possible partially through their economic, racial, and able-bodied privilege. All of these women identify as white, middle-class, and physically able-bodied. These privileged identities intersect and allow these women to access the benefits of

sport, first, by simply giving them the economic means and leisure time to participate in sport. This is especially true for the triathlon and endurance athletes, sports which tend to be expensive and require extensive time training. Secondly, the whiteness of these athletes gives them the privilege of being able to see themselves reflected in the media as “normal” and “good” athletes that are meant to be admired for their positive influence as role models.⁴ Whiteness is normalized throughout the United States, and this is even the case in sporting culture where racial minorities are either absent, viewed as overly violent, aggressive, and in need of controlling, or overly sexual and also needing to be tamed or contained (Vertinsky & Captain 1998; Schultz 2005; Ferber 2007). Although women of color certainly participate in sport and many do find empowerment or ways to resist patriarchy and white supremacy through sport, it is more difficult for women of color to do so, given the intersection of racism with sexism. Therefore, these white, middle-class, female athletes are the most likely ones to be beneficiaries of any empowerment that can come through sport.

By couching my participants’ position as one of privilege, I do not mean to suggest that they are individually culpable in creating the systems of oppression that allow them to benefit from the positive effects of sport. Rather I reference their various subject positions because these female Christian athletes have complex identities that require an intersectional analysis. Simply considering how gender is constructed or performed by these women ignores how race, class, and sexuality affect how they navigate their lives within sport and evangelical Christianity.

⁴ J. Katz (2006) found that black male athletes receive more media coverage when accused of crimes compared to white male athletes who are accused of similar crimes (p. 139).

“A Strong Woman of the Lord”: Contribution to the Literature

As the literature review demonstrates, scholars have investigated separately women, evangelicals, and female athletes' negotiation of gender and inter-role conflict. However, with the exception of Blazer (2015), none have examined the ways in which these three identities interact and shape how female Christian athletes navigate the gendered spaces of evangelical Christianity and sport. Also, no one has examined how Christian female athletes manage the various roles they are called to fulfill as athletes, workers, mothers, and wives. My study of Christian athletes and their negotiation of gender and inter-role conflict is an extension of the literature on how Christians react and change to cultural and social change, but also how they are proactive in creating gendered and family structures that are functional, religiously sound, and fulfilling (Gallagher 2003, p. 14).

In order to address these various gaps in the literature on female Christian athletes, I begin by analyzing the *FCA Magazine*, between 1970 and 2013, and how both female and male athletes are represented in terms of gender and gender roles and how their representation has changed over time. Secondly, I investigate how female athletes and staff within FCA negotiate the various gender demands placed on them given their sport and evangelical subcultures. Christian female athletes are caught between the expectations of embodying masculinity, which most sports require, and living up to the feminine standards that characterize evangelical mothers and wives. Finally, I examine how FCA female athletes and staff members manage the first, second, and third shifts as Christian female athletes, paid laborers, mothers, and wives.

Methods

For this research project I utilize feminist standpoint theory as my epistemological lens. In this way, I am particularly interested in understanding how systems of oppression operate on the lives of women and how social and cultural structures such as sport and religion contribute to inequality (Kleinman 2007). One of the main principles of standpoint theory is the belief that in a hierarchical society, like our own, different subject positions and different ways of understanding the world are created (Hesse-Biber, Leavy, & Yaiser 2004, p.15) Feminist standpoint theorists value the viewpoints of those with less power, as they offer unique insight into not only their own experiences, but also a critical vantage point of those with power (Harding 2004, p.43). In this way, I am attempting to bring light to the experiences of female Christian athletes as they occupy multiple disadvantaging positions. As female athletes and coaches, they are less likely to be taken seriously in a society that values men and masculinity, particularly within the sports world. Secondly, evangelical women, although valued within their religious setting, are still a part of a community where a pervasive discourse that normalizes patriarchy within the family and church remains.⁵ By highlighting their experiences I am able to pinpoint the ways in which power operates within the lives of female Christian athletes and how that power either empowers or constrains. In addition to using feminist standpoint theory, I also utilize a grounded theory approach in analyzing my data, meaning I specifically look for themes that develop through my analysis of the *FCA Magazine* and interviews, instead of setting out to prove specific conclusions

⁵ Statement by the Southern Baptist Convention, the largest Protestant evangelical denomination: “While Scripture teaches that a woman’s role is not identical to that of men in every respect, and that pastoral leadership is assigned to men, it also teaches that women are equal in value to men” (<http://www.sbc.net/aboutus/pswomen.asp>).

or hypotheses. Furthermore, I attempt to remove my own assumptions and let the data speak for itself. However, I do not claim a positivist position, meaning my data, analysis, or conclusions are the “truth.” Rather I understand my interview data specifically to be co-constructed events in which my interviewees and myself influence one another in the creation of knowledge. Kvale and Brinkmann (2009) describe the knowledge gained through interviews as not “merely found, mined, or given, but [...] actively created through questions and answers, and the product is co-authored by interviewer and interviewee” (p. 54).

I have chosen to focus on FCA because, founded in 1954, it is one of the longest standing neo-muscular Christian organizations still in existence.⁶ FCA’s primary mission is to use sports to evangelize and minister to athletes, coaches, and communities. The organization consists of local groups or “huddles” within schools and universities that are student led. These huddles are overseen by local FCA staff members whose job is to provide guidance and resources to the huddles. Local FCA staff members also minister and provide support to coaches in their area who want to use their position as coaches to evangelize and be a positive influence on their team. Local and regional staff members are also responsible for organizing and managing summer camps for young athletes and coaches. According to FCA’s website, they have had 86,557 athletes attend their camps and they currently have 11,912 certified huddles.⁷ These numbers indicate the broad impact that FCA has throughout the country, making it an important site of research. FCA also consists of a sister organization called FCA Endurance, which targets adult

⁶ Baker (2007) p.199.

⁷ <http://www.fca.org/what-is-fca>

endurance athletes. With this sister organization FCA is expanding its ministry beyond middle school, high school, and college athletes.

FCA is also pertinent to my study because they are actively seeking to diversify their staff by intentionally hiring more women and racial minorities. Founded in the 1950s, FCA in many ways, has mirrored the mainstream sports world with its focus on male athletes, male leadership, and the widely popular sports of basketball, football, and baseball. However, FCA has recently recognized that women and girls now make-up over half of their athletes and therefore they need women on staff who can relate to these athletes and minister to their needs. Because of this organizational mission, FCA is a fruitful sight for investigating how female staff and athletes are navigating their roles within the organization and the home.

Strengths of Project

One of the major strengths of my project is that I am analyzing two data sources—the *FCA Magazine* and interviews with female Christian athletes. In this way, I am able to triangulate my results to ensure the groundedness, meaning the accuracy and validity, of my findings. Validity is also ensured within my content analysis by using a large sample that stretches over a 40 year time span. With this large sample, I am able to draw conclusions about how representations of gender have or have not changed within the *FCA Magazine*. Another strength of my project is that I interviewed over 20 female athletes as well as female staff within FCA, which provides multiple perspectives on the organization and how women negotiate gender. Another strength of my project is that my participants were diverse in terms of age, geographical location, career, level of engagement with FCA, and time with the organization.

With this diversity and the in-depth nature of my interviews, I was able to attain rich, quality data that I was ultimately able to use to answer my research questions.

Limitations of Project

The limitations of my project primarily lie in my interview data. For example, there were major differences or gaps between my interviews with athletes versus staff members, meaning each group held differing priorities, challenges, and work-family routines. Although I think valuable insights were gained by studying both of these subgroups alongside each other, I may have obtained a more in-depth analysis by focusing on one of these groups. Another limitation is the lack of diversity in terms of the sports the athletes competed in and in terms of race or ethnicity. The majority of the athletes I interviewed were triathletes. Although some of the FCA staff members participated in different sports in the past, not many were actively competing. Therefore, my data primarily captures the experiences of endurance athletes. How Christian athletes in different sports negotiate gender may vary given that each sport has specific expectations in terms of gender. Also, my participants lack diversity in terms race and ethnicity. All of my participants are white; this is at least partially related to the fact that the majority are triathletes or endurance athletes and nationally these sports have a high percentage of white participants.⁸ Another reason for the lack of diversity is that FCA simply does not have many women of color on staff. I attempted to obtain interviews with the few women of color I could

⁸ USA Triathlon reports that 88.2% of its members are white (<http://www.usatriathlon.org/about-multisport/demographics.aspx>).

find through internet research, however, no one responded to my requests. With this lack of racial diversity, I am unable to describe or analyze fully the ways in which constructions of race intersect with the constructions of gender in the lives of female Christian athletes.

Chapter Outline

Chapter 2: “Bold and beautiful”: Athletic gender complexity within the *FCA Magazine*. Chapter two examines how female and male athletes are represented in the *FCA Magazine* between 1970 and 2013. Specifically, I argue that Christian athletes are represented in ways that both uphold and undermine gender hierarchy and traditional gender norms. Athletes within the *FCA Magazine* embody both traditional gender norms and a complex range of gender performances, breaking with both traditional femininity and hegemonic masculinity respectively. I first describe how traditional gender norms are upheld by representing men and women in stereotypical sports and through descriptions of physical, emotional and personality characteristics. Ultimately, I argue that although female athletes embody masculine characteristics through their “on the field” role as athletes, they are encouraged to perform a certain level of femininity in order to shore up heterosexuality. It is through the “off the field” roles as wives and mothers that female athletes’ femininity and heterosexuality is ensured.

Chapter 3: The ripple effect?: Gender roles “off the field” as represented in the *FCA Magazine*. Chapter three further investigates the stories and practical advice given to the *FCA Magazine*’s readership in terms of romantic relationships and parenting. I specifically analyze what these texts, written about and for athletes, imply about gender relations and gender roles within the family and church. I argue that despite female athletes’ gender complexity,

women in the magazine most often conform to traditional gender roles within the home, fulfilling primarily supportive roles as mothers and wives. In other words, women breaking with gender norms in one area, such as sports, does not necessitate a ripple effect on their interpersonal and communal lives as Christian believers. Furthermore, despite relying on essentialist beliefs about gender and an insistence that women and men fulfill traditional roles in the home, I argue that within the *FCA Magazine* men break with hegemonic forms of masculinity as fathers and women are given a voice and authority through women's only advice columns.

Chapter 4: “A Beast on the field and a princess off the field”: Navigating gender, athletics, and Christianity. Chapter four focuses on how actual female athletes navigate the various gendered expectations they encounter as athletes and Christians. Women in sports have long had to deal with the “image problem”—the myth that being a female athlete automatically calls into question one's sexuality, or the presumption that all female athletes because of their masculine qualities are more likely to be lesbian. Therefore, Christian female athletes in FCA, with their stance against homosexuality, have to maintain a certain level of femininity in order to avoid associations with lesbianism. This issue is compounded by what I call the “modesty problem,” which insists that Christian women seeking to fulfill Biblical femininity do not place too much importance on their outward appearance. Despite these challenges of navigating gender, sport, and their faith, I argue that sport has impacted these female athletes positively, teaching valuable skills such as teamwork, discipline, and leadership, all of which are forms of what I call micro-empowerment. Ultimately, through this micro-empowerment, Christian female

athletes find acceptance, confidence, and affirmation through sport, helping them be successful in other areas of their lives.

Chapter 5: Balancing act: FCA female staff and athletes managing inter-role

conflict. In Chapter five I utilize a multilevel theoretical approach in order to demonstrate how female athletes and staff manage their various roles as paid laborers, athletes, mothers, and wives in a conservative Christian organization. With this theoretical lens I examine how work-family-leisure conflict is shaped both by the larger socio-cultural expectations placed on women as mothers and wives and FCA as an evangelical organization with a Christian faith system and conservative gender ideologies. Both of these larger factors influence the type of inter-role challenges individual female staff and athletes face within FCA, as well as the ways in which they negotiate the various demands placed on them. In order to manage this complexity, women in FCA rely on strategies such as multitasking and faith in order to create meaning and purpose while navigating their various and demanding roles. As a way of integrating their multiple identities, the female Christian athletes I interviewed deployed a form of multitasking that included combining social, personal, and spiritual time with their athletic training. In this way, they were able to find greater meaning and personal fulfillment in their sport despite the extra time spent away from family.

Chapter 2: “Bold and Beautiful”: Athletic Gender Complexity within the *FCA Magazine*

The purpose of this chapter is to examine how female and male athletes are represented in the *FCA Magazine* between the years 1970-2013. My analysis of gender representations in the magazine will provide a historical framework for how contemporary women in the organization negotiate and perform gender. Understanding how women have been perceived, written about, and visually depicted through the years will also work to triangulate the views and opinions expressed by the female athletes and staff in FCA that I interviewed.

In the analysis, I am specifically examining how women as athletes are presented, how their representation compares to their male counterparts, and how their representation has changed over time. The analysis demonstrates that there is a clear distinction between how women as athletes are represented and how women in more traditional roles such as wives and mothers are presented. When it comes to the athletic role, the *FCA Magazine* presents a complex view of what it means to be a Christian female and male athlete. Instead of reinforcing the gender binary, which most often happens in mainstream media presentations of athletes, the *FCA Magazine* presents several options in terms of gender performance for both male and female athletes. While traditional and stereotypical gender roles and presentations for men and women are certainly present within the magazine, these representations are not the norm for athletes and they are most commonly seen when women and men’s roles within the family are discussed. Athletic gender complexity for men and women is present from the beginning of my sample in the 1970s and only increases through the years, while sexist and stereotypical representations of women decreases. However, in the late 2000s there becomes more emphasis on female athletes highlighting their femininity because of their presumed inherent feminine qualities. I argue that this call for femininity in female athletes is tied to both the systemic homophobia present in

women's sports and evangelical Christians' strong stance against homosexuality. In this way, the *FCA Magazine*, while presenting a complex view of what it means to be a male or female athlete, ultimately reinforces heterosexuality as the only option for athletes, similar to mainstream media.

First, I give brief background information that helps to frame my expectations before describing what my expectations were and how my assumptions were quickly disrupted. Next, I provide details on my method of textual analysis of the *FCA Magazine*. I then demonstrate how women and men are presented in ways that both reinforce and undermine traditional femininity and hegemonic masculinity respectively. Finally, I show how the *FCA Magazine* ultimately shores up traditional gender norms and roles through heterosexual relationships, a common strategy that is also used in mainstream sports media coverage to make women's sports more palatable and marketable to a wider audience.

Background

Within mainstream media coverage of sports, masculinity and femininity are most often polarized and seen as one-dimensional. In terms of femininity, many scholars have demonstrated the ways in which female athletes receive negative coverage in mainstream media. In their study of ESPN's *The Body Issue* Cranmer, Brann, and Bowman (2014) found that instead of gender equity, which the magazine claims as its aim, female athletes in *The Body Issue* are more likely to be represented out of the context of their sport, with more emphasis on their sexuality and less on their sport or athleticism. Similarly, *Sports Illustrated* has received a large amount of attention from scholars, and many have documented the negative representation that women receive within the magazine. *Sports Illustrated* is one of the most popular sports magazines in the United

States and is known for its visual imagery as well as negative portrayal of female athletes. In her study of feature articles of female athletes in *Sports Illustrated* Andrea Lumpkin (2009) found that in the 1990s women were most likely seen in individual and more feminine sports such as figure skating, gymnastics, and tennis, and their femininity was emphasized more than their athletic accomplishments. Similarly, Weber and Carini (2012) found through a content analysis of the covers of *Sports Illustrated* in the 2000s only 4.9% featured women and their position as athletes was minimized by sharing covers with men, featuring non-athletic women, and through sexually objectifying women.

In quantitative terms when it comes to foregrounding women's sports, the *FCA Magazine* does not fair better than *Sports Illustrated* and it is much worse. Lumpkin (2007) found in a content analysis of the covers of *Sports Illustrated* in the 1990s that women appear only 6% of the time. However, that percentage is larger than women on the cover of the *FCA Magazine* in the 1990s, where women are only seen on the cover 2.1% of the time. The coverage for women in the 2000s does not get much better in the *FCA Magazine* with women only appearing on the cover 2.5% of the time, compared to 4.9% in *Sports Illustrated* (Weber & Carini 2012). However, my analysis elucidates that the numbers do not present the entire picture, and women's overall coverage in the *FCA Magazine* is far more equitable than in magazines such as *Sports Illustrated* and *ESPN*.

Expectations

When I first began looking at *FCA Magazine* I expected to find female athletes represented in stereotypical or traditional feminine ways. I am defining traditional femininity as inherently weak, emotional, relational, natural caretakers, and inherently more religious

compared to their male counterparts. Given mainstream media's coverage of women's sports outlined above, I expected women's ability as athletes to be diminished by focusing on their physical appearance or drawing attention to their faith, relationships, and non-athletic interests, instead of their sport. I also anticipated that women would be presented as overly emotional, or more focused on their feelings, as well as more focused on their relationships with teammates, friends, or family members. Overall I predicted that women would be seen as weaker, physically and emotionally, and not "real" athletes compared to male athletes who I expected to be more respected for their athletic ability. In this way, I expected women's feminine representation to be highlighted by its contrast with men's more masculine characterization. I expected to find men embodying characteristics of hegemonic masculinity, such as strength and competitiveness, being natural leaders and protectors and ultimately distancing themselves from femininity, emotions, and relationships. I also anticipated men using sport to become more masculine, since this has been the primary goal of muscular Christianity as discussed in the Introduction. Ultimately, I predicted men would be less emotional and less relational, with the main focus on their sport and not their faith lives or non-sport interests.

The links between hegemonic masculinity and sport are almost commonplace; media representations of male athletes most often reinforce the idea that sport is naturally a domain for men. Clarke and Clarke (1982) have argued that sport "appears as a sphere of activity outside society, and particularly as it appears to involve natural, physical skills and capacities" therefore, sport "presents these ideological images *as if they were natural*" (p. 63). In other words, because men as athletes are most often seen as biologically superior, sport has the potential to further widen the perceived gender gap between men and women by reinforcing the belief that there are inherent differences between men and women. Sports and gender scholars such as Kane (1995)

and Dworkin and Wachs (2009) have revealed how the media contributes to the widening of the perceived gender gap within sports. Kane (1995) argues that the media distorts the reality of biological difference by only portraying the most talented and most athletic male athletes and therefore contributing to the myth that all men are physically stronger and more powerful than all women. Dworkin and Wachs (2009) also found in their examination of health and fitness magazines that men are overwhelmingly presented as bigger, stronger, and faster than women and in turn are prescribed different health and fitness needs for men and women based on assumptions rooted in perceived biological differences.

Most aspects of mainstream media certainly distort reality and contribute to the ideal of hegemonic masculinity as well as the perceived biological differences between men and women. However, as I will demonstrate the *FCA Magazine*, along with presenting female athletes in ways that resist gender traditions and hierarchies, the magazine also presents a more complex and therefore more realistic picture of what it means to be a male athlete. While hegemonic masculine ideals are certainly present within the magazine, men are also seen as relational, emotional, and having self-reflective faith lives. In this way, Christian spirituality serves as an avenue for male athletes to express emotions that are less valued in the sports world, such as fear, sadness, and pain, and men are encouraged to build meaningful relationships with others that are not simply built on competition.

Methods

The *FCA Magazine* was first published in 1959, and began with the name *The Christian Athlete*. In September/October of 1982, the magazine changed its name to *Sharing the Victory* (STV), keeping this name until 2013, when it became *FCA Magazine*. For clarity, I will only

refer to the magazine as *FCA Magazine*. The magazine was sometimes published bimonthly and sometimes monthly. My sample consists of two issues per year, usually January/February and July/August issues between the years of 1970-2013. However, sometimes I used issues a month before or after these typical months because either the issue was not published that month, or the consistent articles I was coding were not present in those months. For each issue, I coded three consistent articles: 1) the cover story; 2) “The Young Lions” section; and 3) one select article featuring a woman, if possible. The reason for selecting articles specifically about women, was to attain as much data on female athletes as possible because they were much less likely to be featured in the cover stories. “The Young Lions” section highlights four to six individual athletes and the name of this section changes throughout sample. The name of this section changed to “The Young Competitors” in 1975, “Standing Tall” in 1982, “Pressing On” in 1988, and finally “Heart of an Athlete” in 2004. Although the name of this section changed frequently the content stayed the same, except when changing to the “Heart of an Athlete.” With this name change, the section went from highlighting four to six athletes to focusing on just one athlete.

For each article, I coded for 12 large themes, Religion, Relationships, Emotions, Positive and Negative Characteristics, Military, Physical Appearance, Gender, Racism, Athletics, Non-athletic interests, and Disability. I also coded the subject of each quotation as either male or female and the race of each subject. I chose these themes after reading through five random issues from my sample and gaining an understanding of the type of topics discussed in the magazine. Within each large theme I then developed subthemes that are more specific and descriptive. Overall these themes were chosen because they were useful in creating a thorough analysis of gender representation within the magazine. Following Taylor and Bogdan’s (1998) guidance in conducting content analysis, I refined my themes, or categories, as I progressed in

my analysis, adding, expanding, redefining, and collapsing my categories as I went along (p. 152).

Using the qualitative analysis software, Atlas ti, I was able to compare the way men and women are presented within the magazine as well as differences across race. In addition, for each issue within my sample I counted the total number of articles, those that feature women, men, and those that were gender neutral. Finally, I counted the total number of issues per year, as well as the number of women that are present on the cover of all of the issues between 1970 and 2013. In this way, I was able to attain the percentage of articles about women and the percentage of women on the cover during this time frame. Besides these quantitative results, my overall analysis is primarily qualitative in nature. In other words, my tabulated coding scheme was used to organize my data and to “develop insights and generate theoretical understandings, not to produce frequency counts to prove [a] hypotheses” (Taylor & Bogdan 1998, p. 154).

Results: Why is This Girl *and* Boy Crying?

As athletes, women are almost completely absent from the magazine before March of 1973. The first female athlete to appear in the magazine is Janet Lynn, pictured in Figure 1, in the March 1973 issue. The article is entitled “Why is This Girl Crying?” and recounts Lynn’s dedication to her sport, the pressures of being a semi-professional athlete, her faith journey and her athletic successes and failures. Janet Lynn’s article in many ways reinforced the assumptions I began with about how female athletes would be represented. The article begins by describing her as “petite (5-2) blond with the pixie face and ubiquitous smile. ‘The Perpetual Smile’ as LIFE dubbed her” (Warner, 1973, March, p. 2). The author goes on to describe her as “our symbol of unspoiled, unfettered youth” (Warner, 1973, March, p. 2). With this description, Lynn

represents many aspects of traditional femininity, in that she is small, youthful, blond, cute, innocent, and always smiling. Also, as the title suggest, there is an emphasis within the article on Lynn's emotions and the article even states that she went into "near hysterics" after performing poorly in a competition (Warner, 1973, March, p. 7). Lynn also discusses how she struggles with jealousy and even envies more popular girls and girls she perceives as being thinner.

Lynn's representation as overly emotional and envious of other girls is in many ways a stereotypical depiction of a female athlete. Furthermore, she is an athlete in the traditional feminine sport of figure-skating. Given that the *FCA Magazine* and the organization itself had been male dominated up to this point, it is not surprising that Janet Lynn is the first female Christian athlete to be depicted in the magazine. Lynn is unintimidating and non-threatening as an athlete; she fits neatly into the female and feminine box especially within the context of Christianity. However, as stereotypical as this first representation of a female athlete appears, there are some hints within this article and another article within the same issue, that perhaps women will receive more equitable coverage.

Along with being an emotional athlete, there is also an emphasis on Lynn's dedication and hard work to attain her athletic success. Lynn explains that although her brothers also began skating at a young age, they were not as dedicated to the sport and were "happy to leave the figure skating regimen to me" (Warner, 1973, March, p. 4). The word "regimen" indicates that her brothers were not as disciplined or committed as their sister, which becomes clear when her training routine is described. The author states that "Janet has lived a unique 11 years from that day when she labored through her first of uncountable figure eights. She has practiced three or four hours in the morning, gone to school, then practiced another two or three hours at night. On weekends she logs 16 to 20 practice hours" (Warner, 1973, March, p. 4). Furthermore, Lynn

attends ballet classes in order to gain more fitness, “agility and rhythm” (Warner, 1973, March, p. 4). Instead of downplaying her grueling training routine or perhaps focusing on the grace and composure needed in figure skating, the article emphasizes Lynn’s hard work and the physicality involved in her sport.

Although, the title suggests that Lynn would be seen crying throughout the entire article, Lynn actually mentions how showing emotion does not come natural to her. In describing her faith life and how she has overcome shyness, Lynn states that “To be outwardly emotional was unnatural for me; I couldn't bring out what I felt. Knowing Christ has really helped” (Warner, 1973, March, p. 5). Not being able to show emotion is a characteristic that we usually associate with men and masculinity, and young women are typically assumed to be overly emotional. However, here Lynn is stating that it is not normal for her to express emotions, but her faith allows her to have more freedom of expression. Inadvertently, the author of this article has pointed to the actual complexity behind gender and women’s emotionality—women can be over emotional and emotionally reserved. On the surface, “Why is this Girl Crying?” portrays women as traditionally feminine, however, on closer inspection gender is not as polarized as might be expected.

Within the same March 1973 issue, there is also an article about two female high school basketball players who live in Alaska that presents a more complex picture of women and gender. Within the two page article there are three pictures and two of them are still shots of the athletes in uniform and the other picture is an action shot of one of the girls competing. The article begins by describing the harsh conditions that are present in Alaska and the particular challenges these two Christian female basketball players face in order to compete in their sport. The author states that, “the girls practice two hours daily and often walk home in minus 50

degree weather. During their 29-game regular season the team travels to various arctic communities via plane, train and bus” (“Hooping it up,” 1973, March, p. 22). The author also states that the athletes often have to manage less than adequate sewage systems and compete in buildings that serve as morgues. The article mentions that one of the athletes competed with a broken toe and the other is praised by her coach for being the “hardest working female athlete I’ve ever worked with” (“Hooping it up,” 1973, March, p. 23). By focusing on harsh conditions, competing through injury, and the work ethic of these athletes, the article emphasizes the dedication and toughness of these athletes, qualities that are most often associated with masculinity.

This description parallels how male athletes are presented at this time. Playing through or overcoming injury, hard work, and dedication are common themes when male athletes are discussed. For example in January 1971, there is a story in the magazine of a male high school football player who is advised by doctors to give up his sport, but manages to come back with the help of physical therapy and faith and excel in track and field and football. He is also described as having “tremendous determination and desire to excel” (“The Young Lions,” p. 18). Although pushing through pain and overcoming injury are common narratives for both male and female athletes, early in my sample male athletes are also seen breaking with these hegemonic masculine norms.

Keeping with this theme, in January of 1974 there is an article entitled “Peace Through Pain,” which is a first person narrative by a high school athlete who becomes ill and suffers for years without knowing what is wrong. The author describes the physical and emotional pain he goes through, such as embarrassment and fear. He also tells how he spent hours on the phone with his girlfriend crying and praying about the situation. After a series of tests the doctors are

able to determine his illness and he goes on to be able to compete in college athletics. On the one hand, these examples of male athletes pushing through or overcoming injury to excel is representative of hegemonic masculinity. However, alongside their ability to endure through pain is the narrative that emotions, relationships and relying on or sharing their faith are important aspects of masculinity that need to be expressed as well. This is counter to the image of hegemonic masculinity that circulates within popular media, and this article is one of the first indications that *FCA* is resisting hegemonic masculinity by presenting a more complex view of masculinity, along with femininity. I will return to discuss the ways in which hegemonic masculinity are both resisted and reinforced in the magazine, but first I will discuss the athletic gender complexity of female athletes' representation.

My argument that *FCA* presents athletic gender complexity, does not negate the fact that sometimes traditional gender norms are reproduced in the 1970s into contemporary time. In the first article about female basketball players, published in March of 1973, the female athletes are respected as athletes, however, at the same time, there are indicators that women are not being taken as seriously. For example, the female athletes' appearance is mentioned in this article, one being described as a "blue-eyed brunette" and the other as "comely" ("Hooping it up," 1973, March, p. 22-23). The author also uses softer verbs or adjectives when describing the girls' accomplishments or aspirations such as "tossed in," "best foot forward," and "grace the Ohio State University campus" ("Hooping it up," 1973, March, p. 22-23). Ultimately, the article does not let the reader forget that these are *female* athletes. As the quote above demonstrates, Debbie is the "hardest working *female* athlete" the coach has ever worked with ("Hooping it up," 1973, March, p. 23). Therefore, before presenting how female athletes within *FCA Magazine* are breaking with normative femininity, I will first describe the strategies used to devalue women's

athletic ability. Specifically, I argue that women's athletic ability is diminished by presenting women in more feminine sports, mentioning or focusing on their appearance, and by presenting women as silly and more emotional.

“Barefoot Gigglebox”: Reproducing Normative Femininity

As noted above, researchers have shown how female athletes' talent and abilities are often negated or downplayed by focusing on the athletes' physical appearance (Cranmer, Brann, & Bowman 2014; Weber & Carini 2012; Lumpkin 2009) Specifically, these scholars most often found female athletes to be sexualized or objectified as sexual objects. However, in the *FCA Magazine*, the sexualization of women is almost completely absent. On one level this finding is not surprising given that this is within the context of a Christian magazine, however, within the realm of sport media coverage, the lack of sexualization is quite remarkable. Despite a lack of women's sexualization, women's appearance is sometimes discussed within the magazine, with women being much more likely to be described physically in terms of hair and eye color than men. For men, eye and hair color are only mentioned three times, one is to reference an athlete's ethnic heritage as Norwegian, one time is to demonstrate the old age of someone, and the other reference is to characterize a man as non-threatening. In comparison, women's hair and eye color are mentioned seven times. For instance, in July/August of 1985, the cover story features three female golf players. When describing each athlete and their athletic accomplishments, the author also briefly mentions their hair and eye color (Stogsdill, 1985, July/Aug, p. 3-5). Referencing these golfers hair and eye color, has no purpose in this article except to remind the reader that these are potentially attractive women and resulting in the distraction of attention away from their ability as athletes. Despite this, perhaps inadvertent sexism, each golfer is pictured actively

swinging their golf clubs, instead of being sexualized or depicted as passive (Stogsdill, 1985, July/Aug, p. 3-5). However, these women are still seen in the traditionally feminine sport of golf.

As we saw with Janet Lynn, presenting women in traditionally feminine sports offers little resistance to normative femininity and most often works to uphold gender hierarchies. Although Lynn is the only figure skater present within my sample, women are predominately seen as golf and tennis players. Golf and tennis were some of the first sports women publically participated in, given that they are primarily perceived as feminine sports. Because they were considered less physical and require more skill than strength, most women who played golf or tennis were not pushing the boundaries of femininity, therefore, women have received little to no push back against playing these sports. Tennis and golf are also often portrayed within the larger culture, and within the *FCA Magazine*, as recreational or leisure activities that non-athletic people or athletes who play more physical sports use to relax and have fun. Husbands and wives are often seen playing these sports together as a way to spend time together, further reinforcing the idea that “true athleticism” is not required to compete in golf or tennis, therefore allowing men and women to be on a more equal playing field. For these reasons, within the *FCA Magazine* golf and tennis are sports where there is an over representation of women. Of the 17 golfers⁹ seen in the magazine eight of them are women and there is only one more cover story of a male golfer than a female golfer. Tennis is also predominately presented as a female sport. Out of the 16 tennis players mentioned, ten of them are female. These numbers are especially noteworthy since overall men are present within the magazine 61% of the time and women 39%.

⁹ I only counted those who played golf or tennis on an organized team and not recreationally. I also excluded golf and tennis coaches.

Finally, as we saw with Janet Lynn, emphasis is often placed on female athletes as silly and emotional instead of serious athletes who are focused on their sport. For example, in the May/June issue of 1986 there is an article featuring a female barefoot water-skier. The article is entitled “The Barefoot Gigglebox,” and begins by describing how water skiing without skis is very difficult and dangerous and requires wearing a helmet for the jumping events. The female athlete described is at the top of her field at the age of 17, winning the Florida state championship the past five years in a row. The article goes on to describe her faith journey and how now that she is a Christian she is “happy all the time” and “laugh[s] a lot” leading people to call her “Gigglebox” (Hull, 1986, May/June, p. 9). Although her talent in a dangerous sport and her faith are the focus of this article, with her happy personality only mentioned in passing, the author chose to place “Gigglebox” in the title. Ultimately, drawing attention to her bubbly and joyful personality serves to diminish her talent and the fact that she engages in a high risk activity.

This portrayal of the “Barefoot Gigglebox” may not seem significant, however, when compared to a male water-skier, the gender differences become clear. A decade earlier in July/August of 1976, there is an article entitled “Oh, You *Can* Get to Heaven on Water Skis.” The article is told from the first person perspective and recounts how the athlete was inspired by his father to take up water skiing, despite his dad’s lack of talent. The athlete also details how he came to take his faith more seriously and began to integrate his faith with his sport. Instead of the happy and carefree portrayal of the female water skier, the male athlete explains that he became “serious about water skiing” at the age of 15 (McArthur, 1976, July/Aug, p. 10). He also points out that he “made a thoughtful, mature commitment of [his] life to Jesus Christ and asked him to allow [him] to be a witness” (McArthur, 1976, July/Aug, p. 10). The difference in

characterization could be attributed to self-representation versus imposed representation, however the difference still remains, painting this female athlete as less serious and even less of an athlete despite her skill in a dangerous sport.

Conforming to Hegemonic Masculine Ideals

Similar to the way in which normative femininity is reinforced in the *FCA Magazine*, hegemonic masculinity is also emphasized. There are two main ways in which hegemonic masculinity is re-inscribed onto male bodies: 1) by referencing the use of athletics to teach masculinity; and 2) by emphasizing that being a Christian does not make one a weak or less aggressive athlete. However, masculinity is ultimately presented as more complex than dominant forms of masculinity, which runs counter to how male athletes are presented in mainstream sports magazines.

“Sports become a beautiful avenue....” One of the earliest expressions of sports being used to teach masculinity is in January of 1973. Within this issue there is the beginning of a three part series focusing on sports within the family and using sports to draw family members together. Two authorities on Christian parenting are questioned about family dynamics and how parents should handle certain circumstances surrounding their boys and sports. The whole premise of the series is that sports and athletics can be a vehicle to teach boys positive character traits and strengthen the family unit. This first article focuses on fathers and sons, and the author stresses that sports teaches boys how to be men. The article begins by stating that “sports become a beautiful avenue to teach give-and-take” (Hall, 1973, January, p. 7). Later in the article the expert is questioned about what to do when the father feels like he is being replaced by his son’s

coach. His reply is that “if somebody can help my son be a better man I've got to be big enough to say ‘more power to you’; I want my son to be the best man he can be” (Hall, 1973, January, p. 10). The underlining assumption is that sports, and good coaching in particular, produces better men and therefore the father should be “thrilled” that the son has another role model to help him become a better man.

At this point in time, women were absent from the magazine as athletes, consequently the three part series focuses solely on boys and men as athletes. Competition is presented as solely the domain of boys and meant to help them grow and mature. In the next article of the series, the focus is on the mother-son relationship. The author states that:

“[Competition] can be a very useful tool in helping mom and son become friends. That is, if she uses sports as a healthy way to promote relationships. If she competes at the level of teacher and helper, great. If she sets out to win to prove herself or to set herself up as a heroine in his life, this will defeat him. Any boy knows when someone is letting him win and he is not complimented by it. So the competition should be normal and can be healthy if the motivations are proper and understood.” (Hall, 1973, January, p. 7)

In other words, the purpose of competition and sport are to solely build up the masculinity of boys and young men. For a young man to be beaten by his mother, or worse, his mother lets him win, this does not serve him well and would destroy his masculinity. Instead, competition should be “normal” meaning boys primarily win and mothers should not desire to win too much, only teach or help. The implied message is that the mother is not supposed to teach her son masculinity by beating him rather sport and competition itself imparts masculinity onto the son.

Another example comes in January 1975 from an article featuring nine college FCA members about competition and how it fits within their Christian world-view. One young man states that “losing can be a great feeling, too. It makes you more of a man when you can lose and accept the fact that you lost and can still gain from it. The ‘taking part’ is important. It’s easy to sit in the stands and criticize. We ought to all cheer anyone who has the guts to get out and compete” (Warner, 1975, January, p. 20-1). In other words, competing and even losing molds boys into men by teaching them how to take a metaphorical hit or blow. It is hard to tell from this quote, what the young man means by the “taking part,” but it could easily be seen as a metaphorical taking or the literal “taking” of a blow, as is mentioned above. Later in the article the author questioning the young men states that he believes that the purpose of competition is to make himself and his opponent better men (Warner, 1975, January, p. 22).

“You don’t have to be a wimp.” Another significant narrative within the *FCA Magazine* that reinforces hegemonic masculinity is the insistence that being a Christian does not make one weak, less aggressive, or less of an athlete. This narrative is deployed throughout my sample, but especially within the 1980s and early 1990s, and men are primarily the ones engaging in this language as a way of bolstering their masculinity. In July/August of 1983, a football coach and high school huddle leader, featured in the “Standing Tall” section, explains how his faith is growing alongside those of his athletes. He further states that “the players know I’m sincere and that being a Christian doesn’t mean you’re a sissy” (“Standing Tall,” 1983, July/Aug, p. 21). With this statement the coach is assuring the readers, and perhaps even himself, that just because he is sincere and desires to be a good Christian does not make him weak or feminine, both of which are implied with the word “sissy.” In other words, the football coach and

former football player at Texas A&M, wants to maintain his masculine image despite his role as a Christian.

This same sentiment is expressed in more detail by Los Angeles Dodgers pitcher Orel Hershiser in the May/June issue of 1986. The author explains how Hershiser became a Christian shortly before going pro and because of his success the athlete was recently asked how a “Christian lifestyle can exist in a highly competitive pitching career” (Spoelstra, 1986, May/June, p. 3). Hershiser’s reply was “Just because you’re a Christian doesn’t mean you have to be a wimp (Spoelstra, 1986, May/June, p. 3). Later in the article the pitcher is asked to elaborate on his quote. He does so by saying:

“My aggressiveness comes from wanting to be the best I can be for Jesus Christ. If aggressiveness is part of the game, I don't think it's a sin. When aggressiveness comes out of anger, that’s something else. I’m mild-mannered and get along with everybody when I’m off the mound. On the field I try to be the best Orel Hershiser I can be, because that's what God wants of me.” (Spoelstra, 1986, May/June, p. 3)

Hershiser’s statement reflects one of the main themes echoed throughout the magazine, God wants Christian athletes to compete to the best of their ability, which means practicing and playing their hardest. As Hershiser’s quote demonstrates, competing to the best of your ability means being aggressive, competitive, and anything but a “wimp.”

Another telling example comes from September/October issue of 1989 where the cover story features NFL defensive lineman Reggie White. The article features direct quotes from the player on topics such as dealing with fame, his marriage and family life, friendship, and his

athletic experiences. One topic is titled “Stomping Opponents” and White talks about playing and tackling hard not only as part of his job but also a calling from God. White states:

“In the Old Testament God commanded the Israelites to destroy cities and kill men, women, children, cattle, everything. God's called me to get the quarterback or whoever has the football. My intentions aren't to hurt anybody or end anyone's career. There are times a guy is hurting so badly you want to get him out of the game and you know if you can hit him hard enough to ring his bell, you'll do it. That's being a competitor. Too many people think meekness is weakness. Meekness is strength. When I'm out on the field I'm aggressive. Off the field, some of the guys I play against are my best friends.” (“Man with a message,” 1989, Sept/Oct, p. 6)

It is significant that White begins his statement by referencing the Old Testament because there is much debate among Christians about how literal the Old Testament is to be read or interpreted. Many Christians argue that the Old Testament should be read symbolically and that the stories told should not be taken out of their very specific context (Brueggemann, 1997). However, White is interpreting the Old Testament quite literally here and in a way that not only justifies his career as a football player but also reinforces his masculinity. White states that his intentions are not to hurt his opponents, but pain is certainly a by-product of tackling other players, especially when attempting to “ring his bell” in order to get a player out of the game. White justifies this behavior by stating that aggressiveness “on the field” is “being a competitor.” In other words, similar to Hershiser's comment above, as long as aggressiveness is part of the game, than it is acceptable and even a calling from God to be aggressive.

Highlighting aggressiveness or forcefulness in turn assures the readers, especially the male readers who look up to these men, that these are masculine male athletes and that being a Christian does not mean you have to be a “sissy” or “wimp.” Words such as “sissy” and “wimp” have a lot negative connotations and stigma attached to them, especially in the realm of sports, which as mentioned above represents the epitome of masculinity. These words are often used as insults against male athletes who are perceived as not tough enough and cannot bear the violence or aggressiveness of their sport. Therefore, these words imply that athletes are not masculine enough and are displaying feminine qualities, which is the worse insult of all for many male athletes.

However, both athletes while maintaining a masculine persona through their sport, also model Christian qualities by stating that their aggressiveness stays on the field. Both players refer to their “off the mound” or “off the field” personas as friendly and “mild-mannered,” which further demonstrates that aggressiveness is meant to only be a part of the game and not their day-to-day lives. In other words, they perceive athletics as a separate space from the rest of their lives, and as we saw in the previous section, a space that fosters and teaches hegemonic masculinity. However, in the *FCA Magazine* hegemonic masculinity is altered by not only keeping aggression and competitiveness “on the field,” but also by highlighting male athletes’ emotional, relational, and spiritual lives. The language of separate spheres, “on the field” and “off the field,” as I will demonstrate is an important narrative that also shapes how femininity for female athletes is encouraged and performed. In contrast to the mainstream coverage of women in sport, the *FCA Magazine* presents female athletes as aggressive and even masculine “on the field.” As I will show, it is only “off the field” that women must maintain normative femininity.

“I’ve learned to cry...”: Male athletes resisting hegemonic masculinity. While many Christian male athletes certainly uphold and value hegemonic masculinity, many simultaneously resist these ideals. Even in these early years, the type of masculinity that is encouraged or expressed, does not neatly fit into the mold of hegemonic masculinity within sports. In January 1973, the same article discussed above where sport is stressed as teaching boys how to be men, there is also the claim that “[sport] also teaches fairness, gentlemanliness and taking a rap and not rapping back. This is what life is about” (Hall, p. 7). While this quote in some ways upholds dominant masculinity, it does so with a twist. This quote demonstrates how sport is meant to teach boys how to be tough by learning how to take a “rap” or hit. But sport is also supposed to teach boys about “fairness,” or playing by the rules and being able to take a hit *without* hitting back, and even “gentlemanliness.” This type of masculinity that boys are meant to learn is certainly different from hegemonic masculinity, which focuses on strength, domination, and violence. Instead, FCA presents a type of masculinity that is guided and tempered by Christian principles and therefore resists many hegemonic masculine ideals.

There are three main ways in which men break with the small gender box of hegemonic masculinity. First, men are seen as emotional and willing to express their emotions. Second, men are seen as relational, taking their relationships with family and friends seriously. Finally, men are seen in feminized sports such as race-walking and bowling or having more feminine non-sport interests.

In the beginning of this chapter I gave the example of a male high school athlete who is seen expressing pain, praying, and crying with his girlfriend. Men sharing or expressing emotion was a common theme I found throughout my sample. Men expressed or talked about emotions almost at the same rate as women, with men discussing emotions 9.8% of the time and women

14.1%. For example, in July/August of 1973, “Pro Christian Athlete of the Year Bob Vogel” states that “FCA gives a man an environment to be a Christian in a manly way [...] I’ve learned to cry without feeling less a man and to tell a teammate I love him without fear of public censure” (Stogsdill, p. 26). The first part of Vogel’s statement at first appears to be upholding hegemonic masculine ideals of men wanting to show that they are “manly” men who are strong and athletic by playing sports. However, the second part of his statement reveals that Vogel is reinterpreting manliness to mean showing pain and even love in public spaces towards other men and without shame.

Another example that shows how the *FCA Magazine* works to destabilize hegemonic masculinity is in an article in February of 1991 about a husband and wife discussing their relationship and Christian dating in general. The article discusses dating guidelines for Christian teenagers and also the importance of communication to relationships. The couple begin to discuss how men are taught that crying or expressing pain is a form of weakness and that men feel pressure to stay guarded emotionally because of the “‘Rambo images’ society holds up to men as ideals” (King, 1991, Feb, p. 17). The husband goes on to state that “it’s not that guys don’t feel; it’s that they repress their emotions and then they don’t have empathy for other people” (King, 1991, Feb, p. 17). This discussion about emotions and masculinity is certainly remarkable in the context of a sports magazine and even a Christian magazine. With this discussion FCA is acknowledging that men are taught by society certain forms of masculinity and ways of being that are potentially harmful to men and women. Instead of relying on the argument of biological differences between men and women, this representation of men reveals the social construction of gender and masculinity in particular. The strategy or explanation of biological difference as a way to navigate gender roles and relational issues is also a common

theme that developed out of my interviews with female athletes and staff. However, mirroring this article the women also deploy other strategies, such as the social construction of gender to help navigate their day-to-day lives.

Although the two examples above of breaking with hegemonic masculinity are white male athletes, black athletes are also seen resisting masculine norms through valuing relationships with teammates, friends, and family members. For example, in January/February of 2002 a Duke University basketball player explains how he asked his mother to move to Durham with him when he went to college. The article highlights the importance of the athlete's mother to his life and the constant support he receives from her as she attends every home game. The article, "Unashamed," also emphasizes the athlete's commitment to his faith and how he is unashamed to share his faith and beliefs with his teammates. He explains how growing up he used to be afraid to pray in front of others or express his faith publicly, even in church. Then he tells of "one time in church where I didn't care. I lifted up my hands real high and was praying out loud" (Palmeri, 2002, Jan/Feb, p. 6). The raising of hands and praying out loud indicates that the basketball player is not only unashamed of expressing his faith but also of expressing emotion publicly.

Overall, black men are present within the *FCA Magazine* 19.5% of the time compared white men who are present 77.7% of the time. Quantitatively these numbers show the overall whiteness of FCA and that the organization has a long way to go in terms of attracting non-white athletes, especially other racial minorities besides African Americans. However, in terms of a qualitative analysis, FCA overwhelmingly resists relying on racial hierarchies and stereotypes when describing or presenting black male athletes. For example, white men and black men discuss controlling their emotions or their emotions getting out of control close to the same rate.

Similarly, black men and women are presenting having positive and negative characteristics at about the same rate as white men and women. Relationships in the form of friendships, teammates, and family members are also discussed about the same rate for black men and women and white men and women. These numbers reveal that there is little difference in how black men and white men are represented and overall the *FCA Magazine* does not reproduce racial hierarchies. This is not to say that racism is not present within the magazine. I argue below, when it comes to the representation of female athletes, black women are presented in ways that do uphold damaging racial stereotypes. However, FCA does not present black men as violent, aggressive, and out of control, which are common stereotypes present in mainstream media.

Finally, male athletes break with normative masculinity by being seen participating in non-masculine sports or doing non-masculine activities. For example, in July/August of 1974 they cover story is entitled “A Wiggle, a Jiggle, and a Giggle,” and relates the stories of three different male race walkers. The article begins with the author stating how bizarre it is to see men race walking, primarily because of the hip motion that the sport requires in order to keep both feet on the ground at the same time. The author writes, “It is ridiculous, actually. Grown men working so hard at something which, well. I mean, put the same motion in a skirt on any street in America and you've got a hit show. But on a track?” (Warner, 1974, July/Aug, p. 2). The author is quick to point out however that race walking actually requires a lot of athletic ability and skill. Despite this assurance of athleticism and in turn masculinity, the article still represents men in a non-masculine sport and in some ways even trivializes their talent and sport. One of the race walkers is a preacher who is said to have become involved in the sport in order to lose weight, a sentiment that is most often expressed by female athletes. Another of the walkers

states that he is encouraged to continue race walking because his soon to be wife thinks he “look[s] cute wiggling down the road!” (Warner, 1974, July/Aug, p. 5). Both of these race walkers are represented in traditionally feminine ways by focusing on and valuing their appearance.

Besides being seen in non-masculine sports such as race walking and bowling, men are also seen participating in non-sport activities that break with the hegemonic masculine ideal. For instance, May of 1998 features is an article about a college baseball player who is well known for his athletic talent as well as his singing ability. The article explains how one of his more memorable moments was not actually playing baseball but singing the national anthem for one of his games. The baseball player also sings for his school’s FCA Huddle; the author describes how he “sings with power and feeling and the message from his heart and voice touches the audience” (Atcheson, 1998, May, p. 7). Later in the article the athlete himself states that “I don't know what it is about music [...] When I listen to Christian music, it is an unbelievable time I have with God. It is like He is sitting right beside me. I feel so close to Him” (Atcheson, 1998, May, p. 9). With this description, FCA is presenting a male athlete engaging not only in his sport but also in an activity that women are primarily seen participating in and enjoying. Furthermore, the male athlete enjoys music and singing, and he also uses it as a way of expressing emotions with other Christians and with God. The willingness to express emotions and connect with others that is described here, is similar to the way the Duke University basketball player described above is unashamed of raising his hands in church and talking about his close relationship with his mother.

Parallel to the way male athletes are presented in ways that break with hegemonic masculinity that is mostly seen within sports, female athletes within *FCA Magazine* also disrupt

traditional femininity. However, as I will show, while presenting athletic gender complexity for both men and women, heterosexuality and in turn traditional gender roles are also upheld within the magazine.

“No lipstick-smearing or dress-up for you!”: Breaking with Traditional Femininity

January/February of 1990 features an article entitled, “Heart to Heart: Her Kid Sister Never Played Dress-Up with Her, but She’s Still Proud of Her.” This article is significant in that it highlights a female basketball player and her tomboy tendencies are validated and even respected. The article is written as a letter from a non-athletic sister to her basketball playing younger sister. The older sister explains how her younger sister “refused to make friends with my old Barbie dolls. Only footballs, soccer balls, basketballs, golf clubs and track cleats would do as your ‘playmates.’ No lipstick-smearing or dress-up for you!” (Sawyer, 1990, Jan/Feb, p. 15). Although the older sister really wanted to have a more feminine sister to play with, she eventually began to support her sister’s basketball career and describes the spiritual changes her sister goes through because of her experiences as an athlete. In other words, being a tomboy and growing up to be a superb athlete as a female are seen as a valid accomplishments and a way of living that fits within a Christian worldview.

As outlined above, there are ways in which female athletes’ ability as athletes are diminished. However, overwhelmingly women as athletes, are represented in similar ways as their male counterparts—successful, competitive, and talented. In particular, women are seen aggressively competing in their sport and they have similar struggles as Christian athletes, using their faith to evangelize, overcoming injury, and controlling emotions. Finally, women are seen participating in traditionally masculine sports such as hockey, weightlifting, and wrestling. The

breaking with traditional femininity by female athletes is seen from the beginning of their inclusion in the *FCA Magazine*.

Female athletes as active, aggressive competitors. From the start of analyzing the *FCA Magazine*, I noticed right away that women were pictured actively playing their sport. The fact that this was unusual to me underscores how rare it is to see female athletes actively competing within mainstream magazines or pictorial media. Even in the early years of women being present in the magazine, they are still seen primarily as competitors and not props or as simply a pretty face. The first female athlete within my sample appears in July/August of 1974. She is a tennis player and of the five pictures of her, three of them are of her actively playing tennis, one is of her instructing girls in the sport, and one is a head shot of her in uniform (Aucamp, 1974, July/Aug, pp. 8-10).

Similarly, in January of 1977 the cover story features Nancy Swider, an American speed skater who made it to the winter Olympics the year before, coming in seventh place in the 3,000 meters. The cover picture presents Swider speeding around the ice rink, presumably during a race, as spectators watch on. The next page also features a closer shot of Swider hunched over skating intensely. The article focuses on Swider's goals as a skater and how she managed to make to the Olympics without a coach and only the help of her father and brothers. Swider tells in the first person how she gradually learned better technique by watching other skaters and asking other coaches questions. She credits her ability to making it to the Olympics without a coach to her faith in God and her belief that God has given her this athletic ability for a purpose (Swider, 1977, Jan, pp. 5-8).

Also, in “The Young Competitors” section of the July/August issue of 1977, there are two female athletes pictured that on first glance appear they could be male athletes. As stated in the methods section “The Young Competitors” section starts off as “The Young Lions.” The first female athlete to appear in this section is in March of 1975, while still under the title of “The Young Lions.” However, in the very next issue, this section’s name changes to “The Young Competitors.” With this name change the editors are implying that to refer to female athletes as “lions” would be too aggressive for women, especially since the caption under the title “The Young Lions” is a Bible verse from Psalm 104:21 which reads, "The young lions roar after their prey, and seek their meat from God." While the name change suggests women will not be presented as aggressively as male athletes, the opposite is actually true as seen in the July/August issue of 1977.

Figures 2 and 3 feature images from “The Young Competitors” section from July/August 1977. The female athlete in Figure 2 is a softball player, and is seen pitching the ball underhand, which besides her name, is the only clue that the athlete is female. She has short hair and there is nothing particularly feminine about her uniform. The female athlete in Figure 3 is even harder to pick out, and may even be overlooked as female. She is pictured in the middle of throwing the shot put. Like the first female athlete, she has short hair and is without the typical markers of femininity. As you can see there four male athletes pictured here with two of them active and in uniform and two with head shots and out of uniform. This section of the magazine soon became more standardized with only head shots of athletes and coaches, most of whom are pictured out of uniform. However, as can be seen with this example, the magazine makes a concerted effort from the beginning to depict female athletes the same way they do male athletes. Moreover, once

women become a part of the “The Young Lions” section, their presence there is constant and only increases through the years.

Female athletes’ overall presence in the magazine dramatically increases in the 1980s and into the 1990s and 2000s, as well. As you can see from the chart below the percentage of articles about women jumps from 7.9% in the 1970s to 25.3% in the 1980s. The number of articles about women continues to increase into the 2000s with 32.5% from 2000-2013. With this increase in coverage of female athletes and women’s sports, a more complex picture of what it means to be a female athlete emerges. One of the reasons for this complexity is the fact that women are seen competing in more sports such as volleyball, basketball, and soccer.

For example, in July/Aug of 1988 there is an article covering a potential Olympic volleyball player. All three pictures of the athlete feature her competing in her sport and even aggressively spiking the volleyball. The article also begins by highlighting her talent; the author writes, “What she lacks in height she makes up for with a dynamic jump, superb upper body strength, fiery intensity and faith” (Brown, 1988, July/Aug, p.10). The cover story for the January 1988 issue features Lynette Woodard, the first female Globe Trotter, and she is also depicted actively playing her sport; her talent and skill with the basketball are highlighted.

In the 1990s basketball becomes a highly popular sport for female athletes, one reason being the founding of the Women’s National Basketball Association (WNBA) in 1996. Even prior to the formation of the WNBA, female basketball players are present in the *FCA Magazine*, and represented in similar ways to male basketball players. In January of 1992 there is an article that features college female basketball player, Jan Jensen, and discusses her desire to play professionally. The article focuses on her ability as a player and the author even compares her to Michael Jordan, saying “having Jan Jensen ask a coach if she still wanted her on the team would

be like Michael Jordan asking the Bulls coaching staff if they wanted him to shoot the ball” (Paxton, 1992, Jan, p. 10). Her work ethic and leadership qualities are also emphasized and the sole purpose of the article is to showcase Jensen *as* an athlete. She is presented similarly to NBA star, David Robinson, who is featured in the cover story of the same issue. Although Robinson is given considerably more space in the issue, both are pictured actively playing basketball.

Basketball is certainly one of the more popular sports women are seen competing in and the majority of articles feature women in a similar fashion as male basketball players. This trend continues into the 2000s with many examples of female basketball players competing and forcefully taking up space on the court. However, basketball is far from the only sport women where women are depicted. Soccer is another popular sport where female athletes demonstrate a competitive drive and aggressive tendencies. For example, in June/July of 2004 the cover story features a female college soccer player, Quinn Rinehart, who plays for the U.S. Naval Academy. Athletes in military academies or athletes who happen to be war veterans are not unusual in the *FCA Magazine*. However, it is somewhat unusual for a female cadet to be featured with only two female cadets referenced out of the 19 total mentioned in my sample. The article discusses Rinehart’s leadership abilities as an athlete on the soccer team, and a soldier becoming the Brigade Commander, the highest rank in her Brigade, as well as a Christian, leading the academy’s FCA Huddle. There are nine pictures of Rinehart and three of them are of her playing soccer intensely, either with or without the ball. One of the quotes highlighted in the article and which is written in large print across one of the two page spreads reads “...in every aspect of our lives, we should always try our hardest” (Baker, 2004, June/July, pp. 10-11). The pictorial representation of Rinehart as well as the sentiment of trying your hardest, demonstrate that female athletes are not only aggressive but they should also *try* to be aggressive, especially when

it comes to sports where aggressiveness and forcefulness are valued and contribute to their performance.

Another example comes from January of 1998 where the cover story showcases WNBA player, Charlotte Smith. There are five pictures of Smith in this article, four of them are of her competing in uniform and the other one is a head shot of her in uniform. Smith has been seen playing basketball, dribbling and shooting the ball, and she is photographed forcefully vying for space on the court against her competitors (see Figure 4). In this way, Smith's representation works to destabilize traditional femininity by presenting her as strong and competitive. However, as one of the few black female athletes within the *FCA Magazine*, gender complexity for women comes at the expense of reinforcing racial stereotypes of black female athletes. The reinforcement of racial tropes becomes evident when representations of black female athletes are compared to white women, particularly female basketball players.

Within my sample, 25% of the women present are black, while the remaining 75% are white.¹⁰ Although black women appear in the magazine in the 1970s and early 1980s, within my sample the first black female does not appear on the cover of the *FCA Magazine* until January/February of 1988. Lynette Woodard, the first female basketball player to be a member of the Harlem Globetrotters, appears on the cover of this issue and is the first female athlete to be on the cover who plays a sport other than golf or tennis. Prior to the 1988 cover, only a few white women made the cover and Nancy Swider in January of 1977 is the only female athlete besides a

¹⁰ Other races and ethnicities are almost completely absent from the magazine.

golfer, tennis player, or figure skater, to be on the cover.¹¹ The fact that Woodard, a black female athlete, is the first female to be presented in a non-feminized sport such as basketball is indicative of the ways in which racial stereotypes are perpetuated within the sports world at large and *FCA* in particular.

Historians and critical race scholars have outlined the establishment and perpetuation of racial stereotypes as they apply to black women. Critical race scholars such as bell hooks (1992), Patricia Hill Collins (1999), and Janell Hobson (2005) have described in depth how these stereotypes continue to inform the way our society perceives and treats black women. One of the most damaging myths and one that is pertinent to the domain of sports is the belief that black women are more masculine, more athletic, and in turn more like men. In her article, “Reading the Catsuit: Serena Williams and the Production of Blackness at the 2002 U.S. Open,” Jamie Schultz (2005) shows how the media representation of Serena Williams as too muscular, too strong, and therefore too much like a man, works to uphold damaging racial stereotypes and racial hierarchies within tennis and society at large.

Although within the *FCA Magazine* black female athletes are not discussed as too masculine or too muscular, their pictorial representation reinforces this stereotype. Lynette Woodard in 1988 is pictured actively playing basketball and even showing off her ball handling skills. There is nothing remarkably masculine about her presentation, however, she is the first female athlete to be depicted outside of a traditionally feminine sport. The next female athlete to be on the cover is a white female golfer in May/June of 1990, followed by a black female

¹¹ One other black woman, a track and field athlete, appeared before 1988, however, she was pictured with three other athletes, two of whom were white men.

volleyball player in May of 1992. In other words, black women within the *FCA Magazine* are presented as the ones who break from traditionally feminine sports first. In this way, they pave the way for white women to embody masculine characteristics and play non-feminine sports such as soccer, basketball and even hockey, wrestling, and weightlifting. Furthermore, women's representation within the *FCA Magazine* upholds the perceived and actual racial segregation between sports. For example, although black women only appear within the magazine 25% of the time, they are appear on the cover 47% of the time and they are primarily seen as basketball players.

Beyond breaking with feminized sports such as golf and tennis, as basketball players, the images of black women compared to white women also work to reproduce racial myths and stereotypes. For example, although both black and white female basketball players are seen actively competing in their sport, black players are pictured as more aggressive and more muscular. In Figure 4, for example, professional basketball player Charlotte Smith is seen without the ball, but aggressively fighting for space on the court against a much taller player. The physical struggle between the two players can be seen not only in the positioning of their bodies against each other, but it can also be seen in their facial expressions. Smith in particular, has a look of intensity or even anger. It is worth noting also, that Figure 4 is one of the few pictures of a female basketball player without the basketball and therefore playing defense. The reason for this is perhaps because basketball players tend to be well known for their ability to score points. But the fact that Smith, a black female, is pictured here playing defense which often requires more physicality and toughness, reinforces racial stereotypes of black women being more aggressive and in turn more masculine.

In a similar way, Figure 5 features another professional basketball player, Tamika Catchings, who along with a look of intensity, is depicted in a way that highlights her muscular arms. It is hard to look at this picture without noticing her large and muscular arms. The cover photo of her, which feature Catching's crouching at an angle with the basketball, also emphasizes her muscularity. This is not to say that white women in the *FCA Magazine* are not also depicted as muscular or strong, but their muscularity is rarely if ever depicted as vividly as Catchings. This holds true even when white women are seen competing in traditionally masculine sports, as I will show further down. Therefore, *FCA Magazine* follows mainstream media presentations of black female athletes, which often reproduce damaging racial hierarchies.

Women in masculine sports. White female athletes are presented in more feminine sports of golf and tennis, especially in the 1970s and 1980s. With black women paving the way, female athletes of both races begin to be seen in the more masculine sports of basketball and soccer, beginning in the late 1980s. However, beginning in the 1990s, female athletes begin to appear in traditionally more masculine sports such as hockey, wrestling, and weightlifting. For example, a high school female power lifter appears in May of 1994. The author describes how the athlete went from not being to lift the bar in her first workout to winning the National High School Powerlifting Championship four years in a row. The author explains that the athlete had to overcome inexperience, and the ridicule she received behind her back from those “who considered weightlifting a man's sport” (Walker, 1994, May, p. 21). However, she has the support of her family and friends, and her coach even believes that “If she were 6-foot-2 and 220 pounds [...] she'd be a Division I football player because of her heart and dedication” (Walker, 1994, May, p. 21).

Wrestling is another traditionally male sport that women are seen competing in and one in which women are described as also facing resistance. In January/February of 2007, an article about a female wrestler appears. The article describes how women's wrestling is a growing but still uncommon sport and the athlete explains how she has to prove herself to male athletes who have not seen women be successful in the sport. The athlete states, "A lot of guys who wrestle haven't seen girls wrestle, or the ones they have seen weren't very competitive and didn't succeed. I've had to prove myself to men that I am worthy of their respect" (Magill, 2007, Jan/Feb, p. 19).

Finally, in January/February of 2013 an article about a female hockey player, firmly reinforces the idea that masculinity, or perhaps simply a lack of femininity is acceptable for female athletes. The overall article is about the new sport specific hockey ministry that FCA recently started and one of the professional Christian athletes involved is Jinelle Siergiej. In the article she explains how she lacked confidence growing up in her athletic ability and even how she looked. She states that "when it came to being a high school girl, I didn't have confidence in how I looked. I always looked to my teammates or girlfriends for something I felt like I didn't have. I was jealous of the guys for their hockey talents, and jealous of the girls for their looks or boyfriends I didn't have" (Bonham, 2013, Jan/Feb, p. 22). Siergiej's struggle is that she does not fit into the traditional feminine box, but she also lacked the confidence to own her masculine qualities as a female. She finds her existence as a nontraditionally feminine female athlete uncomfortable in her high school, however, she soon comes to realize that "God made me the way I am and that I am perfect just as I am" (Bonham, 2013, Jan/Feb, p. 22). Therefore, she started to focus more on her God given athletic ability and using her talents for God. In this way,

Siergiej's masculine qualities that allow her to excel at sports are eventually seen as a gift and simply the way God created her and therefore something to be celebrated.

Faith and injury. Similar to the way that both male and female athletes are seen aggressively competing, they also have many of the same struggles as Christian athletes. Two of the main themes that emerged from the magazine were 1) athletes and coaches using their position and God given abilities to be a role model or evangelize; and 2) maintaining and growing their faith through adversity, which for athletes presented itself primarily in the form of injury.

The language both male and female athletes used to describe their faith as it relates to athletics and overcoming injury is remarkably similar. For example, a female triathlete states in March/April of 1989 that "I don't preach at people or bang my Bible. I just speak quietly that I race for God" (Jenkins, p. 10). Being gentle or delicate when evangelizing is also expressed by a male athlete in June/July of 2009. The man states that "The key to dealing with people in general is that they have to know that you care about them. [...] You have to deal with people in gentleness. You have to come alongside them. You can't push them or pull them; you have to walk with them. (Bonham, 2009, June/July, p. 10). Here both the male and female athlete express the desire to evangelize in a way that is not overbearing or harsh and may even be considered more feminine. Overall the theme of religion was present 50% of time for men and 58% of the time for women, further demonstrating that faith and evangelism play important roles in both male and female athletes' lives.

Maintaining faith while overcoming injury was also another common theme discussed by both male and female athletes. For example, in September/October of 1994 there was a cover

story of a male professional golfer, Paul Azinger, and his battle with cancer. He describes how his faith helped him get through his chemotherapy treatments and how he has learned that winning tournaments and making money are not the most fulfilling aspects of life (Hoskins, 1994, Sept/Oct, p. 6). Similarly, in July/August of 1983 there is a cover story about a female athlete and coach entitled “Her Knees in His Hands.” In the article she discusses overcoming a number of injuries and how she has learned to trust God more and has come to believe that good comes out of bad experiences, such as injuries (“Her Knees in His Hands,” 1983, July/Aug, pp. 3-4). The female athlete, like the male athlete, discusses the lessons injury taught that her—sports and competition were not the most important things in life.

Controlling anger and an “ever-competitive attitude.” Another unexpected subtheme that both male and female athletes discuss is that of struggling to control anger and an overzealous competitive attitude. Remarkably, these struggles are ones that both men and women deal with, since anger and competitiveness are usually associated with male athletes. Although female athletes are certainly competitive and experience anger, in media representations these characteristics are most often erased or left out of the picture, unless to instill racial difference.¹² In terms of controlling emotions, the exact same percentage of men and women discuss issues of controlling their anger or temper when competing. For example, one female multi-sport athlete in July/August of 1983 states: "Sometimes when I'm preparing to throw the javelin or shot I'll get a notion of revenge in my mind. Then I'll catch myself and ask 'what are you really here for?'"

¹² For example, the anger and aggression of professional tennis player, Serena Williams, is often discussed by the media in a negative light, reinforcing the stereotype of the “angry black woman.”

Or if I'm fouled hard in basketball and want to retaliate I'll say to myself 'Is this how you really want to react?'" (Stogsdill, p. 8). This sentiment was also expressed by male athletes. For instance, in the same issue a high school football player mentions that, "As an athlete I'm under scrutiny all the time and when I'm tempted by opposing players to fight back, I realize what the Lord wants me to do and pray for his strength" ("Standing Tall," 1983, July/Aug, p. 21). Both players discuss being tempted to express anger or use negative emotions to fuel their desire to compete or play hard, desires or feelings that are considered sinful for Christians.

Struggling with being too competitive was another common theme that both male and female athletes discuss. Out of the eleven times that an athlete is referenced as having a competitive spirit or struggling with being too competitive seven of those references are women. These numbers are quite remarkable, as mentioned above, given that men are mentioned 61% of the time and women only 39%. Male and female athletes also use similar language to discuss overcoming their competitiveness. For example, in May of 1997 a female soccer player and team manager states that "FCA has helped me to overcome an ever-competitive attitude, and to be able to uplift others in Christ through competition" (Greer, p. 12). And in September of 1991 a male athlete also discusses how he is "super competitive and never like[s] to lose at anything" ("Pressing On," p. 19). But he states that being a Christian helps him keep perspective when it comes to athletics.

On one level, by presenting female athletes as competitive and even struggling with being too competitive, FCA is negating the idea that women are not natural competitors when it comes

to sport.¹³ However, the fact that female athletes are much more likely to “struggle” with being too competitive indicates that women feel more uncomfortable with their competitiveness and therefore need to struggle against that drive. Male athletes on the other hand rarely feel the need to apologize for or curb their competitiveness. Therefore, the theme of competitiveness, as discussed by athletes in the *FCA Magazine*, is a perfect example of how gender traditions and hierarchies are both reproduced and resisted at the same time.

Showing your “Feminine Side”: Shoring up Heterosexuality for Female Athletes

March of 2010 marks the first discussion of what it means to be a Christian *female* athlete. Prior to this time it is assumed that the standards for Christian men and women as athletes are the same—compete your hardest and play at your fullest potential, have faith to get you through tough circumstances or experiences, and use your position as an athlete to evangelize. While this standard has not necessarily changed, it is altered by calling for Christian female athletes to be feminine. The main message of this issue is that female athletes do not have to compromise their femininity for sport, because the assumption is that all women, even athletes have a feminine side. The cover story entitled “Bold and Beautiful,” came about when Florida State University women's basketball team launched a new website that featured their athletes in "glamorous attire" while holding basketballs and getting out of limousines in evening gowns. The website make-over sparked controversy and head Coach Sue Semrau had to defend her

¹³ One of the tropes of normative femininity is that women are naturally competitive, but only when it comes to competing for the attention of men.

decision against feminist sport commentators who argued that Semrau was setting back women in sport.¹⁴ Semrau states that,

“So many people don't think you can be strong and feminine at the same time, but these girls are, and that's the truth. This whole thing has shown that, so often, femininity is defined by what we wear, but I don't believe that's the case at all. I believe that all women have a feminine side that is always present. It's part of who God created us as women. And that's our whole tag line with this Web site- that you can be both strong and beautiful as a woman. You can have a power about you that is also a grace.” (Ewert, 2010, March, p. 8)

Semrau's message indicates that women as athletes, while being strong and powerful like their male counterparts, are made differently, and inherently possess a “feminine side.” Ironically, Semrau states that femininity is not tied to physical appearance or what women wear. Why then did the coach quite literally make-over her entire team and present them in a more feminine light? Clues as to the motivation behind coach Semrau's actions appear throughout the article.

The author begins the article posing several questions to female athletes:

“As athletes, we don't look like most women in the media-the ones we're told are examples of beauty. Does having strong arms and powerful legs mean we are less attractive? As athletes, we are competitive and bold. Does that mean we're not modeling biblical womanhood? As athletes, we are often stereotyped and labeled

¹⁴ It is worth noting that FSU's women's basketball team was not the only team around this time to re-do their website in order to feature their athletes in more feminine and glamorous attire. See Jayda Evans (November 11, 2009). “Women's hoops media guides and web sites getting sexier” in the *Seattle Times*.

with ‘manly’ characteristics. Does that mean we should submit to those opinions and surrender our femininity?” (Ewert, 2010, March, p. 10)

The author answers all of these question adamantly saying “No. No. And no” (Ewert, 2010, p. 10). FCA wants to assure female athletes that they are not being ungodly by playing sports and in turn breaking with traditional femininity. At the same time the FCA is assuring female athletes that they do not have to “surrender” their femininity and give in to the stereotype of the “manly” female athlete. Although not explicitly stated here, the reference to “‘manly’ characteristics” of female athletes is certainly related to the often cited stereotype of female athletes as lesbians. Possessing more masculine characteristics is the whole reason that female athletes get labeled as lesbians. Other hints at the relationship to masculinity and sexuality are presented by female athletes interviewed for the article.

When asked about femininity and sports Andrea Robertson states:

“It is sometimes glorified to be masculine on the field, and it can be hard to turn that off. So much of our identity can get wrapped up in our roles as athletes. There can be an implied responsibility to stay that way—to stay 'athletic' off the field, to stay in the sweats and in that rough-and-tough mentality. It can become a bit of an identity crisis. But we have to look at the Bible and to how God created us to find our identity. Being beautiful and being a woman is something to be celebrated. It’s not sinful or negative. In the Bible, God describes beautiful women, and we have to know how He made us and that He considers us all beautiful.” (Ewert, 2010, March, p. 14)

Similar to the quote above about manly characteristics, the underlining message of Robertson’s statement is certainly related to sexuality. Robertson believes that female athletes are facing an

“identity crisis” about how to behave and dress on the field versus “off the field.” However, her statement could easily be read as an identity crisis of sexuality for Christian female athletes.

Because athletics has become such an important aspect of some young women’s lives, Christian athletes feel the pressure to “stay ‘athletic’ off the field, to stay in the sweats and in that rough-and-tough mentality” (Ewert, 2010, March, p. 14). Instead, Robertson wants young women to remember that God has created them to be women and therefore not just “athletic.” With her declaration that, “Being beautiful and being a woman is something to be celebrated,” seems to imply that when women are on the field and fulfilling their role as an athlete they are not necessarily women, but when they come “off the field” female athletes need to remember that they are indeed women and therefore need to shed the “sweats” and “the rough-and-tough mentality” (Ewert, 2010, March, p. 14). In other words, women need to act like women and not “manly” in order to assure themselves and others that they are not lesbians.

Knight and Giuliano (2003) have termed this issue that almost all women in sports face the “image problem.” The “image problem” is the myth that being a female athlete, especially a successful athlete, automatically calls into question one’s sexuality, or the presumption that all female athletes because of their masculine qualities are more likely to be lesbian. In order to ward off such suspicions female athletes’ femininity is often emphasized in media representations. Building off the work of Kane (1996), Knight and Giuliano argue that “Because femininity is often used as a proxy for heterosexuality, the media can implicitly or covertly ‘assure’ their audience that female athletes are heterosexual through coverage and photographs that portrays these women in a ‘heterosexy’ manner” (2003, p. 273). FSU’s website make-over is a clear example of how female athletes, coaches, and financially invested parties, such as team managers or owners, navigate the “image problem.” Circumventing the “image problem” is

beneficial for financial investors in women's sports because athletes perceived as heterosexual are viewed in a more favorable light than those perceived as homosexual (Knight and Giuliano 2003).

In this way, the "Bold and Beautiful" article points to the widespread homophobia that exists within the sports world especially in women's sports. The article also reflects the Christian doctrine against homosexuality, which often results in homophobia within conservative evangelical communities such as FCA. Within my sample, homosexuality is referred to five times, and four of those times it is within the context of women's sports.¹⁵ In this regard, FCA is reinforcing the idea that gender and sexuality always coincide. In other words, FCA is not concerned that male athletes are gay, because they are assumed to be inherently masculine, but because women in sports have to embody masculine qualities, there is fear that they could be or could become lesbians. Within mainstream media female athletes need to appear heterosexual in order to appeal to men, in a Christian context, FCA needs to remind female athletes that they can be, or need to be feminine, and not always "'athletic' off the field" for religious purposes. Athletic being a stand in for lesbian and feminine for straight.

"Strong, yet submissive...": Securing Traditional Gender Roles in the Family

Within the "Bold and Beautiful" FCA is not only encouraging female athletes to remain feminine, or straight, but they are also encouraging a certain type of heterosexuality—one based

¹⁵ These numbers reflect the number of times I found homosexuality referenced, within and without my sample. There may have been more references since I did not look at every single issue or article.

on traditional gender roles in Christian families. One female athlete, Allison Whitworth, when asked what it means to be a godly woman states,

“Proverbs 31 gives the description of a godly wife, but it can apply to all women. [...] The woman is trustworthy, meaning she will do what she says and what is given to her will be done well, even the things she doesn't enjoy. She works...hard. She is intelligent, analytical, practical, talented, generous, fearless and wise. I want to be this woman! Everything she does is successful. She gives to others out of her blessings.” (Ewert, 2010, March, p. 12)

By stating that this Bible verse can apply to all women, although it is only describing a “godly wife,” automatically assumes that all women should either strive to be wives or at least act like wives. The verse itself and Whitworth’s paraphrasing describes a very busy woman, who is constantly taking care of others, especially her children and husband. Although the verse itself does not state that women should be submissive to their husbands, the implication is that women should always be taking care of others and only emitting selflessness. Another female athlete states that a “godly woman” is “strong, yet submissive; confident, yet humble. The examples of godly women in the Bible were faithful and obedient” (Ewert, 2010, March, p. 12).

It is clear that women, and in turn wives, must be all things to everyone or in a sense have to be super-women. However, these women are athletes, which means they must excel and work hard at their sport, which requires embodying certain “manly characteristics,” and they must fulfill the traditional roles that women, and wives, are expected to fill such as being submissive, humble, and obedient. On the other hand, for women being an athlete and being competitive does not make them less faithful Christians and it does not mean they are less of a woman and certainly not less beautiful. The mixed message that this article relates is represented pictorially

as well. Figure 6 is a two page spread within the issue and features several female athletes competing in a number of different sports. All of the athletes are actively competing in their sport, demonstrating their talent, strength, and even embodying masculine characteristics. However, what is not evident from Figure 6, because the image is black and white, is that the grey ribbon behind the athletes is bright pink. Furthermore, the Bible verse that reads across the bottom of the page reads “a woman who fears the Lord is to be praised” (Ewert, 2010, March, pp. 16-7). Because these female athletes are breaking with traditional femininity, FCA needs to reinforce traditional femininity with the pink ribbon and the Bible verse reminding women to fear God.

Privileging the Role of Father and Male Leadership in the Home

Just as female athletes within the *FCA Magazine* remain tied to traditional gender roles within the family, men also are encouraged to maintain heterosexual and traditionally masculine roles with their household. There are several examples throughout my sample of male athletes being represented as fathers and husbands and in turn taking the role as leader of their family. However, one example is especially poignant for its close proximity to the “Bold and Beautiful” article in 2010, but also because of the strong statement it makes about godly fathers. In January/February of 2007 an article appears entitled “Turn to Me: Why Men Today Desperately Need Their Father”—father here referring to both human fathers and God the Father. The article begins with a list of statistics detailing the consequences of families and relationships not having a father present and how men in general are failing to live godly lives. For example, domestic violence and pornography addiction, are described as linked to divorce and children growing up with behavioral problems (Burns, 2007, Jan/Feb, p. 28). The author goes on to provide several

quotes from best-selling Christian author John Eldrege, author of *Wild at Heart* (2001). Eldrege writes,

“What we have now is a world of uninitiated men [...] Partial men. Boys mostly, walking around in men's bodies with men's jobs and families, finances and responsibilities. The passing on of masculinity was never completed, if it was begun at all. That's why most of the us are Unfinished Men. And therefore unable to truly live as men in whatever life throws at us. And unable to pass on to our sons and daughters what they need to become whole and holy men and women themselves.” (qtd. in Burns 2007, Jan/Feb, p. 29)

Later in the article Eldrege emphasizes that only a man can pass on masculinity to his son, no matter how caring his mother is or supportive his community, “the only place he is going to get what his soul needs is from another man” (Burns 2007, Jan/Feb, p. 31). This article firmly reinforces heterosexual relationships and the primary position of men within the home. Male children must have their fathers in order to become better men, and fulfill the needs of their soul. Although we saw in 2010 that women should maintain a certain level of femininity and submissiveness or at least busyness within the home, their position within the family is not presented as vitally as fathers are within this article. “Turn to Me” urges men to take their role as fathers seriously and the consequences of men failing to do so are presented as dire.

Similar to the “Bold and Beautiful” article of 2010, traditional genders roles within the family are reproduced at the same time as hegemonic masculinity is disrupted. In particular Eldrege focuses on the need for men to communicate and foster fellowship and friendship with other men. Eldrege calls men to turn their hearts to God and let God mold them and their desires. In other words, men are to submit not just their actions, but their emotions to God and form close

connections with God and men in order to remain faithful. Instead of the stoicism that is associated with hegemonic masculinity, value is placed here on expressing emotions, communication, and meaningful relationships, just as we saw with male athletes.

Conclusion

Although presentations of gender with the *FCA Magazine* are not simply one-dimensional, they do ultimately reinforce stereotypes of sexuality in sport. The magazine presents various options for women and men in how to perform their gender and in turn promotes a complex view of what it means to be an athlete. However, when it comes to sexuality there remains only one box, similar to that of the sports industrial complex. In the next chapter, I will demonstrate further how women within the *FCA Magazine* not only maintain femininity, but also uphold traditional gender roles within the family. However, I also argue that women gain authority and agency by giving advice about dating and romantic relationships and through women-only advice columns or articles. Furthermore, the next chapter examines how men uphold traditional gender roles within the family at the same time they break with hegemonic masculinity by taking on feminine qualities such as nurturance, gentleness, and care.

Chapter 3: The Ripple Effect?: Gender Roles “Off the Field” as Represented in the *FCA Magazine*

This chapter examines the stories and practical advice given to the *FCA Magazine*'s readership; I specifically analyze what these texts, written about and for athletes, imply about gender relations and gender roles within the family and church. Although outside of my sample, the December 1993 issue caught my attention because of the eye-catching cover picture. The cover features triathlete Jan Ripple (see Figure 7); she is pictured from the waist up, in uniform—skin-tight swimsuit, visor, and sunglasses. She is actively running, presumably in a triathlon race since she is wearing a racing number and has body markings on her arms. The most striking aspect about this image is not necessarily that she is pictured active, but that her appearance makes it hard to distinguish whether she is a female or male athlete. She has very short hair, her arms are somewhat petite but still visibly toned, and despite the fact that she is wearing a skin-tight jersey, the outline of her breasts are obscured. Even with her name in bold letters beside the picture it is hard to tell whether the name, “Jan Ripple,” refers to this athlete, or another athlete within the magazine. This image in many ways is a prime example of the athletic gender complexity demonstrated by female athletes within the *FCA Magazine*, which I discussed in the previous chapter.

However, looking within the pages of the magazine, at the story of Jan Ripple entitled, “Ripple Effects,” the representation of her gender becomes less complex. Her role as a mother is emphasized by the depicted family dynamics and reinforced by accompanying pictures of her family. Ripple's roles as a mother and wife are foregrounded despite her status as a famous athlete within the triathlon community. In 1989, she was the second female to finish the World Championship Hawaii Iron Man Triathlon, with a dramatic ending crawling to the finish line as the first place female competitor passes her for the win. This image was captured and is often

replayed by ABC's *Wide World of Sports* and is used to symbolize the "agony of defeat" (Drollinger, 1993, Dec, p. 5). However, within the article, her husband Steve is quick to point out that he does not see the image of his wife crawling to the finish line as the agony of defeat but the "agony of effort" as it was a "victory for Jan to complete the race!" (Drollinger, 1993, Dec, p. 5). In other words, her husband is praising her and the amount of effort it took for her to complete the race, as indeed the Hawaiian Ironman is often considered the hardest race on earth.

Later in the article, her husband tells how they take their younger children to the track while Ripple completes her track workouts. He states that he likes his children being able to see their mother "bent over and huffing and puffing" because "they can see that success doesn't come easy. It takes work! Maybe even through an example like that they're going to be able to visualize the effort Jesus puts forth in something like prayer" (Drollinger, 1993, Dec, p. 7). In other words, Steve praises his wife's efforts as an athlete and even wants her to be an example to their children, not only in demonstrating that "success doesn't come easy" but also in demonstrating spirituality and the qualities of Jesus (Drollinger, 1993, Dec, p. 7). Although Jan's athletic gender complexity as demonstrated through her athleticism and hard work are praised throughout the article, as readers we are ultimately reminded that she is feminine, a wife, and in turn not the head of the family.

Despite the couple of references to Jan's athletic accomplishments and abilities, the article is more focused on the Ripple's family life and their counter-cultural lifestyle. For example, they refrain from watching TV, they de-value "worldly" success, and spend more time together as a family, supporting each other (Drollinger, 1993, Dec, p. 6). The article does not focus on Jan's athletic ability or accomplishments as the front cover suggests. Instead the article begins by describing Steve's athletic background before moving on to describe Jan's fame and

athleticism. Steve is the first one quoted in the article and he emphasizes the importance of family values and teaching their children to be leaders who give back to society. He goes on to state that, “leadership starts by example, and that example starts with the parent. I believe it even starts with the father. America is in need of real men who walk with strength and integrity” (Drollinger, 1993, Dec, p. 6). Jan also reinforces male leadership within their family, by crediting Steve’s leadership abilities for holding the family together. She describes him as the spiritual leader, reminding them to pray and keep their priorities as a family in check. In other words, Jan takes second chair when it comes to leading the family and upholding their religious values. Also, despite the androgynous cover picture of Ripple, her femininity and role as a mother are highlighted by the pictures scattered throughout the article. Two in particular feature Ripple with longer, blonde hair, wearing more feminine attire, smiling, and surrounded by her children.

This article on Jan Ripple and her family is a perfect example of how female athletes in the *FCA Magazine* do not fit neatly within traditional femininity when it comes to their sport and athleticism. But this article also demonstrates how despite the gender complexity presented by female athletes, women within the magazine most often conform to traditional gender roles within the home, fulfilling primarily supportive roles as mothers and wives. In other words, women breaking with gender norms in one area, such as sports, does not necessitate a ripple effect on their interpersonal and communal lives as Christian believers. Adding further complexity, this article presents a husband and father who, although assumes a leadership position within the home, does not fit neatly into hegemonic masculine ideals. As a father and husband, Steve is highly supportive and caring of his children and his wife’s athletic goals. He is also highly involved in family life and serves as the spiritual leader for the family, roles that situate fathers outside of hegemonic masculine norms. This chapter, therefore, examines how

gender roles are performed “off the field,” in the families, churches and FCA communities of Christian athletes.

Evangelicals and Changing Gender Roles

Gender roles within evangelical families and churches began to change with families' increased dependence on two incomes. Therefore, the debates that raged in the 1970s between fundamentalists, such as James Dobson and Susan Foh, and Biblical feminists, gave way to actual changes in language, attitudes, and behaviors of evangelical families and communities in the 1980s and 1990s (Gallagher 2003; Bartkowski 2001). When analyzing the *FCA Magazine* as a form of evangelical literature, I expected to find a similar pattern in how gender roles are discussed from the 1970s through the 1990s. However, I found that as a sports magazine, *FCA Magazine* is not particularly concerned with debates over the interpretation of scriptures. Rather the magazine is primarily concerned with offering its readers practical advice based on Biblical principles that are presented through stories of real athletes' personal struggles with living a Christian life as athletes.

In the last chapter, I argued that the representations of female and male athletes break the mold of traditional femininity and hegemonic masculinity. In this chapter, I will argue that although there is a large degree of gender complexity presented within the *FCA Magazine*, men and women remain firmly within the masculine and feminine gender boxes through their actual or assumed heterosexual relationships. In other words, the main strategy that is used to uphold traditional femininity and hegemonic masculinity is the family and heterosexual romantic relationships. By presenting men and women as fathers, mothers, and spouses, readers are reminded that “off the field,” female athletes in particular, must fit firmly within their respective

gender box by fulfilling these roles that continue to be informed by conservative and essentialist beliefs about gender.

However, despite their reliance on essentialist understandings of gender within the family and heterosexual relationships, I will also demonstrate in this chapter how men and women also break with gender essentialism in order to navigate or negotiate their familial relationships and position within FCA. Men are not simply restricted to the role of distant, authority figure, and women are not simply relegated to the home without any power or influence on family and community life. Instead, similar to the range of gender possibilities available for male and female athletes “on the field,” the roles of men and women “off the field,” as represented in the *FCA Magazine*, also provide Christians with a range of possibilities. In particular, as early as the 1970s, FCA was redefining male leadership, as servant-leadership, a transformation that is usually associated with the rise of the Promise Keepers in the 1980s and 1990s. Women are also provided space within the *FCA Magazine* that affords them authority when it comes to addressing women’s issues by providing encouragement, resources, and spiritual guidance to other women.

Therefore, I will first analyze how women fulfill traditional femininity by performing their role as caretakers of children and supporters for their husbands who are often athletes and coaches in FCA. I will also analyze how the gender narratives presented within the magazine are informed by class and race. Then I will move to discuss how men through their roles as fathers and husbands, break with hegemonic masculinity and even take on feminine qualities such as nurturance, gentleness, and care. Finally, I will show how women gain authority and agency by giving advice about dating and romantic relationships and through women-only advice columns or articles.

“Don't expect to be pampered”: Women in the Supportive Roles of Mother and Wife

In the 1970s, women within the *FCA Magazine* predominantly are presented within the role of mother or wife. The first cover story and cover picture of a woman that I discovered features coaches' wives. The article from November 1970, although not a part of my sample, was the first representation of women I came across. The article entitled, “The Wife of a Coach: A Woman for all Seasons,” presents the results of a questionnaire that was distributed to 100 coaches' wives during FCA's summer conferences. The wives' responses are presented in a question and answer format and there are various pictures of women performing domestic work, talking with one another, and cheering on their husbands at athletic events. Throughout the article it is clear that as wives and mothers' the needs of their husbands and children take priority over their own.

For instance, although the article begins on a positive note stating that 95 out of 100 believe that being a coach's wife is exciting because it is “unpredictable,” “rewarding,” and you get fame and recognition, the article quickly moves to discuss the frustrations and challenges that coaches' wives face (Stogsdill, 1970, Nov, p. 12). Some of the challenges mentioned are that their husbands are away from the home, often leaving them with the responsibility of disciplining children and making major decisions by themselves. The wives also feel neglected, resent having to put up with their husbands stress, as well as his busy schedule that frequently conflicts with important family time or special occasions (Stogsdill, 1970, Nov, p. 12). The author recalls that one “loving wife” was so frustrated with the amount of time her husband spent away that she often “threaten to burn down the gym and plow up the playing field” (Stogsdill, 1970, Nov, p. 12). The expectations for these women are clear, as well as their frustration with

having to take the brunt of family responsibilities and placing the needs of their husbands above their own.

The expectations and accompanying frustrations of these coaches' wives becomes even more apparent when the women are asked to give advice to new coaches' wives. Below is a partial list of their responses:

“Physically—

Be as attractive and congenial as possible.

Attend the games and shake hands with a smile.

Practically—

Never touch his clipboard but always know where it is.

Learn to fix late, warmed-up meals.

Don't expect to be pampered too much.

Count on him for as little as possible at home.

Psychologically—

Don't try to change him or interfere with his career.

Don't feel sorry for yourself

Learn how to handle him after a loss.

Expect to be the whipping post after he's had a hard day.

Always treat him as if he were the greatest man alive—even when he's not.

Miscellaneously—

Realize he doesn't love the sport more than you; he loves both but in different ways.

Don't make him choose between you and sports; you might be disappointed in the choice he'd make." (Stogsdill, 1970, Nov, p. 14-15)

This list sets very clear expectations for these women as coaches' wives. They are expected to work around their husband's schedule, his emotions, and support him even when he does not reciprocate. The coach, in other words, is expected to pursue his career unhindered, while his wife stays at home, takes care of the children and other household responsibilities. In essence, women are supposed to deny their own needs and simply learn to cope with their husbands' absences.

The self-sacrifice demanded of women as mothers and wives is also evident when female athletes are presented in these roles. In the July/August issue of 1976, female runner Janell Smith is featured on the cover and the article highlights her career as an outstanding runner and Olympic hopeful. As an athlete, her accomplishments are respected. However, the article starts off by explaining that her husband is an athletic director and coach for a local high school and that the "bulk of her day is spent caring for two pre-school sons" (Stogsdill, 1976, July/Aug, p. 7). She is also said to live in a "plain, white house in a Kansas City, Mo., suburb" where she is "active in her church and FCA" (Stogsdill, 1976, July/Aug, p. 7). Only after these markers of domesticity is she then described as a superb athlete and even compared to the renowned Olympic runner Jim Runyn. The article continues to describe her early running career, which culminates in her attempt to make the Olympic team in 1968. Smith, however, is waylaid by sickness and injury and believes her career to be over. But her husband Mike Carson had other ideas and began to train her for a comeback in the long jump. Just as she starts her training regimen, there is "one problem. Instead of her stomach muscles hardening, she noticed they grew larger, that situps were tougher to perform" (Stogsdill, 1976, July/Aug, p. 7). Smith is pregnant

and her definitive response is “end of comeback” (Stogsdill, 1976, July/Aug, p. 8). Smith however states: “I wasn’t disappointed. I’d always wanted a family and it was finally going to happen. Today my family's my life” (Stogsdill, 1976, July/Aug, p. 8). Despite Smith’s dedication to her sport, she ultimately is happy to trade her life as an athlete to that of a mother. She expresses no regrets of leaving athletics but instead states how grateful she is for the lessons sport has taught her and how she wants to pass the fun aspect of sport down to her sons.

Much like the article began with Smith’s role as a mother the article ends describing her as a mother who has given up her running career in order to raise children. Although it is certainly possible for female athletes to return to competition after having children, of which there are many recent examples, this is not even considered a possibility for Smith. Now that she is a mother, her main responsibility is taking care of her children and abandoning her athletic goals. Although these representations of coaches wives’ and female athletes align with the historical context of evangelical communities in the 1970s, as I will show, the self-sacrifice demanded of wives and mothers, particularly coaches wives’ continues throughout the 1980s, 1990s, and 2000s.

Similar to the 1973 series that focused on family relationships and sports, which I discussed in the previous chapter, the September/October issue of 1980 also features several articles centered on the family. The issue begins with a general article entitled, “A Family Report Card,” giving advice to families and is followed by first-person narratives by five members of the Westering family. Unlike the family oriented articles of the 1970s that only assumed that boys played sports, this issue includes daughters as athletes; however, only one of the three daughters tells her perspective, whereas both of the sons present their stories. Furthermore, like the 1970s articles, the 1980s series also focuses on men as athletes and coaches. Although the

perspectives of the mother and one daughter are represented, their stories center on the husband/father, who is also a football coach, which forces the family to negotiate living with his hectic schedule.

For example, Donna, the mother/wife, shares similar concerns and frustrations with having a coach for a husband, as the coaches' wives in the November 1970 article. She bears the brunt of raising the children and making family decisions. Even Frosty, the husband, admits he was often away and describes how one time he "returned from a recruiting trip and [his wife] lined up all five kids and said, 'Children, I'd like you to meet your dad!'" (Westering, 1980, Sept/Oct, p. 9). Similar to the women in 1970, Donna explains how she enjoys the excitement of going to the games and supporting her husband, despite the fact that her husband is often absent during football season. Donna also describes going through a tough time personally when the children were little and she had the burden of raising them alone most of the time. She explains, "For a while I went through a vacuum so far as my personal growth was concerned because I couldn't be involved in activities I found stimulating" (Westering, 1980, Sept/Oct, p. 10). During this time, Donna was expected to sacrifice her own needs for the sake of her children and support her husband's pursuit of his coaching career.

The daughter also begins her story stating that it was often difficult being the daughter of a coach and that his "hectic schedule" often interfered with other family members' activities. However, like her mother, she also remains positive stating that they ultimately struck a balance and her parents somehow found time to support and attend their own sporting events. Also like her mother, the daughter even apologizes for her dad and talks about how despite his frequent absence, he did often sacrifice to attend her events. For instance she states, "Dad's often concerned that he hasn't been around enough because of his coaching responsibilities. He doesn't

always remember the times he sacrificed to be with us for important occasions and how thrilled we were when he took time to be there” (Westering, 1980, Sept/Oct, p. 15). In other words, not only does she apologize for her father, but she also states how “thrilled” she was when he simply showed up. Her enthusiasm over her dad’s presence is an example of internalized norms for male behavior and how they are often overly praised when they do simple tasks that women do all the time, such as washing the dishes, doing the laundry, or in this case, simply showing up to his daughter’s athletic event.

This type of internalized sexism and unquestioned support of husbands and fathers as coaches continues into the 1990s and 2000s. In January of 1995, the same sentiments that are expressed by the coach’s daughter in 1980 are found in the article entitled, “The Life of a Coach’s Kid.” The article is written by Tracy Teaff, the daughter of Baylor University’s football coach at the time. She explains that her life has revolved around the football season her entire life leading her to refer to her age as 34 seasons old. Teaff describes her enthusiasm for the sport and the Baylor team and recounts how she only missed a “handful of games. Begging, bartering, or borrowing, I managed to make my way to the games” (1995, Jan, p. 27). She also describes the excitement and anxiety she experienced at games and how she “considered [her]self the greatest fan Baylor ever had” (Teaff, 1995, Jan, p. 27). At the end of the article Teaff is sitting with her father, who has recently retired from coaching, and she finally realizes that her enthusiasm and joy for the Baylor team actually stemmed from her undying support for her father and not necessarily the team.

Throughout the article there is no mention of the long hours her father spent away from home or even the role her mother played in her life. The only negative effects of her father being a coach mentioned are being teased by her classmates for her undying support and enthusiasm, as

well as enduring fans' criticism of her father's coaching decisions. Although told from the perspective of a woman, the article simply recounts how this young woman's life revolved around her father's sport and team. No mention is made of her own athletic or career goals and ambitions, or whether her father supported or cheered her on. Not until the end of the article is there a hint that perhaps she did have athletic ambitions of her own growing up. Teaff states at the end, "I have only one regret: I never got to play quarterback for my dad" (1995, Jan, p. 27). In other words, she desired to be an active player, if not in football another sport. As a quarterback for her dad, she perhaps would have received more attention and have been able to develop a closer relationship with her father. Therefore, her statement suggests that she either regrets not spending more time pursuing her own athletic goals as a child or that she wishes she could have spent more time with her father and active participation in football was her only opportunity. Either way, her statement demonstrates the self-sacrifice made by wives and daughters for the benefit of male coaches.

Within the *FCA Magazine* we continue to see women in supportive roles up until contemporary times. For example in June/July 2007 there is an article about a professional baseball player, Adam Wainwright, who discusses his recent status as a father, his faith, and his pitching career. Within this article, we see a representation of a male athlete as a father and husband, but we also get a glimpse of what it means to be the wife of a Christian professional athlete. The baseball player explains how much he appreciates his wife and her support despite the long hours he puts into his career. He even goes as far as to say that because he is gone so much his wife is basically a single mother during baseball season. But he is quick to point out that she is still supportive and even occasionally allows him to get away on the weekends to play golf during spring training.

Wainwright appreciates his wife's support and her role as a mother to their child. He states, "It's nice to know that when you come home, people love you that much and are wanting, and kind of needing, your presence. Jenny respects me as the spiritual leader of the household, and I respect everything she has to say to me" (Ewert, 2007, July/Aug, p. 16). Wainwright's statement clearly delineates their roles as husband and wife—as the wife and mother her job is to stay home and prepare a domestic space where Wainwright can feel comfortable, supported, wanted, and even needed. His role on the other hand is to provide for the family financially and act as the leader of the home despite his extended absences. Wainwright states that he respects his wife's opinions, but there are no examples provided of what that might mean or look like for them as a couple.

Although we do not hear from Mrs. Wainwright, Wainwright's statements present her as nearly the sole caretaker of their child as well as a submissive wife who respects her husband's authority as the "spiritual leader of the household" (Ewert, 2007, July/Aug, p. 16). Clearly, Wainwright and his wife are fulfilling traditional roles within the family; however, Wainwright's status as a professional athlete in many regards makes it possible for them to maintain this conventional gendered lifestyle. Wainwright undoubtedly makes enough money to support his family without his wife having to work.

Race and class narrative of Gender Roles within the Family

The above examples not only reveal the gendered expectations of mothers, wives, and even daughters within the *FCA Magazine*, but they also reveal how these expectations are informed by race and class. All of the examples discussed so far in this chapter are of white, middle-class men and women. Historically, minority women or women from lower economic

classes have not had the privilege of staying at home as mothers or housewives. Because of the economic strain felt by those of the lower class and minorities these women have always had to work in order to help support their families (Amott and Matthaei 1996). Therefore, on one level it follows that the examples of stay-at-home mothers and housewives in the *FCA Magazine* are all white, middle-class women. However, beyond revealing the economic and racial privilege of middle-class white women, the above examples also reveal how narratives about gender roles within the family are influenced by race and class. Using Joe Feagin's (2013) concept of the "white racial frame," I will specifically analyze how FCA presents whiteness as the norm despite its attempts at including people of color. In this way, the gender narratives presented within the *FCA Magazine* reveal how they are informed by larger society's tendency towards white racial framing, which ultimately contributes to racial stereotyping and damaging narratives about race, religion, gender, and the family. FCA is certainly not alone in presenting narratives that are created by and for the benefit white people; mainstream media representations of sport also highlight the intersections of race, gender, and class.

Joe Feagin (2013), defines the "white racial frame" as an

"[O]verarching white worldview that encompasses a broad and persisting set of racial stereotypes, prejudices, ideologies, images, interpretations and narratives, emotions, and reactions to language accents, as well as racialized inclinations to discriminate. For centuries now, it has been a dominant and foundational frame from which a substantial majority of white Americans—as well as many others accepting or seeking to conform to white norms and perspectives—view our highly racialized society." (p. 3)

In other words, the white racial frame is a mindset and point of view that helps Americans, particularly white Americans, make sense of themselves and society. The dominant ideology of this frame proclaims that whites are morally good, superior, and sympathetic, while other races are morally bad, inferior, and unsympathetic (Feagin 2013, p. 96-7). This dominant frame of reference is also embedded and overlaps with “class-oriented and patriarchal ways of looking at society,” or what Feagin calls sub-frames (2013, p. 14). These multiple frames of reference are present within the *FCA Magazine* and work to create specific narratives of gender roles within Christian family life.

The first example comes at the end of “The Woman for all Seasons” article of 1970, when one coach’s wife explains how “being a coach’s wife is often wearing [...] But it’s always been rewarding. I think the high point was when one of our black players, who had tragically lost his own parents and a set of foster parents, came over on Mother’s Day with a card for me. In one word the ‘best part’ would be ‘giving.’ The returns are a hundredfold” (Stogsdill, 1970, Nov, p. 17). Here the mother and coach’s wife is encouraged by the positive influence she has had on one of the black players, which is demonstrated by the Mother’s Day card. Although there is nothing particularly racist about her statement, it does reveal how she sees her role as “giving” to her husband’s players, and in particular to black players, who are presumably in need of the most help. Within mainstream media representations, racial minorities, and specifically black people, are most often depicted as victims or in need of help from white people. This coach’s wife statement, although perhaps well-meaning, reinforces the idea that racial minorities are always in need of helping or saving and reveals the confidence with which white, middle-class mothers

often take on the role of savior. The 2009 film, *The Blind Side*, is a more recent example of how this narrative continues to circulate in popular media.¹⁶

Class also informs the ways in which gender is constructed within the *FCA Magazine*. Throughout the 1980s article series on the Westering family, going to college is emphasized as a priority within the family and it is even discussed as a foregone conclusion that the children will go to college. Mrs. Westering also mentions having a “neat part-time job” and enjoys taking her daughter out to lunch and shopping (1980, Sept/Oct, p. 11) The fact that Mrs. Westering calls her job “neat” suggests that she does not take the work too serious or that it is not necessary for her family’s well-being. Also, the fact that she is able to take her daughter out to lunch and shopping reveals, that the Westerings have all the trappings of a middle-class family. Therefore, the ideal of stay-at-home mothers and wives who unquestioningly support their husbands, as demonstrated by the “Wives of all Seasons” article in 1970, the Westerings in 1980, and even the Wainwrights in 2007, is an ideal that is predicated on certain racial and class privileges.

Besides ideal gender roles being established through racial and class privileges, there are also racialized overtones in the way black mothers and fathers are presented verses white mothers and fathers. The most significant differences surface when looking at spiritual leaders within the family. Of the 15 mothers demonstrating faith or spiritual leadership within the family, seven of those are black, while eight are white. As mentioned in the previous chapter, black women only make up 25% of all women within the magazine, while the remaining are

¹⁶ *The Blind Side* tells the story of a homeless black high school football player who is taken in by a white family and eventually goes on to play in the NFL.

white women.¹⁷ Therefore, these numbers are significant in that they demonstrate an over representation of black women as spiritual leaders. Furthermore, when it comes to fathers the numbers are reversed—out of the 12 fathers who are seen demonstrating faith or spiritual leadership in the home, only four are black and eight are white. Although these numbers do not tell the whole story, they do reveal one way in which *FCA* presents a white racial frame of reference about black families. This racial narrative presents black women as more capable or more “natural” spiritual leaders and black men as predominantly absent as spiritual leaders within the home.

There are certainly examples of black fathers fulfilling their role as leaders of the family. But in general these numbers suggest that the *FCA Magazine* is more comfortable presenting a white baseball player, such as Adam Wainwright, as the spiritual leader of the family, instead of a white woman or a black man. In the previous chapter, I argued that black female athletes are presented as more aggressive, more masculine, and paving the way for white women to enter traditionally masculine sports such as basketball. In a similar manner, the *FCA Magazine* is contributing to a stereotypical racial narrative, by presenting black women as “natural” spiritual leaders within the home, while white women supposedly unquestionably submit to their husbands’ spiritual leadership. In this way, black women again are seen taking the lead in breaking with traditional gender norms, only this time within the home. Although black women’s leadership within evangelical churches has been much more accepted and normalized than white women’s leadership (Butler, 2007), by upholding this dichotomy *FCA* is pigeon-holding men

¹⁷ Races and ethnicities, other than white and black, are almost completely absent from the magazine.

and women based on race and gender and ultimately presenting a limited range of possibilities for black men and women as mothers, fathers, and spiritual leaders. I do not want to suggest that FCA is intentionally engaging in racist narratives or stereotyping. According to their website, as a Christian interdenominational organization, FCA values integrity, service to others, and “unity in Christ” through relationships with others (“Mission and values,” par. 14-18). However, the insidiousness of the white racial frame in American society is revealed through the *FCA Magazine* by the fact that despite FCA’s good intentions, the patterns I have discovered reveal the ways in which the institutionalized and pervasive racism of the larger culture infiltrates sub-cultures such as FCA.

Redefining Fatherhood and the Patriarchal Christian Family

While women, especially white women and coaches’ wives, are presented in the primarily traditional gender role of supporting mother and spouse, men on the other hand break with hegemonic masculine ideals when it comes to their roles within the family. Although men are primarily seen as leaders of the family, they also demonstrate care, love, and attention for their families, which works to undermine hegemonic masculinity as the ideal for evangelical men. Ultimately, patriarchy is still upheld within the family, however, men are presented as leading with gentleness and kindness, and not through strength or coercion as might be expected from evangelical masculinity. In the previous chapter I argued that the “on the field” versus “off the field” expectations for male athletes are different, and that “on the field” male athletes are allowed to perform hegemonic masculinity by demonstrating aggression and competitiveness. In this chapter, I argue more specifically that the “off the field” roles of fathers and husbands, gives

male athletes an avenue to break with the hegemonic masculine norms of sport and express what are typically seen as feminine characteristics.

The redefining of masculinity and men's role within the family is not a new phenomenon within evangelical communities. This shift has been well documented in evangelical men's organizations such as the Promise Keepers (PK) (Bartkowski 2003; Newton 2005; Silverstein et. al. 1999). PK, founded in 1991, began in order to foster men's more active engagement in family life. Silverstein et. al. (1999) explains how the founder Bill McCartney believed that "the majority of men, himself included, have focused too intensely on their work lives, and have given up responsibility in their families. His message exhorts men to take back the mantle of responsibility as leader of the family" (p. 667). In this way, PK encourages men to remain the spiritual leaders and head of their households, but they are to trade in authoritarian or distant fathering practices for an active role in family life and emotional accessibility. Although PK began in 1991, I argue that this leadership style, which is often called "servant leadership" (Bartkowski, 2003), began to be promoted within FCA beginning in the 1970s. During this time the women's rights movement was gaining ground and according to the *FCA Magazine*, the movement was causing gender roles to be confused. However, instead of falling back on hegemonic masculinity in order to bolster patriarchal authority, FCA called for redefining what it means for men to lead, and even what it means to be a man.

The first example of this shift in male leadership or authority comes in July/August of 1977 in the article "Called to Serve." The author begins by calling attention to the anxiety many men are feeling because of the women's rights movement. He writes: "Some men feel that if women are treated with greater respect, men will be automatically demeaned. 'Being a Man' is more than resisting the women's rights movement, though" and the author wants to allieve the

fears of men as their “self-identity is being threatened” (Conway, 1977, July/Aug, p. 24). From the onset this article has the potential for simply reinforcing hegemonic masculine ideals of men taking charge and asserting their manhood in stereotypical ways. However, the article continues in a different tone and direction. The author describes two kinds of leadership, one that is coercive and forceful and another that is based on sharing a “vision” and a “burden” that “ignites in the followers the same concern that the leader has” (Conway, 1977, July/Aug, p. 24). This type of leadership is championed by the author and he argues that men should learn their own strengths and weaknesses as well as those of their followers in order to make decisions about what is best for everyone. The author also states that men should learn the skill of decision making and ultimately model the leadership style of Jesus.

While there is nothing unique about the author’s statements so far, the author continues to emphasize men’s need for sensitivity and an attitude of service. The author writes, “Sometimes as a young man struggles for self-identity in the world of women’s liberation, he rejects sensitivity as being a female trait. [...] Unfortunately some men feel that to be real men they must be served rather than to serve” (Conway, 1977, July/Aug, p. 24-25). However, the author argues that men should again model themselves after Jesus who is described as being sensitive and caring to others in the Bible. Calling men to lead with sensitivity and through serving others, the author is ultimately not disrupting the importance of male leadership but rather emphasizing its importance. By addressing men’s fears and anxieties about their masculinity the author is directly speaking to a male audience, even though at the time women were beginning to be incorporated into the organization and magazine. The author ends by stating, “It is true that the roles of men and women are confused today and there are not many good models for young people to follow. That is why it is important to use Christ as a pattern” (Conway, 1977,

July/Aug, p. 25). In this way, the author is affirming that the women's rights movement is a menace to the church by confusing gender roles. But instead of discussing women's place in the church or family, FCA focuses on how men should react to women's confusion by learning the correct and a Christ-like form of masculinity, which will in turn make them better leaders.

Along with redefining male leadership as servant-leadership, there is also an emphasis in the magazine on men prioritizing family and their spirituality over their careers. Just as men leading through service, involvement in family life is also a teaching that PK began to emphasize in the 1990s. However, throughout my sample, beginning in 1970s and continuing into the 2000s, men are seen reevaluating their involvement in the family. An article in January of 1973 focusing on the father-son relationship, explains that men should spend more time doing things with their sons instead of simply watching TV together. Furthermore, the author encourages fathers to be emotionally available for their sons and foster open communication with them (Hall, 1973, Jan, p. 8-9).

Throughout the *FCA Magazine* fathers are always encouraged to maintain an active role in their families despite their busy schedules. In January/February of 1982 an article entitled, "Misplaced Priorities," reveals a coach admitting to placing his job before his family. Written from a first person perspective, Coach Sparks describes how he used to place too much emphasis, including his self-worth, on his career, particularly his team's win-loss record. He states that, "There's no question in my mind that Satan's making an all-out attack on families today. He's using coaches like me who are sometimes so eaten up with our egos we try like crazy to meet the world's standard of success" (1982 Jan/Feb, p. 26). This coach then has had to learn to put his ego aside and trust God to help him place his spiritual well-being and family before his coaching and career. Coach Sparks even demonstrates humility in the article by

owning up to the fact that he often fails at keeping his priorities straight. Despite showing an example of a man making an honest attempt to be involved in his family and demonstrating humility—actions that undermine hegemonic masculine authority—this article ultimately reinforces the major role men have within the family. As the author states, Satan is attacking families and it is the man’s job to step up and protect his family. In this way, masculine authority is still upheld within the family, just as male leadership within the church is maintained.

FCA’s stress on the importance of active fathering continues in the *FCA Magazine* into the 2000s. In June/July 2009 there is an article entitled, “Championship Fathering,” which not only illustrates how FCA brings masculinity into the domestic realm by focusing on fathering, but also demonstrates how FCA erases real issues of racism in order to address the gendered issues of fathering. The article features Carey Casey, the CEO of the National Center for Fathering, which according to their website is dedicated to addressing the perceived widespread absence of fathers within families or what they have dubbed the “fathering crisis” (“Letter from the CEO,” 2015, par. 5). Casey is one of the few black leaders featured in the *FCA Magazine*, but his presence and FCA’s representation of him shows how FCA sidesteps issues of race in order to stress the importance of fathers and masculinity.

For instance, in “Championship Fathering” Casey discusses the important role his own father has played in his life. He tells how as a child, his father made him get on the bus to go to FCA camp despite the fact that all of the other children were white and it was at a time of “racial turmoil” (Ewert, 2009, June/July, p. 22). Later in the article, Casey talks about watching his father respond “with dignity” when he was called racial slurs (Ewert, 2009, June/July, p. 24). Through his father’s example he was able to respond in a similar manner when he was golfing at a “high-class course” and another golfer approached him asking him to carry his clubs (Ewert,

2009, June/July, p. 24). The man approached him, thinking he was a caddy, despite the fact that he was dressed in “‘Tiger Woods duds’ and looked every bit the part of a man about to hit the links” (Ewert, 2009, June/July, p. 24).

With both of these stories FCA is de-emphasizing the structural and systemic aspects of racism and simply representing racism as individual behaviors or attitudes. Furthermore, Casey’s stories reveal how the white racial frame is used not only by white American’s, but also “many others accepting or seeking to conform to white norms and perspectives” (Feagin, 2013, p. 3). The first story de-emphasizes racism entirely by Casey failing to mention any struggles he may have had as the only black athlete in FCA, or how his father may have helped him navigate difficult situations. Instead, Casey focuses on what is assumed to be racial harmony, at least within FCA, by simply stating that his father made him get on the bus full of white athletes. Casey’s second story focuses on one act of racism that happened to him and how he responded, with “dignity,” instead of lashing out in anger, which he learned from his father. Race relations, or racial tensions, are also de-emphasized in this story by Casey failing to mention the race of the man who asked him to be his caddy. It is hard to imagine someone other than a white man asking a black man dressed in “Tiger Woods duds” to be their caddy. But in order to avoid implicating white people in racial oppression, Casey leaves out the man’s race as well as the larger picture of institutional racism and how fathering may be impacted by a society embedded with racism.

Casey’s stories, which are told from a white racial frame, are mediated through the *FCA Magazine*, which certainly influences how he relates his past. FCA does not provide statistics on the racial demographics of its members, however, the leadership and staff of FCA are

overwhelmingly white.¹⁸ Therefore, Casey, who himself was on staff with FCA, knows his audience and most likely knows how to negotiate his racial identity around the feelings of white people. Focusing on the individual actions of a few “bad” people is the most tactful way for Casey to tell of his childhood and the lessons he learned from his father because this coincides with the dominant white racial frame that attributes racism to only the actions of a few “evil whites” (Feagin 2013, p. 106).

Focusing on individual actions to address racism is also a common strategy of PK. Along with redefining masculinity, one of PK’s goals is to foster racial reconciliation among men. PK has made antiracism central to its mission by making “antiracism a defining feature of being a ‘godly man’” (Newton, 2005, p. 241). PK is unique as an evangelical group in asking it’s mostly white, middle-class members to consider racial reconciliation central to their manhood. However, Newton (2005) points out that by focusing on cross-racial relationships and individuals’ acknowledgement of how they have contributed to racism through their own attitudes or actions, PK fails to address racism on a larger and institutional level. In this way, FCA parallels PK’s attempt at redefining masculinity and addressing racism at the level of individual actions; however, the examples above suggest that both organizations, intentional or not, end up reinforcing male authority and the racial status quo on the institutional level. A direct connection between FCA and PK’s is not made within the magazine until 1996 when there is a special issue with the lead article featuring Bill McCartney, the founder of PK. However, even with this special issue the matters of gender and race are almost entirely overlooked. Instead, as a

¹⁸ This information was related to me through an interview with someone high up in FCA leadership. They told me this in the context of the organization wanting to increase the racial diversity of their staff.

whole the articles within this issue points more to how FCA's failure to address gender roles gives women space to break with traditional gendered expectations.

From the beginning of the lead article entitled, "A Yielded Heart," it is clear that this issue's purpose is not to simply promote PK or their ideology, but rather to show how McCartney was influenced by his ties to FCA. The article explains that McCartney was on his way to an FCA banquet in 1990 when "God gave McCartney the idea of men filling stadiums for Christ's glory" (Greer, 1996, Special Issue, p. 6). Absent from the article is any mention of PK's beliefs about male leadership or the need for men to prioritize family over career. Instead the article simply recounts McCartney's conversion story and how his conversion influenced him to quit his job as a head coach and start PK.

Although with this issue FCA is closely associating with PK and McCartney's vision of male discipleship, FCA is also remaining rather neutral on issues of gender within the church and family. The same issue also features articles on female athletes and the female athletic director, Joan Cronan of the University of Tennessee, who also serves on the board of trustees for FCA. She is even described as helping FCA create a "case statement and strategy" for including more women in FCA and meeting the needs of female staff. The article also mentions that she is a deacon for her church. With this issue, FCA is in a precarious position, not wanting to exclude or offend any of their readers, but especially their female readers. By honoring McCartney and PK, without trying to sell PK's gender ideology, as well as honoring the various leadership roles of Joan Cronan, FCA is most likely attempting to appeal to women by offering them various roles to play within the organization.

However, this is not to imply that women are given authority over men in the organization or their families. Ten years earlier, in the January/February issue of 1987, there is

an in-depth article featuring the Women's Ministry Director of FCA. The article includes an "FCA Female Factsheet" that describes the process of women becoming included in FCA listing important dates as well as numbers and percentages that show the increase in women's involvement (Larson, 1987, Jan/Feb, p. 16). Overall, the article is celebrating women's involvement in FCA and the Women's Director discusses the various challenges she faces in trying to get more female staff in FCA and supporting female athletes. The director even points out the structural challenges women face as coaches, such as family demands, and criticizes FCA for not prioritizing the hiring of more female staff. However, the Women's Director is explicit about women's leadership in the church and states that female staff do not have "Biblical authority over those they serve" (Larson, 1987, Jan/Feb, p. 16). She states that the purpose of FCA staff, male or female, is to provide support and service to coaches and athletes as opposed to Biblical teaching. Therefore, "leadership shouldn't even be an issue" (Larson, 1987, Jan/Feb, p. 16).

Despite the claim that women's leadership is not an "issue" within FCA, the fact that women are primarily seen fulfilling traditional gender roles as mothers and wives does suggest that women's leadership in reality is an "issue." Within the magazine, FCA still upholds the idea that women should be submissive to their husbands, or at least provide them unquestioned support for their careers as athletes and coaches. Although there are examples, such as Joan Cronan, of women in leadership positions, FCA reinforces the traditional evangelical belief that women as leaders in the church should not have authority over men. In other words, within the *FCA Magazine* women are seen as submissive wives and mothers, who are rarely portrayed as preachers or teachers within the church. However, this is not to suggest that women do not have any power or authority within FCA. In the next section I will analyze two ways that women

within the *FCA Magazine* are given authority and a voice within the organization—1) by providing advice about dating or romantic relationships to both men and women; and 2) ministering specifically to other women through women-only editorials.

Women Gaining a Voice and Authority

As early as 1975, women in the *FCA Magazine* are respected for their wisdom and knowledge of navigating dating and romantic relationships. In May of 1975 an article entitled, “The Other Woman: A Thinking Man’s Look at the FCA Volunteer,” is written from the perspective of a male FCA volunteer who talks about how he became overinvolved with FCA. He began to spend too much time away from his family, so much so that his wife complained that it was like he had another woman in his life. Even when his FCA Huddle began to meet in their home, he states, “I immediately assumed the glamorous roles of group discussion leader, friend and confidant” (Savage, 1975, May, p. 13). His wife on the other hand was “assigned the jobs of typist, cook and cleaning woman. She sat on the steps and listened to our meetings but it never occurred to [him] to invite her to participate—even on ‘ladies night’ when the guys bring dates” (Savage, 1975, May, p. 13). However, the husband soon realizes his mistake and began asking his wife to share a “Christian woman’s perspective on interpersonal relationships as they relate to dating and marriage” with the huddle members and their girlfriends (Savage, 1975, May, p. 13). On one level this article, by comparing this man’s FCA involvement to “the other woman,” and by emphasizing his wife’s gift of giving relationship advice, is simply reinforcing gender essentialist beliefs of men as natural cheaters and women as naturally better at communication and relationships. However, as early as 1975, FCA presents women as having an important role within FCA—to lead young men and women in regard to romantic relationships.

This trend continues throughout the 80s and 90s. The May/June issues of both 1981 and 1982 focus on “Dating” and “Lust” respectively. In both of these issues there are articles by women giving advice on dating in a godly manner. For example in May/June of 1981, coed Holly Kelly gives advice to young people about dating as a Christian. She answers questions about what to look for in a date, what types of activities she likes to do on dates, what Christian couples should avoid, and if it is okay for Christians to date non-Christians (1981, May/June, p. 6-7). In May/June of 1982, there are even more articles written by women who are combating the stereotype that only men struggle with lust. For example, one woman mentions her appreciation of a “well-muscled male body, especially swimmers” and one way she deals with lust is through athletics and exhausting herself physically (Porter, 1982, May/June, p. 13). Another female athlete in this issue talks about how some of her teammates bring *Playgirl* along on road trips, but she avoids the temptation by reading Christian books and listening to Christian music (McKibbin, 1982, May/June, p. 7).

These examples show that FCA is not simply relying on a male perspective when discussing issues of dating and lust. These examples also reveal that as early as the 1970s and 1980s women are given a voice and even authority in terms of how to handle dating and romantic relationships. By sharing their own experiences with dating and handling lust, their opinions and strategies are respected and held up as instructive for their peers. In this way FCA, through the *FCA Magazine*, is providing a space for these young women to gain voice and authority, at least among their peers. Older, married women are also seen having a voice and respected authority when it comes to dating and relationships.

One revealing example in February of 1991, is an interview style article with a married couple entitled “Christian Dating.” An important moment in the interview depicts women’s

authority on the issue of relationships and communication. The interviewer asks the man specifically how he balances showing vulnerability by expressing emotions with strength. The man begins his answer by saying that even strong men cry, because all men have weaknesses. Immediately though his wife interrupts him and rebuts her husband's statement as well the interviewer's question by saying that they are assuming that crying and showing emotions are weaknesses. She states that "Crying can be the strongest thing you can do if you're demonstrating you care strongly for something" (King, 1991, Feb, p. 17). She goes on to say that "when a boy is from a family where both the mother and the father are looked up to, a healthy male will develop both sides of his character. And, some traits from his mother are emotion and sensitivity" (King, 1991, Feb, p. 17). Despite the fact that her comments are reinforcing essentialist notions of women being more emotional or more sensitive, her statements and the respect she is given because of them demonstrates how women are respected and their opinions held in high regard. Once the wife makes her statement the husband follows her lead by discussing how men are taught to repress their emotions and have the pressure of fitting into the "Rambo images' society holds up to men as ideals" (King, 1991, Feb, p. 17). Because of his wife's comments, the man reevaluates his own comments and beliefs, therefore, showing how much he respects his wife's opinions.

Another way women are able to gain a voice and respect within the *FCA Magazine* is through women-only advice columns. These editorials are written by women, for women, and provide advice on issues that are salient to women. One specific issue that women address for the benefit of other women is that of eating disorders. Within my sample, there are two different articles (May/June 1990 and June/July 2006), written by women for women, that provide first person narratives about struggling with eating disorders. Both of these articles are meant to raise

awareness about the issue and give resources and encouragement to those dealing with disordered eating. Because this issue primarily affects women and female athletes in particular, women in the *FCA Magazine* are able to have authority about the issue, offering advice and help to other women. For example, the article, “Freedom and Mercy,” from June/July 2006 provides statistics on the prevalence of eating disorders, especially among college female athletes, and a first person account of a woman who overcame her disorder through a women’s specific ministry called Mercy Ministries. The founder and president, Nancy Alcorn, began the organization as a way to minister and provide services to women who have “struggled with everything from sexual abuse and unplanned pregnancies to eating disorders and drug abuse” (Goreham, 2006, June/July, p. 27). Alcorn has also written a book about eating disorders and how women can overcome them with the help of God. The article also includes a first person narrative of a woman who overcame her eating disordering by being a part of Mercy Ministries.

This article, along with the May/June 1990 article are both female spaces that give support, encouragement, teaching, and resources to women. Furthermore, these articles, and others like them, are spaces within the magazine that highlight women’s leadership and women’s ministry to other women and even to men. Following with this theme, January/February of 2003 is the beginning of a three part series called “For Women Only.” Despite the title, the author assures the reader that God does not have a distinct message that only applies to women. Instead, the author states that, “The influence that women have is so powerful that men will be impacted in their walk with Christ when they grab ahold of and live out these truths” (Bustos, 2003, Jan/Feb, p. 29). In other words, women have the power by living a godly life, to influence the men in their lives to also live in a Christ-like manner.

The author of the article begins by stating, “I love everything about being a woman. I am a wife, mother, daughter, sister and friend. Ironically, I am not an athlete in the typical sense of the word” (Bustos, 2003, Jan/Feb, p. 29). Although not an athlete, the author compares her life as a Christian to a race and explains how she exercises and trains her “heart of faith in Jesus Christ through devotion, discipline and perseverance” (Bustos, 2003, Jan/Feb, p. 29). The non-athletic author is attempting to identify with all women, athletes and non-athletes alike. The author continues to explain how throughout her life she has constantly been serving others because of her need for approval from God and others. She uses the Biblical story of Mary and Martha; Mary being the one who sat at Jesus’ feet listening, while Martha was busy serving and feeding the disciples. The author explains how “Many women so identify with Martha that she has become their role model, taking secret pride in their own Christian service. In some circles, if you aren’t bordering on exhaustion due to over commitment, other Marthas actually may look down on you” (p. 29). But the author reminds readers that they should not simply do things to seek approval from others, but rather should stop and take time to listen to God.

The author continues the Mary and Martha theme in the following months and the main message of the entire series is that women should not be busy for the sake of being busy. Instead, women should remember that no amount of good works will save them or win the approval of God, because they already have his approval. She asserts that women should love others and God first and listen to his teachings, using them to figure out where and how to serve him. The author does a good job of focusing on individual women’s need to stop being so busy. But the author fails to address the cultural and structural aspects that necessitate women to do so much. This oversimplification of women’s issues can be seen in the article’s accompanying picture. The picture features a woman, holding a baby while sitting in front of a computer and talking on the

phone, with the caption “Today’s woman finds herself juggling many commitments” (Bustos, 2003, Jan/Feb, p. 29). The woman, instead of a look of desperation or exhaustion, as might be expected from such a busy individual, has a big smile on her face and appears to be enjoying the balancing act. In other words, the author and the article series does not question the concept of women’s work or how these tasks supposedly come natural to women. Relegating female-typed work to women is not unique in the United States, as women still perform more domestic labor than men (Steinberg et al., 2008). However, as Christian women, athletes, and paid laborers outside the home, women in FCA are in a unique position in terms of the numerous roles they are asked to fill. In Chapter five I explore the inter-role conflict created by the gendered demands placed on female athletes and staff in FCA, as they negotiate their positions as paid laborers, athletes, mothers, and wives.

Despite this lack of analysis and even because the overall lessons are broad, this series could easily be applicable to men’s lives. The author provides general advice and writes in an abstract way that men could also find relevant to their faith lives. Even though the female author is given a voice and a sense of authority by speaking directly to women, this series goes beyond simply wanting to have an impact on women. FCA is hoping that women living a Christ-like manner will also have a positive influence on men. Therefore, this series that is targeted at women is ultimately not a gender specific message but is meant to impact both men and women.

Another similar series begins in January/February of 2006 entitled “Behind the Bench” and is written by the wife of FCA’s current President and CEO. The wife, Chris Steckel, begins the series by telling the story of how she met her husband. They played flag football together and her husband went on to become an NFL coach. She writes from the perspective of an insider, knowing what it is like to be a coach’s wife and therefore being able to speak directly to the

needs and challenges of other coaches' wives. Unlike the previous series, "For Women Only" which attempted to appeal to all women, this series is meant to directly address the needs of coaches' wives. Steckel writes, "It is our vision that with this page, encouragers will be encouraged. Bringing features that will motivate you, resources that will equip you, and devotions that will inspire you to take on the challenges of the coaching live" (2006, Jan/Feb, p. 18). At the bottom of the page, there is even an invitation for coaches' wives to contact FCA with suggestions for how this column can best minister to them and what issues they would like to see addressed.

As the column continues, each month it is written by a different coaches' wife. They each share their experiences of supporting their husbands and sons in athletics or even in the military. Each woman shares important lessons she has learned from her experiences as a coach's wife. The coaching profession is described as challenging and unpredictable for couples, but the women ultimately find satisfaction and joy in their position as supporters and encouragers. Although this section in the *FCA Magazine*, much like the "For Women Only" column, is not necessarily pushing traditional boundaries in terms of women's role in the family and church, FCA is providing a space for women to have a role in ministering to other women. With these stories, personal accounts, and teachings, women are respected as experts on living a godly life as a woman and specifically the wife of a coach.

Conclusion: Merging the Identities of Female Athlete and Mother/Wife

As the examples in this chapter demonstrate, for women, the role of athlete is represented as separate and distinct from the roles of mother or wife. On the other hand, the magazine presents male athletes as embodying the roles of father and husband with ease. Within my entire

sample, Ripple from December of 1993, is one of the few female athletes who is also presented as a wife and mother. Between 1993 and 2013 only four female athletes within my sample are mentioned as being married or having children, and not until 2012 is another female athlete said to be a mother. During the same time period, 13 male athletes are represented as fathers and husbands; this is not including the number of male coaches who are also seen as husbands and fathers.

Certainly there are biological and structural reasons for this stark divide—it is physically difficult for professional female athletes to maintain a high level of competitiveness while pregnant, and women are still expected to take the brunt of childcare after giving birth. But one of the results of the dichotomy between the roles of female athlete versus wife and mother is that these roles are seen as completely separate and not influencing one another. Within the *FCA Magazine*, which is a deliberately crafted piece of literature and form of communication within FCA, this separation of the role athlete and mother/wife is evident. However, in the next chapters I will demonstrate how the role of athlete does influence other parts of women's lives and how women's roles as wives and mothers influences their athletic identities.

Chapter 4: “A Beast on the Field and a Princess off the Field”: Navigating Gender, Athletics, and Christianity

In chapter two I argued that female athletes within the *FCA Magazine* are presented with a degree of athletic gender complexity that is not found in mainstream media, and at the same time heterosexuality and traditional gender roles are reinforced within the family. In this chapter, I will first describe the challenges Christian female athletes face as women and Christians, some of which stem from the mixed messages about gender that the *FCA Magazine* presents to female athletes. In the “Bold and Beautiful” article of March 2010, discussed in Chapter two, female athletes are encouraged to be physically strong, competitive, and athletic, while at the same time maintaining grace, beauty, and femininity. However, within this same article, sport is seen as a positive factor for these women, providing an outlet and space for them to demonstrate qualities and skills that they may not be able to express elsewhere in their lives.

In this way, “Bold and Beautiful” showcases how the gendered expectations for female athletes are confusing, demanding, and for some create an “identity crisis.” This “identity crisis,” a phrase used within the article and by one of the FCA staff members I interviewed, is partially related to what J. L. Knight and T. A. Giuliano (2003) have termed the “image problem.” The “image problem” affects almost all women within sport and is the myth that being a female athlete automatically calls into question one’s sexuality, or the presumption that all female athletes because of their masculine qualities are more likely to be lesbian. In order to circumvent this issue, the media and female athletes themselves, often highlight their straightness by performing specific forms of femininity or by referencing their heterosexual relationships.

Consequently, the “image problem” was why Florida State University, and several other college basketball teams, gave their team websites a make-over in 2010; the make-over highlighted their athletes’ femininity through the use of glamorous attire, make-up, and images

that in no way pertained to their athletic talent or accomplishments. The controversy that ensued sparked *FCA Magazine*'s "Bold and Beautiful" article, written as a way to place femininity and sports within a Christian context. How specifically then do Christian athletes, aware of this "image problem" within women's sports, still engage in athletics and even proudly claim the identity of athlete? How do Christian female athletes reconcile the fact they themselves possess masculine qualities—muscularity, strength, speed, leadership, aggression—characteristics of female athletes that continue to fuel fears of homosexuality within women's sports?

I begin by providing some context and background information on the "image problem" in women's sports and how this effects Christian athletes in particular. Then I explain the theories of empowerment I am using to develop my own theory of micro-empowerment. Next I discuss my methods of interviewing and analyzing my interview data. Finally, I address how my interviewees navigate the "image problem" as well as the varied gendered expectations they encounter as athletes and Christians. Because of the "image problem" in women's sports, Christian athletes are encouraged to maintain a certain level of femininity. Yet, keeping a feminine appearance is complicated by what I call the "modesty problem," which necessitates that Christian women not place too much importance on their outward appearance in order to fulfill godly womanhood. Despite these challenges of navigating gender, sport, and their faith, I argue that, like within "Bold and Beautiful," sport has impacted these female athletes positively, teaching valuable skills such as teamwork, discipline, and leadership. I argue that Christian athletes find acceptance, confidence, and affirmation through sport, helping them be successful in other areas of their lives.

Context for Christian Female Athletes' "Image Problem"

In her essay, "Female athlete=lesbian," Karen Peper (1994) analyzes how myth, metaphor, and narrative work to construct the belief that female athletes are lesbians. Peper (1994) defines myth using S. P. Lowry's (1982) work who writes that myths are stories "whose vivid symbols concrete a special perception about people and their world... That they often embody the essence of our experience accounts for their power... [A myth] guides our personal lives, supports or challenges a specific social order, makes our physical world a manageable place, or helps us accept life's mysteries... with serenity" (p. 196). One of the powerful myths or belief systems that guides the lives of my interviewees is their Christian faith. Within this faith system, as well as the overarching narrative of our society, is the division of the sexes. The belief that men and women are fundamentally different is one of the most taken for granted statements in our culture, and within a Christian framework this statement is supported by the belief that God created men and women differently for a godly purpose.

Furthermore, as Peper (1994) points out the division of the sexes is reinforced by the seemingly biological differences between men and women. This sexual division is further compounded by the socially constructed gender roles, masculinity and femininity, roles that are actively maintained throughout our society and culture (Peper, 1994, p. 199). Susan Cahn (1994) in her groundbreaking work on women, sport, and sexuality argues that sport has long been a space where men asserted their dominance through acts of physical strength, speed, and general athleticism. Therefore, sports has and continues to serve as a space to reinforce the biological differences between men and women. Because we continue to live in a patriarchal society, women participating in sport upsets in some ways the gender order, therefore causing mainstream media to highlight the femininity of female athletes in order make them less

threatening and women's sports in general more marketable to a larger audience. Cahn (1994) argues that one way that female athletes have been contained is through the labeling and narratives of lesbianism within women's sports. Homophobia and the narrative of lesbianism continues to circulate within women's sports today. This affects Christian athletes in particular because the larger culture is just beginning to accept lesbians within sport. As more high profile female athletes "come out" as lesbian, this in turn has fueled Christians' fears of lesbianism specifically within women's sports.

Despite this fear FCA has embraced female athletes by encouraging and supporting women's participation in sport. In this way, the identity female athlete does not necessarily equate to a lesbian identity for my interviewees. Peper (1994) explains that this dissonance is made possible by further using theories of myth and metaphor. She writes that "a single concept may have several different metaphorical structurings that are not consistent with one another and therefore provide different interpretations and 'starting points' for a discussion" (Peper, 1994, p. 197). In terms of my interviews, differing "metaphorical structurings" are evident through the athletes connecting lesbianism with women's sports, while at the same time embracing the identity of female athlete as a positive role. Several of the athletes I interviewed discussed being ridiculed growing up because they did not fit the ideal feminine norm. However, this did not stop them from continuing to participate in sport, or as I demonstrate below, find empowerment through the identity of athlete.

Annie Blazer (2015) describes how Christian female athletes in FCA and another evangelical sports ministry, Athletes in Action, are highly aware of the gendered expectations placed on them as women and as Christians. Through a close reading of the devotional text *Experiencing God's Power for Female Athletes: How to Compete, Knowing and Doing the Will*

of God (2000) written by three female sports ministers, Blazer (2015) demonstrates the precarious situation of female athletes. The authors of this text encourage female athletes to celebrate their “female-ness” since God created them to be women for a purpose (Blazer, 2015, n.p. forthcoming). The authors also encourage female athletes to wear feminine clothes and display femininity through physical appearance. Blazer (2015) points out that one of the main purposes for Christian women is to eventually marry a man and possibly produce children who will then become followers of Christ. Therefore, by insisting on femaleness and femininity, these Christian authors are undoubtedly referencing heterosexuality and attempting to deal with the “image problem” of women’s sports.

Blazer (2015) goes on to describe how the Christian female athletes she interviewed, members of FCA and Athletes in Action, combated the “image problem” head on through their clothing choices and use of makeup. Blazer further describes how specific social contexts informed these choices. For example, some of the women she interviewed played on both secular and Christian teams and they reported feeling less pressure to overtly display femininity in a Christian sports context. Blazer (2015) writes that although the gendered tensions remained present in their Christian sport setting, it “provide[d] an environment where the assumption of shared values create[d] a haven from the work of constructing a feminine appearance” (n.p. forthcoming). In other words, these female athletes did not feel the need to prove their heterosexual status on Christian teams because of the assumed heterosexuality on these teams. My interviewees did not talk about maneuvering the “image problem” in this exact way, but it is clear that FCA does provide a “haven” where heterosexuality is a given and homosexuality is condemned. Because of this “haven” and presumption of straightness, these female Christian

athletes are able to circumvent the “image problem,” at least within the context of their Christian organization.

Theory of Micro-Empowerment in Sport: “Power to” in a “Power over” Institution

In order to explain the effects of female Christian athletes’ participation in sport I engage with feminist theories of empowerment. These theories developed as ways to explain how women find meaning and empowerment within sports culture. The affirmative effects of sport on women’s lives has been well documented. As Heywood and Dworkin (2003) point out, since the 1990s sports has been publicized as a solution to issues of self-esteem and body image for girls and young women (p. xix). Today there are several research centers, such as the Tucker Center for Research on Girls and Women in Sport, and non-profit organizations, such as the Women’s Sports Foundation, that are dedicated to “advancing the lives of women and girls through sports and physical activity.”¹⁹ Both organizations are predicated on the belief that sport has inherent qualities that influences women’s lives for the better. Popular media and sport advertising also leverage the idea that sport enhances women’s lives, making them stronger and more confident. For example, one Nike advertisement geared toward the female athlete encourages women to take control saying: “You are entirely up to you. Make your body. Make your life. Make yourself” (Figure 8).²⁰ The message is clear: taking control over your body, will allow you take control of other parts of yourself and your life.

¹⁹ <http://www.womenssportsfoundation.org/home/about-us>

²⁰ <https://www.pinterest.com/pin/185984659588929550/>. I chose this Nike advertisement because of the message conveyed, and because one of the athletes in the ad is Allyson Felix—an Olympic track and field who is a Christian athlete featured in the *FCA Magazine* on multiple occasions.

Academic research also supports the claim that sport can have a positive effect on women providing tools and an identity separate from women's traditional roles as wives and mothers. For example, in her essay, "Tri-ing for Life: The Emergence of the Triathlon Sport Subculture and its Impact upon Changing Gender Roles in North American Society," Granskog (1991) argues that women's participation in triathlon has a positive effect on how women view their gender identity and their bodies. Specifically, Granskog (1991) found that especially for women over 30, which is the majority of women who participate in triathlon, they gained a greater self-esteem and self-confidence, and "above all, an acceptance of one's self and one's athletic capabilities as legitimate dimensions of self separate and distinct from one's relationship to significant others" (p. 439). This sentiment was also expressed by interviewees, with one triathlete explaining that she clung to her sport because it gave her a sense of accomplishment and an identity that was immediately fulfilling, unlike her identities as a mother or wife.

Granskog (1991) and Heywood and Dworkin's (2003) arguments are grounded in the concept of empowerment. Feminist scholars have long wrestled with the theoretical and practical understanding of power and resistance and how women can become empowered in patriarchal societies that actively work to oppress them. Furthermore, liberal feminist sports scholars are often quick to jump to the conclusion that sport is inherently positive for women and can serve as a tool of resistance against these patriarchal structures. Bradshaw (2002) in her essay on empowerment and feminist sport scholarship is critical of feminists' use of the concept of empowerment, specifically in how they apply it to women in sport. Bradshaw discusses empowerment in terms of "power-to" and "power-over." Feminists most often discuss sport as instilling in women a "power-to" in terms of "personal identity: being in control, taking pride in their personal achievements, and having a body that can respond to challenges, is capable and

able” (Bradshaw 2002, p. 7). Therefore, despite the “power-over” wielded through the institution of sport, feminist sport scholars have argued that individuals have found ways to engage within the power structure of sport that provide personal satisfaction, agency, and instill self-worth and value (Theberge, 1987; Hall, 1996; Deem and Gilroy, 1998; Heywood, 2007; Musangeya & Muchechetere, 2012).

However, as my interviews illustrate, and as several other scholars have found, sport enacts specific forms of “power-over,” not only on the female athlete but anyone who engages in the institution of sport. Critical sports scholars have argued that through sport, particular bodies, gender identities, and sexualities are produced and constructed as ideal (Messner, 2007; Hargreaves and Anderson, 2014). Therefore, sport is not separate from society and culture, but is rather an institution in which bodies and identities are socially constructed and often in ways that promote inequality. Furthermore, as Bradshaw (2002) points out, the female athlete’s body is a site of contestation. For example, sport and physical activity is often touted as a means of getting stronger and therefore breaking with traditional forms of femininity. But women also engage in sport and physical fitness in order to conform to traditional Western beauty standards such as slimness. Although couched in terms of health, Dworkin and Wachs (2009) point out that fitness and physical activity are deemed liberating acts by healthcare providers and fitness gurus alike, however, these activities are also “conflated with consuming and bodily self-surveillance” (p. 21). The consumption Dworkin and Wachs (2009) are referring to is that of the multi-billion dollar fitness, weight-loss, and even sport industries, that encourage consumption of consumer goods and services that feed off self-surveillance in order to achieve an ideal body that is supposedly liberating. Sport, with its focus on controlling one’s body, pressures to perform, and perpetuating a specific gender image, it cannot help but be implicated in this project of shaping

female bodies in particular ways. Female athletes often have to contend with these pressures, expectations, and feelings of inadequacy that may lead to disordered eating, low self-esteem, and negative body image. Therefore, the empowerment that sport purportedly provides for women is not a given and is not all encompassing.

Therefore, given the pervasive effects of the power enacted through sport, I do not use the term empowerment as an all-encompassing term, meaning sport has liberated these Christian female athletes from the “power-over” effects of sport. Instead, I use the term micro-empowerment as a way of describing how sport has shifted the way these women view themselves, their capabilities, and self-worth leading to a change in their interpersonal lives. The change could be small and perhaps only noticeable to those close to them. Nonetheless, the micro-empowerment is noticeable to the person involved in sport and they describe it as a positive influence on their lives that brings about change in other areas of their life. It is important to note that micro-empowerment does not necessarily lead to the challenging of the institution of sport or the acquisition of political consciousness that results in active resistance to systems of oppression (Blinde, Taub, & Han 1994). The Christian female athletes I interviewed are still firmly situated within the patriarchal structure of conservative Christianity and to a certain extent still uphold gender hierarchy within their families and churches.

Methods

My interview sample includes 22 women total, 11 FCA female staff members and seven female athletes in FCA Endurance, a sister organization for adults involved in endurance sports such as running, cycling and triathlon, and 4 athletes associated with Tri4Him, a for-profit Christian triathlon organization that includes professionals and amateurs. Of the athletes with

Tri4Him, one was a current professional triathlete, one was a retired triathlete with Tri4Him, one was a retired triathlete who currently coached for Tri4Him,²¹ and one was an amateur triathlete. I include athletes with Tri4Him because Tri4Him has a similar mission as FCA in that they are both evangelical and therefore the athletes have similar religious backgrounds. Out of the seven athletes in FCA Endurance, one was transitioning to being a full-time staff member with FCA and one was also a coach with Tri4Him. In terms of sports, two were marathon runners, and the rest were triathletes. Of the FCA staff members, almost half of them were currently or had been in the past coaches of female athletes in sports ranging from golf, basketball, softball, volleyball, soccer, and tennis.

With my participants I conducted semi-structured, in-depth interviews that lasted between 40-70 minutes. I conducted all but two of the interviews over the phone or through Skype and recorded the interviews with a voice recorder application. Two of the interviews were done in person at the FCA National Support Center in Kansas City, MO. Through the process of interviewing I noted questions that interviewees had trouble connecting with, or appeared irrelevant to their experiences. I then revised my questions in order to elicit richer data and better understand the lives of my participants. Also, following a grounded theory approach I attempted to remove my own assumptions through the interview process. Kathy Charmaz (2006) writes that as researchers who use grounded theory we “must test our assumptions about the worlds we study, not unwittingly reproduce these assumptions. It means discovering what our research

²¹ Tri4Him has a closely associated partner coaching organization called TriDot, which was founded by the same person. Although they coach Christians and non-Christians, many of their coaches identify as Christians.

participants take for granted or do not state as well as what they say or do” (p. 19). Therefore, my approach to interviewing including removing my own assumptions and biases from the questions I asked. I also invited my interviewees to elaborate on their responses by asking follow up questions and by removing my assumptions of what each interviewee meant by their answers.

All interviews were transcribed verbatim by myself using personal transcription software. Once the interviews were transcribed, I developed a coding scheme; based on my familiarity with the interview data, I knew there were certain major themes I needed to code. Then, similar to the process I used in coding the *FCA Magazine*, I refined my codes as I progressed and discovered new themes that were important. I specifically coded for themes related to women in sport, gender differences, gender roles within families and churches, and challenges women face within FCA.

I also distributed a short demographic survey to my interviewees in order to determine the age, race, ethnicity, residency, education, marital status, number of children, economic class, career, their specific Christian denominational affiliation, how long they had been with their respective organization, and how often they read their respective organization’s newsletter or magazine. The women in my sample ranged from ages 25-57 with the majority being in their 30s and 40s. All of the women were white and only one identified as Hispanic, while the others identified as white. My sample came from all across the United States, with four living in the mid-Atlantic, nine in the mid-west, five in the southeast, and four in the western region. Fifteen out of my sample were currently married. Four were single and had never been married, with one of those four currently in a heterosexual romantic relationship. Three participants identified as divorced; out of those three one was currently remarried, one was in a heterosexual romantic relationship, and one was single. Finally, one of interviewees described herself as a widow and

single. Fifteen out of the 22 participants had children. Only two of my interviewees made less than \$25,000 per year with the rest firmly situated in the middle-class.

I recruited interviewees from FCA Endurance by contacting the head of the organization who then suggested I post to their organization's web forum, *The Body*, and who advertised my call for interviewees in their email newsletter *The Pulse*. I recruited Tri4Him athletes through contacts I made in my previous research with Christian triathlon groups. My contacts in the organization posted my call for interviewees on their social media forums, such as Facebook. I also directly contacted professional triathletes in Tri4Him and TriDot coaches for interviews, finding their contact information through their respective organization's website. I recruited FCA staff members by searching on FCA's website for female staff and directly contacting them. From that point I used a snowball sampling strategy. When looking for female staff I focused on Women's Ministry Directors because they would have the most contact with female athletes and coaches, but I also interviewed female regional directors, local area representatives, and directors of sport specific ministries. All names used in Chapters four and five are pseudonyms and for the sport specific directors I refrain from referring to the sport they are involved with in order to protect the identity of my interviewees. Also, quotes from my interview transcripts have been edited for clarity by taking out unnecessary words and adding punctuation. The [...] is used to indicate when large parts of the text have been eliminated.

Results: Navigating the Image Problem in FCA

Throughout my interviews homosexuality was brought up on a number of occasions and was always discussed as a sin. FCA as an organization has a strong stance against homosexuality as is evidenced by several articles in the *FCA Magazine* and interviews I conducted with female

staff members high up in the leadership.²² My interviewees also demonstrated a presumption of straightness within the organization by insisting on same-sex discipleship²³ and on maintaining boundaries between men and women who are not partnered. Both of these concepts and patterns of behavior rely on a heterosexual framework and in turn constructed homosexuality as something outside the boundaries of their evangelical community.

For example, almost all of the female staff members mentioned the challenge of not getting too close to either the men they work with or men they are ministering to. Many found this a challenge because they wanted to be able to connect with their co-workers or they were attempting to minister in sports where the majority of athletes are male. One woman, a director of a sport specific ministry, said she always made sure a third person was involved if she is praying or ministering to a man, even if it was over the phone. Others discussed the idea that women should mentor and disciple other women because this is a Biblical model and eliminates any danger of men and women forming romantic feelings toward one another. Several of the endurance athletes I interviewed also discussed the difficulty of training primarily with men and maintaining appropriate emotional boundaries.

One ultra-marathoner, Rachel, in her 50s stated that her husband became irritated when she began training and spending long hours with other men, causing the couple to have heated arguments. Another triathlete, Faye, stated that she only went on all-female bike training rides

²² These two interviews are a part of my overall sample.

²³ Discipleship in evangelical communities is a form of mentorship. Discipleship relationships typically occur between a mature Christian, someone who has been a faithful follower of Christ for a number of years, and a newer Christian. These relationships are meant to provide guidance, information, and encouragement for new Christians.

and no longer trained at the track where a coed group practices because she was aware of the sexual temptations that arise in coed settings. Morgan, a professional triathlete living in the Midwest, discussed how the wives of some of her training partners have become jealous in the past because she spent so much time alone with their husbands. Because Morgan is an elite triathlete, she had a hard time finding women to train with, which in turn caused conflict. She explained:

“Especially for me, because I’m a single triathlete, and they do not want their husbands you know calling so and so to figure out a time to work out or whatever. And I’ll try to reassure them [...] we do training that is it. And I’ve actually made a point whenever I train with another guy, I make sure if they have a significant other, I know them and they know me so that they know my personality and [...] I will specifically go and talk to them and make sure I connect with them because it really can be an issue.”

Morgan, as all of these women, were hyperaware of the perceived dangers of men and women who are not partnered becoming too close emotionally and physically. The heteronormative assumption expressed by these women is that men and women are “naturally” attracted to one another. Therefore, using their Christian framework, my interviewees were able to separate themselves from the “image problem” within women’s sports. They were able to claim the identity of *Christian* female athlete because being a Christian and a lesbian was not an option within their religious and social framework.

Despite the presumption of straightness within FCA, many of my interviewees discussed navigating the “image problem” directly. For instance, Eileen has been an FCA women’s ministry director in the southeast for two years. She was in her early 40s and became a Christian

as a Division 1 college athlete when she began attending FCA huddle meetings. When asked about the challenges she faced as a female athlete, Eileen directly addressed the issues raised by “Bold and Beautiful.” She explained how as a college athlete in the 1990s she was exposed to homosexuality for the first time. Through her exposure to lesbian athletes she became aware that female athletes, especially those who were talented, were often assumed or perceived to be lesbians. She stated that in college,

“I was exposed to more lesbianism and you know just kind of the perception that if you were a good athlete that maybe you were a lesbian. And that was frustrating, that you could still be feminine and yet be a competitor, and a successful female athlete. So that maybe came into play more so in college, and even post college, even in the coaching profession as well. Just to maintain that femininity while also being a relentless competitor.”

Eileen, as a female athlete, was clearly aware of the “image problem” that not only Christian athletes, but all female athletes face. Eileen felt the pressure to “maintain that femininity” in order to fend off any perceptions of being a lesbian. The need to be feminine to ward off these suspicions was made more challenging, since in order to succeed she needed to also be a “relentless competitor.” Her phrasing “relentless competitor” suggests qualities such as aggression, determination, dedication, and strength, and are qualities, that to her, appear to be incompatible from femininity and more likely to garner suspicions of lesbianism. Maintaining or performing these separate parts of herself was the challenge and created what others called an “identity crisis.”

The “image problem” and “identity crisis” was also brought up by another FCA staff member. Charlene, a field representative in the mid-Atlantic region, stated that through her

experience as an athlete and staff member she was aware that homosexuality was an issue that female athletes face. When I asked if sport influenced or encouraged homosexuality in female athletes she stated, “You see basketball players and you know they’re so strong and butch and maybe they just don’t feel womanly enough you know I’m not sure. It’s not necessarily just in basketball you know it could be any sport, if you’re at a[n elite] level sport you have to be strong and fit and things like that.” Much like Eileen, Charlene conflates gender presentation with sexuality, expressing the idea that perhaps female athletes are lesbian because they fail to feel “womanly” or feminine, a theme at the heart of the “image problem.” To be an elite athlete requires women to take on masculine qualities such as strength and physical fitness, which for Charlene and Eileen, much like mainstream media outlets and the general population, translates to the possibility of homosexuality.

For example, Diana and Charlene described themselves as tomboys growing up, and in turn being made fun of because they avoided typical girly activities or look like typical feminine girls. Because of their participation in sports they explained that they did not fit the mold of what a woman should look like. For example Charlene stated:

“People just made fun of the way my body looked because I was always, even at such a young age, I was always thicker and I had big legs. And all my friends were like these tiny little sticks and I wasn’t, but I always got made fun of for that. And that was definitely something I think I carried on for a long time, being very self-conscious and low self-esteem with the way I looked.”

Charlene, currently in her 20s, had a similar experience to Diana, an older staff member in her 50s. Diana is a women’s ministry director in the mid-Atlantic region, and she described how she liked sports before sports were acceptable or popular for girls to play. Because of the

unpopularity of sports for women, she received a lot of negative feedback and was called a tomboy in a derogatory way. She was also told that she was going to get “big legs” and a “big butt” if she played sports. The implication was that these physical traits would make her less feminine, less attractive, and perhaps even more likely to become a lesbian. Despite this uneasiness that Diana and Charlene, as well as many of the other female athletes I interviewed, experienced with playing sports, it did not stop them from playing. Many embraced the identity of athlete and believed it had transformed their lives for the better.

Diana and Charlene’s comments demonstrate another important concern that female Christian athletes must negotiate as Christians and athletes—issues of modesty and self-esteem. To return to Blazer’s (2015) reference of the devotional text *Experiencing God’s Power for Female Athletes* (2000), the female authors also warn young women about placing too much importance on physical appearance and how their bodies look. In other words, female athletes are encouraged to perform a degree of femininity, but not too much or they may become consumed with the perfect image of femininity that is encouraged by secular media. This issue for Christian women is what I call the “modesty problem”: maintaining a level of femininity without becoming consumed with physical appearance. The Christian women I interviewed, like many feminists, were aware of the extreme pressure placed on women to maintain heterosexual femininity. This pressure, and the almost impossible standard to live up to, can lead to low self-esteem and negative body image. As Diana and Charlene pointed out above, fitting within the ideal body type or ideal image of femininity can be especially challenging for female athletes who are perhaps more muscular and taller than the average woman. Low self-esteem and body image were common themes expressed by my interviewees and was one of the major challenges faced by female athletes in FCA.

“Female Athletes Have to Feel Good, in Order to Play Good”: Self-esteem and Gender

Eileen, Diana, and Charlene’s interviews contained common themes related to the low self-esteem and negative body image that female athletes often face because of societal pressures to fit the mold of ideal femininity, while at the same time fulfilling their role as athletes. The competing and seemingly disparate identities of athlete and woman, were described by one staff member as “on the field” and “off the field” identities. The danger for female athletes was becoming consumed with either one of these identities because placing too much importance or finding ones self-worth in anything but God and their faith, was considered dangerous.

Diana expressed the dual pressure female athletes face in terms of being the best athlete possible while “on the field” and yet feminine when “off the field.” She stated “There’s a lot of pressure on athletes and on our girls. Lots of pressure to be a beast on the field and be a princess off the field or court.” I asked Diana to clarify what she meant by this statement, and she went on to explain how female athletes today have a lot more pressure to be really good, and to constantly practice and hone their athletic skills. Therefore, they are always trying to become faster, stronger, able to jump higher, hit harder, and think faster. “Off the field” Diana explained that young female athletes are pressured to look like what the media says women are supposed to look like. They never feel thin enough or pretty enough; she pointed out that this is especially true for athletes who tend to be taller and physically bigger or more muscular than the ideal female body seen in the media. Diana explained that some of the effects of this pressure on female athletes are eating disorders and low self-esteem.

Low self-esteem, or lack of self-worth, was a common theme throughout my interviews when talking about the challenges that female athletes face, with six out of the 11 staff members

addressing the topic. For example, Hannah explained that “with women you get more the issues of personal appearance, so just helping them [with] body image, self-confidence [...] concern with pleasing so how do you weave that into competition, who are you out to please, your coach, your parent [...] and that could be somewhat male, but more so female. Or body image you know are you wrapped up in how you look and eating disorders.” Hannah is quick to point out that male athletes may have similar issues, but female athletes are more likely to experience low confidence and issues with body image, a claim that is supported by a large body of health and social science research (Reinking & Alexander, 2005; Holm-Denoma, Scaringi, Gordon, Van Orden, & Joiner, 2009; McLester, Hardin, & Hoppe, 2014).

Dorothy, who resides in the southeast also mentioned female athletes struggling with self-esteem. As a coach for many years, she has learned through experience and through the guidance of other female coaches that “female athletes have to feel good, in order to play good.” In other words, they have to feel good about themselves and be confident in who they are before they can perform well in their sport. One professional triathlete and elite college swimmer, Katie, described her own struggles with her body image, especially as a swimmer and triathlete where tight and revealing clothing is the norm and where being thin is thought to aid in athletic performance. Katie even described how she knew some swim coaches who required their athletes to weigh in before and after every practice, further fueling athletes’ insecurities with their bodies.

Research has shown that female athletes are often at a higher risk for low self-esteem and disordered eating because of internal and external pressures to perform well in their sport, as well as the modelling of disordered eating behaviors by other athletes (Arthur-Cameselle & Quatromoni, 2011). These factors combined with the gendered expectations of femininity that all

young women face creates a precarious position for female athletes to inhabit and navigate. Supporting FCA female athletes and helping them find their self-worth and purpose in God, instead of appearance or sport performance, was the goal of all the staff members I interviewed.

Because of their hope for eternal life, conservative Christians have a long history of rejecting the secular world and placing more importance on spirituality and their identity as Christians. At the same time there have been several moments in history where conservative Christians have reengaged with the world as an evangelistic tool to appear more relevant to non-believers (Smith, 1998; Gallagher, 2003; Hulsether, 2007). As discussed in the introduction, muscular Christianity as it emerged in the mid-nineteenth century United States, was one of these instances of Christians engaging and using the secular institution of sport to evangelize. However, as Christian sports scholars have pointed out, Christians' engagement with sport brought about the risk of becoming too invested in sport and worldly purposes and caring too much about winning a game or race instead of winning souls for Jesus (Hoffman, 2010; Blazer, 2014). This danger was also expressed by several of my interviewees. Along with emphasizing femininity in order to side step the "image problem" and remain within a Christian belief system, these Christian female athletes also believed that playing sport and engaging in sport communities was a calling from God that fit within their religious framework. But just as female Christian athletes face the danger of falling into the femininity trap and placing too much emphasis on appearance, they also risk becoming too consumed with one's sport and identity as an athlete. Both take Christian athletes' focus away from their purpose of evangelizing and living according to their religious values of modesty and meekness.

Balancing God, Family, and Sport: “It’s a Fine Line to Balance”

Despite the risk of over-engagement or over-identifying with sport, FCA, like muscular Christians in the past, continue the mission of using athletics to positively affect people’s lives. FCA is attempting to reach younger athletes through summer camps, exposing them at a young age to the idea of combining faith and sport. At the same time, placing too much importance on sport, competition, or winning was often discussed as a real danger. Many staff members talked about the risk of athletes placing their entire self-worth on their athletic identity. For example, Susan, a women’s ministry director in the Midwest talked about how young female athletes are,

“Trying to find their identity in their sport and then once that, they realize once that’s over they’re like completely lost because they don’t have that sport anymore and just what to you do, I’m not an athlete. And they get hurt or they get injured, well I’m not an athlete anymore, so who am I. If they don’t have the name athlete to their name, they kind of have that loss of identity.”

Susan acknowledged that men also struggle with getting consumed with their identity as an athlete or coach, but several of the other female athletes I interviewed discussed this as a personal issue they have faced.

Feeling a sense of loss or confusion when leaving organized sport was a major issue that professional triathlete Katie discussed at length. I interviewed Katie twice, once in the summer of 2013 when she was a professional triathlete sponsored by the Christian triathlon organization Tri4Him, and once in the spring of 2014 after she had retired from being a professional athlete. The second time I interviewed Katie, she was in the process of learning to live outside the singularly-focused identity of athlete without the pressure to perform or train. She stated,

“I have a lot of time and energy. Not that I have a lot more, but it’s like, I had time and energy that was focused in one direction, and now I have it to focus on another direction. And it can be somewhat of an identity crisis, I won’t lie. I will not even sugar coat it. And it is hard doing something, you know you’ve been with a corporation for 20 years, or you’ve been something, say you’ve been in a marriage for 20 years, and suddenly you’re divorced, and that’s no longer part of you.”

Katie goes on to discuss how she is learning to exercise for fun without a coach telling her what to do or what her “heart rate has to be.” Katie had been a competitive swimmer since she was young, went on to compete at an elite level in college, and then became interested in triathlon because she thought she might have a chance to make it to the Olympics. In other words, her entire life had revolved around competing and training her body to be the most efficient athlete. Her comparison to leaving competitive athletics to that of a divorce demonstrates how much of Katie’s life had been intertwined with her athletic identity. The other professional triathlete I interviewed, Morgan, also mentioned her concern that triathlon and her identity as a triathlete could “completely rule my thoughts and my schedule, although it does, you know it does take up quite a bit, it can’t, it really can’t [be]cause you have to balance other things in life.” Certainly as professional triathletes these women devoted a large portion of their time and even their identity to the sport of triathlon. And not all high school, college, or adult athletes invest as much time or energy into their athletic identity or sport. But other interviewees who were amateur athletes, also mentioned the danger of becoming too engrossed in athletics.

Faye for instance, who was in her mid-40s and a part-time stay-at-home mother of two children, mentioned how she had seen families within the triathlon community fall apart. She

talked about how this often happened when one or more persons in a family become so involved and consumed in the sport that their relationships suffered. Faye herself struggled with keeping her athletic training in perspective. She stated, “I [...] struggle with the balance of trying to get the training in and trying to not let the house and the family and my walk with the Lord suffer. It’s a fine line to balance.” She goes on to explain how she was not sure she wanted to train for another Ironman distance race, because of the amount of time and energy it took away from her relationship with God and her family. Although the time and energy needed to train for triathlon is unique and not reflected in all sports, athletes in other sports also talked about how they had fallen in the trap of placing too much importance on sport and in some cases making sport their god.

Diana, a star basketball player throughout her high school and college career, for example stated how she placed sport before God growing up:

“If I look back on it, in my own mind growing up we went to church, we had faith in our household for sure, but really sport became my god and um, when that got taken away, it was a really, really hard time for me because suddenly I don’t have the most important thing in my life anymore so that was kind of a rough journey.”

Without basketball in her life, much like former professional triathlete Katie expressed, Diana felt lost and unimportant without the label or identity of athlete. Diana goes on to explain how she still liked to compete, but sports no longer served as her god, rather she focused on using sport to minister to others. She stated, “I just realized God created me to play this game for more than just to score points and win games.” In this way, Diana altered her identity as an athlete in order to integrate it into her religious identity and faith life, and this was a common theme throughout all of my interviews. Almost all of these women talked about how sport was a way

for them to either minister to others, or they felt closer to God when training or playing their sport. Much like these women are able to integrate their identity of athlete into their identity as a Christian woman, they were also able to merge sports with their religious beliefs. Furthermore, many of the athletes talked about how sport enhanced their faith lives and helped them find acceptance, confidence, and affirmation in their identity as athletes.

Micro-empowerment Through Sport: “I believed I could do Hard Things”

My interviewees described the positive impact of sport primarily in three ways: 1) sport providing an identity, sense of purpose; 2) teaching life lessons; and 3) instilling confidence, self-value, and feelings of being capable. For instance, Eileen expressed the importance athletics had played in her life by stating:

“I wouldn’t be who I am today if I had not participated in athletics, I mean I think it really gave me kind of a purpose and an identity and a group of friends, you know a fellowship. I mean that team kind of experience that I had was really, really special and you know, I think even before I gave my life to Christ, you know I definitely found my identity solely in being an athlete.”

Eileen goes on to talk about how every sport season she wanted to be playing a sport because being on a team and being an athlete was where she found “acceptance and belonging.”

Although Eileen eventually became a Christian and began to find more of her identity in her faith and religious life, sport continued to shape her identity as she currently works in an evangelical sports ministry and coaches high school volleyball. Through her coaching she also strives to provide her athletes with a sense of belonging and unity as a team.

Similar to Eileen, Dorothy also talked about how she found “acceptance and belonging” in sport because it was the one place where her tomboy qualities were respected and valued.

Dorothy stated:

“I was a tomboy growing up. Sports allowed me to, you know I was never comfortable with the girls at school when they were talking about their hair or what they’re going to wear. The girly things I felt completely isolated and left out and sports gave me a place to feel completely normal. It gave me a place where it was ok to be competitive. It was OK to enjoy that. It was OK to go out there and sweat and go hard and get dirty. [...Sport] gave me a place of comfort-ability that I wasn’t getting anywhere else.”

In other words, sport gave Dorothy a place to feel comfortable in her own body and with her own gender expression that she did not receive elsewhere. Besides a place of acceptance and comfort, some women expressed finding fulfillment and a sense of accomplishment in sport that they did not receive anywhere else in their lives.

For instance, Beth, a triathlete in her late 30s, married, and mother of five discussed at length about the importance of triathlon to her personal identity and feelings of self-accomplishment. Even at an early age when she found out she was good at running it gave her an identity and a sense of purpose because she found success and recognition through sport. Beth continued to run throughout college, and then began doing triathlon after she gave birth to her third child and she wanted a way to get back in shape, or simply “get a break and get out of the house.” Beth was a stay-at-home mom for a long time and had only recently gone back to work part-time. Despite having less time to train, she continued to invest the time and energy into the

sport. Beth recalled her husband asking one time why she was so invested in training and racing and she explained:

“I told him it’s the one thing in my life that I can put the work in and I can get the results out of. You know mothering wasn’t doing it, with young kids, preschoolers, toddlers, you know you do the best that you can, but at times it looks like you’re not doing anything. You know with marriage, with cleaning the house, with anything that I was doing, it just seemed like training was the only thing that really gave that equation and so it made me feel like I could do something right.”

Because training and racing “gave that equation” of accomplishment and success Beth continued to “cling to triathlon” not wanting to give it up despite the scheduling and interpersonal conflicts it sometimes caused within her family. Ultimately, for Beth not doing triathlon would make her feel like she would be forsaking her gift of athleticism given to her by God.

On top of finding a sense of identity, purpose, and acceptance within sport, many women also discussed how sport taught them life lessons and built character. Christine was a marathon runner in her late 30s and living in the Midwest. She described becoming involved in the sport after recommitting her life to God and she felt like she “needed to instill certain things in [her] life like discipline, accountability, all of these wonderful qualities that [she] found would happen through training for something big.” After completing her first marathon, she began to think that there has to be something more to training and “accumulating medals.” A feeling of emptiness, or wanting more from her sport, prompted her to then seek out a Christian sports organization, finally leading her to FCA Endurance. Christine described the lessons and effect training had on her. She stated,

“You have to make different choices in life. I have to make better nutritional choices. I have to make sure I get to bed on time when I have to get up for the race, or for the training run. So overall it’s really helped me to keep schedules, to follow through on my commitments. When I say I’m going to do something, I do it. So it’s just really enhanced me overall.”

Later on in the interview, Christine mentioned how her sister failed to believe her when she said she was going to do a marathon, because in the past Christine had not followed through on her commitments. Therefore, training and sport for Christine not only helped her to stay spiritually disciplined, staying close to God, going to church regularly, but also physically and relationally disciplined. She made healthier food choices, made sure she got enough sleep. Finally, Christine felt that the discipline required to train for a marathon carried over to other parts of her life, and made her a more reliable person.

FCA staff member, Susan, also mentioned enjoying sport for its ability to teach life lesson. When I asked Susan why she liked sports so much or what she got out of them, she stated: “I firmly believe that [...] sports has taught [me] how to be [...] a successful mom. It’s taught me how to be a successful wife, through sacrifice and [...] what it takes to be on a team.” Susan goes on to talk about how she and her husband, a high school football player who was coached and mentored by Susan’s father, modeled their family after a team. As a family/team they taught their children teamwork, sacrifice, the importance of hard work, knowing one’s role on the team, and the value of seeing a job through and not giving up.

Amanda, a triathlete in her late 30s and mother of two, also talked about using her participation in triathlon and the training she undergoes to help teach her children life lessons. Amanda tried not to let her training get in the way of family time, but sometimes it was

inevitable. Despite these conflicts, she felt like her training and athleticism was important in teaching her own children the value of sacrifice and hard work. She told a story about her son who was on a swim team and was upset because he only received a participation ribbon in his race. Another child made fun of him saying that a participation ribbon meant “you suck.”

Amanda brought her son over to the rack where all of her triathlon medals were and told him “you see all of those medals, most of those are participation medals, and I worked hard for those. So don’t let somebody tell you that you suck, you worked hard, you put in the time, and you finished your race.” Amanda goes on to talk about how her children often see her tired after a hard workout and then they go to her races and see the success and excitement that comes from her hard work.

Other FCA staff members talked about how sport taught them “tenacity, determination, organization” as well as independence and fortitude. For one staff member in her late 50s, she credited these traits in helping her navigate and move-up in her corporate career. Finally, Dorothy believed that sport was a space where she was able develop as a leader and grow as a person. She stated “it allowed me to hone certain skills that if sports weren’t in my life, I wouldn’t be able to do that. Finding my voice as far as being a leader and developing leadership qualities.” Athletics was a space where Dorothy felt comfortable being herself and where her talents were valued, therefore, she was able to develop important skills that served her throughout her coaching career and current position with FCA.

Along with sport providing a purpose or identity and helping to hone important life skills, athletics for many of these women also directly instilled self-confidence, self-worth, and had an immediate and lasting effect on these women’s lives. For instance, Lisa, an FCA staff member in her mid-40s, described how as a child she was not interested in playing team sports, but at the

same time, there were not many opportunities for her to participate in individual sports. Her parents were more concerned about academics and therefore did not encourage her to pursue athletics. Lisa explained how her parents spoke out against sports, believing them to be a waste of time. Despite not seeing herself as an athlete, Lisa began to realize as an adult that she enjoyed individual sports such as swimming, running, cycling, and weight training. When she started exercising and working out as an adult she explained “I realized a big difference when I did all over training in terms of how the core of my body felt. It definitely had a direct [...] impact on the core of my mind. Because when my body felt stronger, I believed that I could do more.” Lisa eventually began the popular P90X²⁴ training program around the same time she experienced personal tragedy. With this physical training, Lisa felt like she was more capable to handle the challenge. She recalled:

“I remember thinking to myself, I never thought I could do that program, I thought that program was for other people, and I did it. And so you know what, I can do this too. I believed I could do hard things. And I think pushing yourself physically, pushing yourself to do hard things translates when you have an emotional challenge or a spiritual challenge because you believe that you are able to do hard things.”

Throughout the interview Lisa emphasized the integration of mind, body, and spirit within sports, which she believed FCA did through their 3D coaching program. As the quote above

²⁴ P90X is a popular 90 day workout routine designed by personal trainer Tony Horton. Horton advertises his workout as “extreme home fitness,” which is “designed to get you in the best shape of your life” ([http://www. Beachbody.com/product/p90x.do](http://www.Beachbody.com/product/p90x.do)).

shows, she believed there was a strong connection between how she felt physically as an athlete and her emotional and spiritual self. Feeling good about herself physically, and believing she could do physically “hard things,” translated for her into the rest of her life, providing micro-empowerment to get through a challenging time in her life.

An FCA Endurance athlete in her late 50s, echoed Lisa’s sentiment about sport providing confidence in one’s ability. Rachel, an ultra-marathoner living in the southeast, talked about how running made her feel better about herself and how that had a positive effect on her relationship with her husband. When I asked her how running and training made her feel she stated:

“When you can really put in the miles and you’re feeling really fit, it, it does change your psyche because you sort of feel invincible. [...] If I get to the mountains and then come home, Gary my husband, I mean he can tell the difference, I mean my outlook is just so much, so much better and that translates to our married life a lot too because you feel better about yourself. You feel like I’ve accomplished something.”

Rachel’s favorite part about running and training was getting out in nature alone and running on mountain trails. She described herself as very independent when it came to her training and that training often made her feel invincible. At one point she talked about running through the Amazon jungle and through cities in Chile, as well as the mountains near her house in extremely cold temperatures. For Rachel, being adventurous and running in remote areas made her feel better about herself, and in turn made her relationship with her husband better. Although Rachel is not specific about how training enhanced her relationship with her husband, it clearly had a positive effect on herself. Rachel believed that her training positively affects her mood, she had a better “outlook” and view of herself, she felt a sense of accomplishment, was more confident in

her capabilities, and she felt “invincible” prompting her to engage in adventurous activities. All of these effects are forms of micro-empowerment that affected the way Rachel moved, inhabited, and navigated in the world around her.

One of the most poignant examples of empowerment through sport was that of triathlete, coach, and FCA Endurance huddle leader, Tina. Tina was in her mid-40s and had recently remarried after divorcing her first husband. When I asked Tina how she became interested in doing triathlon, she stated that she was in a “really unhealthy marriage” and a “really bad place emotionally.” In order to offer distraction and encouragement, her sister and brother-in-law suggested that she train for a sprint triathlon with them. Tina explained how she “laughed hysterically at the thought of being able to that,” but ended up progressing up to an Ironman²⁵ and now primarily trains and coaches for Ironman distances. Similar to Lisa and Rachel, Tina also described the effects of training for triathlon as gaining confidence in herself and her physical capabilities. When asked how training made her feel she stated, “I just like the general level of fitness in that I know, I may not have the skills to jump in and do other activities, but I know that my body can handle it. So I love being able to just try different things.” Tina went on to discuss how she recently led a group of women, who are not athletes and do not normally participate in outdoor activities, rock climbing, repelling, hiking, and canyoneering in Colorado. She liked the idea that although she was not necessarily skilled at those activities, she knew that she was physically capable of doing them and wanted other women to enjoy that confidence as

²⁵ Ironman is the longest distance race in triathlon, consisting of a 2.4 mile swim, 112 mile bicycle ride, and finishing with a marathon (26.2 miles) run.

well. Tina even used the word “empowering” to describe how she experienced her body’s ability to do physically challenging activities.

Tina’s feelings of empowerment became even more evident when I asked how her family and friends felt about her doing triathlon. Tina had an 18 year old daughter and she stated that her daughter has enjoyed seeing a “stronger mom. A mom who’s got a little more get up and go and confidence.” The impact of triathlon on Tina’s sense of self became even more poignant when I specifically asked how her ex-husband reacted when she began doing triathlon. Tina explained that her ex-husband began to hate triathlon:

“When I started doing endurance events at the end of that marriage, it was something that I accomplished for myself that re-enforced that I am capable that I am worthy and that it was my accomplishment. Because previously in the marriage any positive accomplishment I did he claim. So it was just affirming that, all right, I am my own person here and I am capable and I am likable. So as I started to believe that again, that fueled his fears. Which then, his negative behaviors grew. Because of his fear, he just had to control everything. So all of a sudden before I knew it he was in control of all finances, in control of my schedule, in control or trying to control my friends. So as I started gaining my spunk and independence back I started taking those pieces of my life back. And he associated all of that with triathlon and obviously there were other factors in my life. There was God in my life. But to him he could blame it on triathlon, so I think that’s where his hatred for triathlon kind of came from.”

Tina’s experience is a clear example of how sport can impact women’s lives and provide feelings of self-worth, confidence, and self-accomplishment. Tina is a prime example of sport providing

micro-empowerment; feeling better about herself led her to stand up for herself in an emotionally abusive relationship and eventually leave that destructive relationship. Furthermore, Tina's discovery of her talent and passion for athletics prompted her to find a career that she finds fulfilling physically, emotionally, and spiritually. Through her interest, talent, and success in triathlon, she was able to become a coach with TriDot, a training program started by the same person who founded Tri4Him. Therefore, the initial confidence she received through triathlon training, eventually led to a career where she uses her athletic talent to lead others in the sport.

Conclusion

Despite having to navigate the gendered expectations of sport and conservative Christianity, as well as the often disempowering effect of sport on women and their relationship with their bodies, sport clearly has import and affirmative meaning in the lives of these women. Several of my interviewees expressed being competitive by nature or having a competitive edge. Many also stated that they are natural leaders, independent, and have ideas of their own different from their husbands. They lead FCA on the national, regional, and local levels, they lead sport specific ministries, they lead non-profits, they've written books, they write blogs, public speak regularly, coach high school and college teams, and almost half have master's degrees. Obviously sports is not the only factor in these women's lives, but it clearly has had a positive impact on how they navigate the world and view themselves in the world. Does this positive impact of making women into leaders and competitors translate into their family life? The next chapter will address how these women navigate their roles as mothers and wives, and what if any bearing their identities as athletes and leaders have on these other parts of their lives.

Chapter 5: Balancing Act: FCA Female Staff and Athletes Managing Inter-role Conflict

In the previous chapter I examined the challenges female athletes within FCA face in navigating expectations of gender “on the field” as Christians and female athletes. In this chapter, I will turn to illustrate the ways in which female athletes and staff negotiate gender “off the field” in their roles as wives and mothers. All but four of the women I interviewed were married or had been married at one time and 14 out of my 22 interviewees were mothers. Virtually all of them discussed at length the challenge of balancing the numerous roles they filled such as workers, leaders, ministers, athletes, wives, and mothers. Therefore, this chapter examines the particular role conflicts these women face as well as how female athletes and female FCA staff members managed these various roles.

FCA has created spaces and opportunities for both female staff and female athletes to break with traditional evangelical gender norms. FCA allows women to lead or minister in religious settings, and through their sister organization FCA Endurance, have created more opportunities for adult women to participate in sport. However, despite breaking with gender norms in terms of their career or athletic pursuits, the FCA female staff and athletes I interviewed still maintained traditional beliefs about women and their role within the family. These traditional beliefs placed a greater responsibility of housework and childrearing tasks on them as mothers and wives and created work-family conflict in regards to time constraints. Furthermore, my interviewees relied on their subculture’s essentialist beliefs about gender, placing a greater expectation of women to perform emotional labor inside and outside the home and creating emotional stress for these women. Mothers’ feelings of guilt for time spent away from children, stemming either from work or athletic training, created additional emotional stress for them.

Executive-level leaders in FCA understand that they need to find better ways to support their female staff members in order to attract and keep them in a job with such large time and emotional demands and instability. Since there are not official channels or methods for helping women in FCA yet, this chapter specifically investigates how these women are handling the various demands on their time. One of the more common strategies deployed by female staff was that of multitasking. I argue that because of evangelicals' reliance on conservative gender ideology, women were assumed to be better at multitasking and therefore it is viewed as normal for women to engage in this strategy. While multitasking can be a short term solution, it can put more stress on women and place them at a disadvantage on multiple fronts. However, all forms of multitasking are not equal, and I argue that my interviewees also engaged in more effective forms of multitasking, primarily through integrating their work life with their core values of faith and sport. Ultimately, despite the lack of structural support for balancing work and family life, FCA female staffers are able to find meaning and purpose through this type of multitasking, alleviating some of the inter-role conflict they experienced.

Similarly, in terms of emotionality, many of the women I interviewed believed that women are naturally more emotional and instinctively want to nurture those around them, whether it be their own children, the athletes they coach, or the coaches and athletes they are working to support and encourage. This added emotional labor expected from the female staff members, simply increased their inter-role conflict. In order to overcome this conflict the women I interviewed worked to create appropriate work-family boundaries and re-evaluated their priorities when needed. However, I argue, focusing on the emotional needs of female staffers by assuming that emotionality is naturally associated with femaleness, FCA is neglecting the emotional needs of its male staffers whose job and family life are also emotionally demanding.

Finally, female athletes within FCA Endurance also found the demands of athletic training to be overwhelming. Even single women, or women who did not work outside the home, or only worked part-time, found it challenging to schedule their training around their various obligations to family, friends, and their religious community. The female FCA Endurance athletes were mostly triathletes or long distance runners. Given the time and physical demands of endurance sports, it is helpful to think of their sport participation as a “third shift” needing to be prioritized and negotiated along with their work and family responsibilities. In this way, evangelical female athletes are juggling their work or career, greater responsibility within family life and household chores, as well as managing the third shift of their athletic training. Despite the physical and time demands that managing the first, second, and third shifts requires, these athletes are choosing to engage in endurance sports because they find the activity personally satisfying. Similar to the FCA female staff, the female athletes I interviewed deployed a form of multitasking that included combining social, personal, spiritual time with training. This combination allowed these women to find a deeper meaning in their training and helped to alleviate the work-family-leisure time conflict they experienced.

First, I explain the multilevel theory of inter-role conflict I am using to analyze the work-family-leisure conflicts that FCA female athletes and staff face. Then I describe the time and emotional conflicts created through their career or athletic pursuits. Finally, I illustrate the strategies FCA female staff and athletes use to cope with the various time and emotional demands placed on them that breaking and upholding evangelical gender norms creates.

Theory

In this chapter I draw from an integrated theory of inter-role conflict in order to analyze the multiple factors and levels of social interaction that affect female Christian athletes. Dixon and Bruening (2005) have developed an integrated and multilevel theory of work-family conflict specifically designed to analyze workers in sport focused occupations, such as coaching, team management, athletic trainers, and athletes. Their model is specifically relevant to FCA staff who face similar workplace challenges as coaches: irregular schedules, administrative pressures, and required travel.²⁶ Dixon and Bruening (2005) argue that instead of simply analyzing separately the various levels of social interaction such as the individual, structural or organizational, and socio-cultural levels, all three need to be considered to obtain a holistic picture of how workers are impacted by their working environment and vice versa. Dixon and Bruening's framework is especially helpful in understanding how female Christian athletes manage the various expectations placed on them as women within a Christian sports organization because of the multiple and often competing cultural, religious, individual, and organizational factors impacting their lives. As I argue, one of the greatest strengths of Dixon and Bruening's theory is that it demonstrates how individual choices, values, and beliefs are influenced by socio-cultural expectations and gender ideologies as well as the structure and organization of the workplace. See Table 1 for a comprehensive view of the multiple factors involved for women in FCA.

²⁶ In the 2006 June/July issue of the *FCA Magazine*, the president of FCA's wife compared the challenges faced by coaches' wives to those whose spouses are FCA staff (p. 11).

“Put on your Director Hat”: Women Called to Minister in FCA

FCA has a clear mission of adding more female staff to their organization. FCA has women employed in positions such as women’s staff development coordinator, local directors of women’s ministries, and area representatives that cover the needs of both male and female athletes and coaches. In other words, female staff are positioned throughout the organization and in positions located all over the county. According to the staffed I interviewed, FCA is aware that over 50% of athletes are now female. Therefore, they recognize that they need women on staff who can relate and minister to those athletes as well as to female coaches and the wives of male coaches. They also understand that the needs of their female staff are slightly different than their male staff, particularly because there are so fewer women than men employed by FCA. Although they have not found an organized and systematic way to address the needs of female FCA staff, they are intentionally seeking out more women and in unofficial ways helping them to become leaders within the organization.

A prime example is the story of sport specific ministry director, Patti. Patti’s first career was in the corporate sector, and when starting at FCA she knew very little about the sport she specifically works with.²⁷ Therefore, she believed for the first few years of being on staff that a man should be in her position. She explained,

“I had to overcome my own thoughts. Because when I came on staff, it took me a couple of years to actually say this position is for me. Because I kept thinking that it needs to be a male. I just always thought that. You couldn’t talk me out of it. It

²⁷ The exact sport is redacted in order to protect the identity of my participant.

needs to be a male, probably someone who has preached before. You know someone who can speak in front of people.”

She even mentioned to her supervisor a couple of times that the FCA board of trustees should consider finding a man for her job. However, her supervisor and the board, which was all male at the time, told her that she was the one for the job because they believed in her ability and that God had called her to fill that role.

Despite lacking self-confidence in her ability to be a leader in FCA, the organization helped to mentor and support her and brought her to the point where she finally felt comfortable being in a position that, on paper, makes more sense to Patti for a man to hold. About her supervisors in FCA, who have all been male, Patti said,

“They’ve been so supportive of the fact that I’m a wife and a mom and that you know I have challenges as a female working with a bunch of males. They just have been so supportive of that and it’s through these three supervisors that I’ve gained so much confidence in just saying forget that you’re a girl, but that you’ve been called to be a director in this ministry. Put on your director hat, and take off your girl hat, take off your man hat, whatever, put on your director hat and be bold and confident in the decisions you’re making. And so I mean they really are a part of my testimony in gaining confidence and boldness to do what I’m called to do.”

In other words, FCA is making a concerted effort to see women as leaders, and build them up to lead within the organization. In a sense, FCA is attempting to take gender out of the picture, teaching Patti to see herself simply as a director and not a woman. On one level this approach can be empowering for women in that FCA is ignoring the stereotype that women are

not good leaders, and therefore treating them more like men. And this approach has certainly helped Patti to fulfill her role as a leader within FCA.

However, Patti is still a mother and wife with specific needs and responsibilities, as well as a leader with a budget, volunteers, and events to manage. Besides the expectations placed on her as a leader in FCA, Patti also has to deal with the demands of being a woman with a husband and children. Out of the 17 women I interviewed who were married or had been married at one point, 12 said they did most of the household chores and day-to-day childrearing tasks.²⁸ Many of the women discussed taking care of the female-typed work “inside” of the house, while their husbands’ did the typical male-typed labor “outside” the house. This sex-typed division of labor has particularly been shown to be unequal and require women to perform more work overall (Blair & Johnson 1992; Meissner 1977). Furthermore, only one of my interviewees expressed strong feelings of discontentment with the division of labor, and most were satisfied with their situation. In other words, the FCA female staff and athletes I interviewed accepted it as a given that they were expected to be the primary homemaker and caretakers.

Despite a general acceptance of traditional gender norms, which places a greater responsibility of domestic tasks on women, the often competing roles these women filled created what scholars have described as work-family inter-role conflict. The job of an FCA staff person is rather demanding in that their schedules are often irregular and unpredictable, travel is sometimes required, and each staff person is responsible for raising her own financial support in order to have a salary. Besides the time demands of women working in FCA, as religious

²⁸ I am not counting one FCA staff member who was married, but because of time restraints I did not have time to ask about her family life.

ministers, they are also called upon to perform large amounts of emotional labor. This emotional labor in the workplace is in addition to the care they are expected to provide for their families. Therefore, examining inter-role conflict within FCA is significant given these time and emotional demands placed on staff—stressors that are often not involved in other jobs or careers.

FCA Staff: Balancing the First and Second Shifts

Balancing the time demands of the first (paid labor), second (household labor), and third (athletic training) shifts was a major theme throughout my interviews. Fifteen out of my 22 interviewees discussed struggling to find balance in their life and not letting one of the shifts take precedent over the others. Hochschild (1985) effectively demonstrated that balancing the first and second shifts are major issue for most working women, however, evangelical women are more likely to subscribe to traditional gender roles and in turn take on more domestic labor than non-evangelical women. (Elision & Bartkowski, 2002). Balancing the first and second shifts was an especially daunting task for the FCA staff members. The factors that created difficulty in finding balance or work-family inter-role conflict came from every level of the social structure. Using Dixon and Bruening's (2005) multilevel theory to evaluate inter-role conflict, which takes into account the individual, organizational, and socio-cultural aspects of a person's life, we can better understand how conflict is created for these women and the strategies they use to resolve conflict.

One of the major and most obvious sources of conflict was organizational: the non-profit structure of FCA places large time demands on its staff members. The time demands of my interviewees became a major theme throughout all of my interviewees, and was evident by the

fact that many of them had difficulty in scheduling an interview. For example, FCA staffer Karen described a very busy and irregular schedule as an area representative in the Midwest:

“Every day is different. I plan for my camps 10 months out of the year, [...] so each day I’m usually doing something for camp. I might be in a school. I might be visiting somebody in the hospital. I might be speaking. I might be helping to get ready for an event. [...] There’s ongoing things that you have to do for financial support and meetings and so you might start work at 10 in the morning, you might start work at 6 in the morning. You might not end your day until 9 o’clock at night. Sometimes my days spill over to 11pm or 12am. Now that I’m married I try to find a better balance but there’s really no set hours for an FCA staff [person].”

Karen is primarily describing the structural and organizational factors that make work-family balance hard to attain: irregular work hours, fulfilling multiple roles or job functions, and responsibility for raising your own financial support. Karen also points to the socio-cultural factors involved: gender ideology and the cultural expectations placed on evangelical wives. Karen’s statement, “Now that I’m married I try to find a better balance,” is significant in that it illustrates the pull she now feels to fulfill her role as a wife.

Socio-cultural ideals of gender were also referenced earlier in the interview as Karen discussed the anticipated struggles she will face once she has children and her ability to manage her various roles. Karen stated, “The next few years I’d like to have a baby, and [...] I plan on being able to still work. And like trying to manage all that, is a lot different from a male handling his job.” Karen is recently married and would like to have children in the near future. However, Karen also does not want to let go of her job and her role as a leader and minister within FCA. Given the above description of her current schedule, causing her difficulty in finding time to be

with her husband, she has a hard time envisioning having a child and balancing the needs of her job, husband, and child. As an evangelical woman, in an evangelical sports ministry that values both women in traditional roles of mother and wife, as well as women in leadership and ministry positions, Karen is caught negotiating two merging gender ideologies. Karen wants to fulfill her role as a wife and mother, and she understands the time demands placed on women in those roles is greater than men's. But she also likes her job and wants to continue to find personal fulfillment in her role as a leader and minister within FCA.

Lisa, another FCA staff member also experiences the challenge of needing to fulfill these two competing roles. However, her position as a single parent magnifies the amount of work she has to accomplish. Lisa explained:

“It’s a huge challenge to be a single parent and work fulltime and be in the public all the time. I’m always out and about [and] if somebody sees me they say there’s the FCA girl, there’s the surf camp girl. So I think that’s a challenge, always being somebody whenever you’re out and then when you’re home, needing to be a mom and needing to be a chef and you need to clean up, and you need to organize, and you take care of your tires, and your heating unit, and all those things that come along with that. So I think that’s where the challenge lies.”

As a single parent, Lisa not only has to work outside the home and perform the traditional female-typed work such as cooking and cleaning, but she also is responsible for the male-typed work such as home and car maintenance and repairs. Lisa also points to another structural challenge of working with FCA—in the small community where she is, she is highly visible in the public realm. In this way, the structure of her family as a single parent, on top of the structural and organizational challenges of working with FCA, combine to create work-family

inter-role conflict. In addition to the individual and structural factors, Lisa also points to the socio-cultural pressures she feels as a working single-mother. Later in the interview Lisa explained that she feels pulled between doing her job well and being a good parent, and she often struggles with performing both well. She stated, “I’ll do my job really well, and I really want to do well at parenting. And somebody is always doing it better than you.” Lisa’s statement reveals that she is aware of the socio-cultural expectations placed on mothers, which often makes it nearly impossible for any mother to be a “good mother,” but it is especially challenging for her as a single, working mother, employed by an evangelical organization. Therefore, individual family organization, work structural factors, as well as our culture’s expectations for mothers combine to create work-family conflict for Lisa.

Beyond the time demands that are influenced by multilevel social factors, female FCA staff members also faced large emotional demands that added to their work-family inter-role conflict. Within a work environment, emotional labor is defined as the “personal interactions—separate from actual job descriptions—among employees and between employees and clientele that facilitate the effective and smooth operation of the organization” (Meier, Mastracci, & Wilson, 2006, p. 899). Researchers have found that women are often expected to perform, and in reality perform more emotional labor on the job than men (Hochschild, 1983; Meier, Mastracci, & Wilson, 2006). Emotional labor and its effects on employees is especially important to consider within a religious context. FCA staffers are called to evangelize as well as tend to the emotional needs of Christian athletes, coaches, coaches wives, both of which require intensive personal interaction, empathy, and sensitivity. Although male FCA staffers are certainly performing emotional labor as they do their jobs, the women I interviewed believed that as women they were naturally more invested in those around them.

For example, I asked women's ministry director Eileen what challenges she faced as a female working with FCA, and she explained: "my biggest challenge is time management and just being able to juggle all the different responsibilities." Similar to Karen, Eileen finds the multiple demands placed on her overwhelming. Eileen goes on to explain that besides working with FCA, she is also a high school volleyball coach, and a mother of two children. She described her challenge as follows:

"I've got so many competing things in my head like, what do the kids need today from me, you know have I signed everything, have I packed their lunches [...] do I have their ride coordinated, all that kind of stuff. And then there's the ministry aspect, like who God's placing on my heart to minister to today or what [...] meetings or huddles [do] I have to attend today. And then there's my team that I'm shepherding and so the needs of them. And is it game day? And is it picture day? What are we doing in practice today? And so all those things are kind of competing in my mind."

Like Karen and Lisa, Eileen has the challenge of simply having too much to do; but she is also describing the burden of performing emotional labor on various fronts. She is busy attending to the needs of her children, her volleyball team, and ministering to other athletes or coaches.

Later in the interview, Eileen explained that the difficulty is related to the expectations placed on women as well as characteristics that are assumed inherent to women. For example, she believed it was harder for women to "compartmentalize," meaning women have a hard time focusing on one thing at a time because of the various responsibilities they are expected to complete at home and work. Part of the issue she stated is that women's "obligations to the family are much different" than men's. Eileen goes on to describe how her position as a mother

and wanting to tend to the needs of her children makes it harder for her to perform her job.

Eileen explained: “certainly there are men who take on more of that responsibility but in general in our culture, you know the mom is the one taking care of the children’s needs you know, the homework, the feeding them. [...] All those things that are required.”

Other interviewees also explained how the cultural expectations for women are different than for men, not only within the home as Eileen describes, but also within their job at FCA. When I asked Dorothy, who primarily works with female athletes and coaches, what their needs are as women in their positions she stated, “Female coaches are moms and wives [...] Male coaches aren’t the main nurturer for her family. The female coach goes out and nurtures her team and her staff and then she goes home and has to nurture her family too. And that can get overwhelming.” Dorothy also described the emotional labor that female staff perform, because as she explained, women are different and simply more emotional. According to Dorothy, “Doing ministry as a woman is a little bit different just because of how we function. We’re much more emotional when it comes to certain things. And you know we’re talkers, we want to talk through it, you know we want to nurture the people around us.” Dorothy is quick to point out that men can also nurture, but because women naturally perform more emotional labor in the job and at home they need more support in their roles than men.

Others also expressed the idea that women have a greater challenge with work and family balance because of the emotional demands of their job. Similar to Eileen and Karen, Susan also spoke at great length about the overwhelming nature of her job because of the time demands as well as the emotional labor they perform. Susan explained:

“When you work in FCA, it’s not a 9-5 job. You’ve got people who will call you [...] sometimes in the middle of the night if they need you. They [say], “hey can

you come, I really need someone to talk to?” And how do you balance? Because ministry doesn’t necessarily shut off at 5 o’clock especially when you are ministering to college kids. Their nights don’t even start until 10 o’clock. And so how do you balance the family time and to be honest with you I actually met with a time management specialist for an entire year, once a month, and she helped me figure out how to balance the ministry and I don’t have to answer my phone all the time. That I don’t have to be everything to everybody at all times.”

Susan was placing a huge burden on herself by feeling like she needed to make herself available to everyone at all times. She explained that although her family may not have noticed or complained about the amount of time and emotional energy she gave to her job, she knew she was overworking herself by not disengaging from the ministry. Meeting with a time management specialist help Susan overcome her feelings of needing to be available to everyone all the time, and she was able to learn how to let go and maintain appropriate boundaries between her work life and home life.

As the examples above demonstrate, the female FCA staffers believed that maintaining balance or keeping boundaries as a minister in FCA was especially hard for women. Furthermore, the women felt isolated because there were no other women on staff in their area with whom they could relate and share their experiences with. As the only female on staff in her state, Susan spoke about not having other women to talk to about her struggles with balance and boundaries because she felt that her male co-workers would not understand her position as a woman with a family in FCA ministry. As discussed in the previous chapter, evangelicals are in support of same-sex discipleship or mentorship, and against opposite-sex friendship or companionship outside of heterosexual marriage. Therefore, female staff members who take on a

greater emotional load have few outlets to discuss the emotional demands placed on them because there are so few women within FCA and the organizational norm of same-sex mentorship.

Clearly the structural demands of an FCA staff person are relevant factors in how interviewees experience work-family conflict. Large time and emotional demands coupled with the insistence on same-sex mentorship places high demands on female staffers with few outlets of support. Using a multilevel theory allows us to see how evangelical gender ideology affects the structure of FCA and in turn individuals. A multilevel approach also allows us to see how socio-cultural expectations of mothers influences female FCA staff and athletes on an individual level.

“Mom Guilt”: Interaction between the Socio-cultural and Individual Levels

The socio-cultural expectations for mothers and wives as well as our larger culture’s gender ideologies, and in particular evangelical’s more conservative gender ideologies, contributes to the work-family conflict women in FCA experience. One of the major ways this interaction manifested was through my interviewees wanting to be highly involved in the domestic sphere.

As stated above, all of the female staff I interviewed pointed to ways that women are expected to fulfill traditional roles within the family, and this was especially evident in regards to childcare. However, many of the women also discussed how they *wanted* to fulfill these roles. For example, Eileen stated, “I mean I want to be there for my kids after school to help them with homework and to give them a snack. And so you know I might prioritize that over going to an FCA huddle or calling on coaches during that time, when I know my children are home and they

need me. So I think that is a little bit unique to specifically women who have families at home.” This emotional desire to be with their children, and fulfill motherly duties, was often expressed by FCA staff and athletes as “mom guilt” when they were unable to tend to their children’s needs because of work or athletic training.

For example, Amanda is a triathlete in her late 30s, mother of two, living in the Midwest. As a high school science teacher, she talked about fitting her training in after she gets off work and before her children get home from school. Otherwise, Amanda explained she would have to do her workout in the evening, which would cut into the time she gets to spend with her family. Amanda goes on to describe her need to be with her children as “mom guilt.” She explained “maybe that’s things that men don’t worry about as much, you know just being with the family. Because I train with a lot guys and they have kids too, but I think there’s always that element of mom guilt. Men don’t seem to have it. I tried to talk to my husband about it, and he doesn’t seem to understand that.” Amanda believes that as a woman and mother she is naturally more attached to her children or simply desires to spend more time with them. Also, her interactions with men, including her husband, who according to Amanda do not experience feelings of guilt for being away from family, reinforces her belief that women naturally want to be more involved in their children’s lives.

Other endurance athletes also described experiencing “mom guilt” because of the time they spend away from the family while training. For example, triathlete and stay-at-home mother, Faye understands that her position as a stay-at-home mother with older children who are more self-sufficient enables her the time and energy to spend the long hours training with others. However, she still feels that her place is in the home and often feels guilty for being gone when her children are at home. She stated:

“I’m blessed, I don’t know how people do stuff like that when they work full time or even part time and they have kids. I don’t know how a mother can do that. And I know of some great moms who have done that, so I know it can be done but I just tear myself up mentally like, “oh gosh I had to get a long bike ride in, and I wasn’t home when my son left for school.” But he’s 16, he takes himself, he’s absolutely fine. He doesn’t need mom to give him a hug or anything. He probably enjoyed the independence. But this is my place, and that’s a struggle for me too, to take time away from my family.”

As a stay-at-home mother Faye is fulfilling the traditional gender role of taking care of the housework and the children’s needs. Faye likes her position and emphasizes that her place is to be in the home. In the beginning of the interview, Faye talked about how her husband had the opportunity to become a professional triathlete, however, he decided that it was his job as the father and husband to work full-time and provide for the family while Faye stayed home with the children. Even though Faye’s children are now older and require less of her attention, she still feels that pull to be with them and make sure they are cared for, therefore, causing her to either feel guilty for training or scheduling her training around her family’s life.

Similarly, triathlete Beth describes her feelings of “mom guilt.” Beth has been a stay-at-home mother for a number of years and has only recently returned to working part-time. Like Amanda, Beth also trains with men, and she has asked them how their wives feel about them being gone for so long. The men she’s asked have responded by assuring her that their wives are supportive and that it is easy for them to get away to train. Beth went on to state her difficulty as a female athlete:

“I don’t know if it’s the nurturer in me that I want to be able to be with my children. But I used to be a stay-at-home mom, I’ve only been working a little over a year. And so before, training was my outlet, it was the one thing that I had. Now it’s getting more complicated because I’m already spending time away from my home and family. And so to train, I’m always glad that I did it, but it takes more planning and I don’t like being gone as long on Saturdays.”

Like Amanda and Faye, Beth also wants to be there for children, nurturing and taking care of them. Before Beth returned to work, the only thing competing with her training time was her responsibilities as a mother and wife. Now, however, that Beth has returned to paid work outside the home, she has an extra “shift” of work that takes her time away from the family, adding to the “mom guilt” of not spending as much time with her children.

Feelings of guilt were also expressed by FCA staff members who often spent long hours working or traveling. Patti for instance, explained how her children were honest with her and complained when they felt she had been travelling too long or working too much. She went on to tell about how one of her children, when asked on an assignment at school what his mom likes to do, wrote that his mom likes to work. Patti felt this incident was a “wakeup call” for her to reevaluate her priorities and make sure she is spending enough time with her children. She explained that although she tries to prioritize her family above her career, when her children make comments about her working too much, it makes her feel terrible because as she states, “I can’t get these days back. You know when they’re these ages.”

The conflict and feelings of “mom guilt” that my interviewees described is a perfect example of how the socio-cultural expectations and gender ideologies influence women on the individual level. Many of these women recognize that our culture places greater demands on

women in terms of household chores and especially childrearing tasks. This is especially true within an evangelical context where women bear even more of the burden of household labor (Bartkowski & Ellison 2002). These gendered expectations and ideologies not only influence the type and amount of labor women do, but they also shape how women think of themselves and their beliefs and values as mothers and wives. As the examples above show, many times women want to or choose to fulfill the traditional role as primary housekeeper, and they especially want to be highly involved in their children's lives. Female athletes and FCA staffers take on the role of primary caretaker, performing more of the emotional and physical labor inside the home. Despite the fact that there are other alternatives such as paying for childcare or husbands taking on more responsibility for the children, the emotional pull to care and nurture is still present. There is nothing inherent about women that makes them primary caretakers of children, instead the larger socio-cultural environment, as well as the cultural values of their subculture, influences the individual values of the women in FCA (Phoenix, Woollette, & Lloyd, 1991).

Strategies for Shift Management

I argued above that the socio-cultural expectations of mothers and wives, as well as the structure of FCA and evangelical families, intensifies the ways in which individuals experience work-family conflict. This interaction was prevalent in that female staff and athletes were assumed to be more emotional than men, instinctive nurturers, and in turn experienced feelings of guilt for the first or third shifts taking them away from their families. At the same time, the interviews revealed how gender ideologies, as well as the structure of FCA, influenced the type of coping strategies women in FCA chose to deploy. One way in which the cultural values of evangelical subculture and the structure of FCA in particular influenced women's management

of their various shifts was through reliance on faith and utilizing skills learned at FCA's marriage retreats. When I asked Patti how she managed her various roles and the multiple demands placed on her she responded:

“Well [...] I know this sounds cliché but I've got to give all the credit to God and how he juggles my time and just kind of makes different things priorities or move things out of the way for me. So I first have to say it's through prayer and saying what do you need me to do today? What should I be concentrating on this week? What should I let go of? And those sorts of things. So it's through prayer.”

Patti goes on to explain that learning to balance and juggle her priorities is an on-going process and an area where she continues to make improvements. Similarly, FCA staff members Eileen, Susan, and Ann also talked about relying on God to show them what they should be concentrating on and how to prioritize their time.

Another strategy deployed was utilizing tools learned at FCA marriage retreats. For example, Susan described how FCA helped her and her family to create a “servant atmosphere,” meaning everyone helped out around the house, instead of relying on her to accomplish all the daily tasks. Susan explained in-depth how her family functions as a team—everyone has their role, no one is allowed to quite, and everyone helps each other out within their home.

Specifically, Susan stated,

“We are a team as a married couple and then our family is also a team. And so we don't have what you call the specific roles, of a man and a woman, you know he does the yard work and I do, no, if it needs to be done one of us does it. You know whether that's the laundry whether that's the mowing. We come along side each other and we do it as a team.”

When I asked Susan how they came to this arrangement in terms of the household chores, she at first stated that they simply talked about it, but then she went on to give credit to FCA and a marriage retreat her and her husband attended. She explained,

“I’m sure there were lots of conversations. I do remember we had to sit down and we talked about things that we wanted versus things that we needed. [...] Helping around the house is not something I want, it’s something I need. [...] It was actually after we went to an FCA marriage conference in NC and they talked about telling your spouse what you want versus what you need [...] and that was a lot of conversations of—OK I *do* need help inside the house. That is *not* something that I want, it is something that I need.” (Emphasis added)

FCA holds several regional, yearly marriage retreats that are targeted at coaches and their spouses. Besides being a staff person, Susan’s husband is a coach, which is why she and her husband attended. FCA markets these retreats as places where couples learn to have a more godly marriage, get the most out of their relationship, and learn to support each other. Susan is a prime example of the tangible impact of FCA marriage retreats. Because of their experience and FCA’s guidance, Susan and her husband were able to communicate more effectively leading to a more equitable and functional household. Therefore, FCA as an organization helped Susan create tangible methods of dealing with her hectic schedule.

On top of gaining tools and strategies from FCA, Susan’s family arrangement is an example of athletes drawing from their experience in sport as a way to negotiate every day family life. Susan and her husband have been athletes and involved in sports all their lives. Susan’s father was a coach growing up and even coached her husband. She also was an athlete and went on to compete in college. Therefore, the metaphor of the family as a team makes sense

to both her and her husband. In her study of female athletes within FCA, Blazer (2015) found that Christian athletes often use sport and their team experiences as tools and symbols to navigate married life. Although Susan was the only female athlete within my sample to bring up the idea of using sport to navigate family and married life, it was one of the more effective strategies described by my interviewees. Its effectiveness is evident by the fact that the strategy ultimately reduced Susan's amount of housework and childrearing tasks. By delegating some of the workload to her husband and even children, Susan is better able to function as a paid laborer outside the home.

Prompting men to become more involved in the daily tasks of their households has been one of the major shifts within evangelical gender ideology (Gallagher 2002). As described in Chapters two and three, FCA has called for husbands and fathers to be more active and available to their wives and children. Susan was not the only one who mentioned that her husband helped out with household chores and childrearing tasks. For instance, out of the 17 women who were married or had been married, 12 stated that their husbands either help out with chores or engage in hands-on fathering. And out of those 12, four of the women stated that their husbands do at least as much, if not more, of the housework than them. In this way, many of the women and their spouses engaged in pragmatism when it came to the division of household labor, meaning whoever was available or better at a certain task, completed it regardless of whether it was female-typed or male-typed labor. However, despite engaging in pragmatism, 12 of the women who were married, or had been married, were still the primary housekeeper and caretaker of children.

Given the multiple roles and demands placed on the women I interviewed, another common strategy used was that of multitasking. However, their use of multitasking, similar to

the women's feelings of guilt, was viewed as an inherent skill women possess and placed them at a disadvantage by adding stress. But the female athletes also utilized a more positive form of multitasking—that of combining training with social, personal, or spiritual enrichment. Similarly, I argue that by combining their passions of faith and sport, the female staffers were able to experience job satisfaction despite the work-family conflict that their jobs created. In this way, even the coping strategies these women used was influenced by their socio-cultural environment that assumes women are better multitaskers and the structure of FCA, which values spirituality and relationships.

Multitasking: Multilevel Interaction in Shift Management Strategies

As described by FCA staffer, Ann, women are assumed to be better at multitasking. Ann stated: “I think as women we are better able to multitask. I mean, I think we were created that way, partly because you're going to be a mom and you're going to do this and do that.” In other words, because of their God given roles as mothers and wives, God has also created them with the ability to manage their various roles through multitasking. Unlike Eileen above, who recognized that our culture demands more from women, Ann's explanation simply relies on gender essentialism in order to explain how women behave and operate in the world. Similar to the fact that there is nothing inherent about women that makes them more emotional or natural nurturers, there is also nothing inherent in relation to women that makes them better at multitasking. Offer and Schneider (2011) found that men and women in dual-earner households multitask about the same amount of time, however, women are more likely to perform two or more activities in the domestic sphere because of the greater responsibilities they have as

housekeepers and caretakers (p. 828). Therefore, the large demand placed on women for the first and second shifts, has forced them to find strategies, such as multitasking, in order to cope.

For example, Lisa explained that multitasking was a strategy she used as a single mother in order to fulfill her various obligations. Like Ann, Lisa also felt that being a woman helped her be better at multitasking, and therefore helped with job performance. Lisa said,

“I find that women multitask as a whole. There are women who don’t multitask, but I find myself highly organized. [...] I’m so organized like at camp, or you know ministry, or when it comes to huddles. That can be a plus. Where I think sometimes men tend to need a secretary or they need an additional person to take that role for them [but] sometimes there’s just not money for that. So multitasking is really huge. I can remember my husband, like if I left him, he’d [say] I can’t do ministry and cook dinner. And I’m like are you kidding me, why not? I totally have that down.”

Lisa offers a unique perspective on how she manages ministry as a woman on top of being a single parent because her late husband was on staff with FCA. Lisa supported her husband in his position with FCA for many years before taking over his position when he passed away. As a working woman, who is responsible for paid and unpaid labor, Lisa has to multitask in order to function. While her husband, found multitasking near impossible, Lisa described herself as very capable of handling multiple jobs at once. This gender difference is not an inherent difference, but rather a learned pattern of behavior. In other words, men may not be as good at multitasking because the time demands placed on them within the home are not as great as women, therefore, they have not had to learn how to multitask.

Female athletes also multitasked as a way to cope with their numerous time demands. Beth for example explained that during the summer she would take her kids to the local high school track, so she could get her workout in, while also watching her children play and ride their bikes around the track. Faye also described that, when her children were younger, she and her husband would go to a local park to run sprints in the grass, while their children would play nearby. Even athletes who did not have children described needing to multitask in order to fulfill the various demands on their time. Jackie, in her mid-40s, is a retired professional triathlete and continues to train and race. Although not currently married or a mother, she is involved in several activities outside of her primary job as a social worker. When I asked her what a typical day looks like, she described a very busy schedule:

“Work all day, as a social worker. I also have some military commitments that I do. [...] I do coaching and I have a dog, I have friends, and trying to balance it all somehow. And try to maybe multitask, sometimes. You know like stretching and talking, you know different things.”

Because Jackie is no longer racing competitively, she has placed other priorities ahead of training. She explained that even with multitasking, sometimes her other commitments would get in the way of training or racing.

Multitasking is a common strategy in our culture, but it has become especially prevalent among mothers and fathers in dual career families. Although researchers have found that married mothers and fathers multitask about the same number of hours each week, women are more likely to combine two or more activities in the home such as household chores or childrearing tasks (Sayer 2007). However, Offer and Schneider (2011) have found that mothers are more likely than fathers to have negative feelings when multitasking, whether in the home or in public.

They suggest that one reason women feel more overwhelmed or stressed when multitasking may be related to the high standard and cultural pressures placed on mothers. Their study also found that for women, multitasking at work was associated with feelings of guilt for not spending enough time with their families. Therefore, the act of multitasking, although perhaps increasing productivity, does not alleviate stress. Wetherell and Carter (2013) found that multitasking increases stress, physiological signs of which were measured by an increase in heart rate and blood pressure in study participants made to perform multiple tasks at once. Therefore, multitasking creates more stress, which may have been one reason the women I interviewed felt overwhelmed with their jobs and family commitments.

However, not all forms of multitasking have the same effects. In the same study, Offer and Schneider (2011) found that multitasking in the presence of family members was an overall positive experience for both mothers and fathers. Although Offer and Schneider (2011) studied the effect of multitasking when performing non-leisure activities, I argue that for the female FCA staff and athletes, combining activities such as socializing, quality family time, and spiritual engagement, with their work or athletic training, was a productive form of multitasking that helped to alleviate inter-role conflict.

Positive forms of multitasking

Athletic training as social time. One positive form of multi-tasking that some of the athletes used was training with their spouses. Long distance runner Christine for example talked about how she and her husband, who is a triathlete, would go on runs together and occasionally bike together. Christine believed that “playing” together has enhanced their relationship and brought them closer together. Gail, who has been a runner for years and just recently began

training for triathlons, also talked about getting her husband and daughter involved in the sport. Although she is unable to train with her husband or daughter because they are faster than her, they enjoy going to each other's races and supporting one another.

Finally, Beth, who discussed "mom guilt" when training for long hours, also experienced interpersonal conflict with her husband when it came to her training. Her husband was verbally supportive of her triathlon participation, but she also explained that her husband would give her the silent treatment when she was gone for long training runs or bike rides. Overall, Beth's husband did not understand her commitment to the sport. However, towards the end of the interview she mentioned that her husband had recently started running and they had started doing their long runs together. Beth discussed how having her husband as a training partner has helped relieve some of the tension they have around the time she is away from the family, because she is at least able to spend time with her husband. Beth would also like to get her husband into biking for the same reason, as she explained "[I wouldn't] feel so bad about those 4 or 5 hour bike rides because he'd be with me."

Besides training with spouses or other family members, or simply using their races as family time, the athletes also used training and racing to foster friendship and mentoring relationships with others outside the family. Seven out of the eleven athletes stated that they liked the social aspect of the sport and training with others was one of their favorite aspects of endurance sports. Although the athletes did not always frame this as a form of multitasking, I argue that using sport to build relationships is a form of multitasking that allowed these women to find more meaning in their athletic pursuits. Finding a deeper meaning in the long hours they used to train was a key element in their ability to continue training despite the "mom guilt" they experienced. Triathlete Faye, for example, discussed at great length how she no longer trains for

her own races but instead finds more satisfaction in helping others reach their goals. As the FCA Huddle leader in her area Faye seeks out other Christian women to train with. Faye especially enjoyed mentoring one young woman who was new to triathlon and a new Christian. She explained that they would go out on their long bike rides and forget to turn around because of the in-depth conversations they were having about their spirituality and faith lives. Faye stated, “It was just incredible and we could ride forever with just that kind of conversation. You’re out in the middle of nowhere and you can talk about stuff that you wouldn’t want to talk about sitting, having coffee together because somebody might hear.” In other words, the structure of triathlon training, which necessitates long hours of training in rural or remote areas, lends itself to intimate conversation and for Faye, same-sex mentorship.

Triathlete and triathlon coach Tina, also spoke about how she no longer races primarily for competition, rather she has shifted her focus to helping others during races. Tina went on to tell about the last Ironman she raced. When she got to the running portion of the race, which is the last leg, she knew she was not going to break her personal record in that race. But instead of becoming discouraged, she began to encourage other racers who were struggling on the run and needed help to get to the finish line. Tina explained that from the beginning of participating in triathlon she was always seeking out ways to mentor or encourage other women to get into the sport. This interest is what eventually led her to her current career as a certified triathlon coach. Therefore, she has combined athletic training with personal relationships and mentorship, as well as her career of coaching. Both her career and athletic training focus on helping and encouraging others. This form of multitasking helps Tina find greater satisfaction in both her job and leisure activities.

Training as personal time. Besides using athletic training to spend time with family, build mentoring relationships, or simply encourage others, many of the athletes also discussed using their training time as personal time. Several of the female athletes said they needed the time they spent training in order to have a break from taking care of children or family and relieve work stress. Gail, for instance, stated that working out made her happy, and when she was done, she often wished she could continue because “it’s a big stress [release]. It’s like I do a lot of thinking when I work out. So I solve a lot of problems.” Amanda, high school science teacher and mother of two, also stated that training was one of the few things in her life that allowed her to have time to herself. When I asked Amanda how her life was different now that she trains for triathlon, she stated, “I don’t have a lot of free time. Although a lot of people ask me how do you go out and run for so long? And I’m like when I go out and run for 2 hours that is my me time. I don’t have my kids with me and I don’t have to worry about all of that. [...] Even though I’m working out, that’s kind of my escape, my time to just get away, which I think all mothers need.” Although Amanda sometimes struggles to fit in her training with her own work schedule and her children’s activities, and also sometimes feels guilty for being away from her children, she continues to train because it is one the few activities where she can “escape” and not have to take care of others. In other words, triathlon training, although a physically rigorous and time consuming activity, is ultimately Amanda’s form of self-care.

Tina also expressed similar sentiments about her triathlon training. Tina most often trains for the Ironman, which is the longest distance triathlon and therefore requires even longer periods of training. I asked Tina how her family felt about her training and she explained that when her children were younger she mostly planned her racing and training around their schedule so it would not impact them negatively. She went on to say, “I actually think it was a

really good role model at that time, because it showed the discipline, it showed the healthy lifestyle. And I'm a firm believer that we all need something for ourselves. You know that old saying to refill our buckets so we can refill everybody else's bucket." Like Amanda, Tina expresses the need for self-care, and for her, triathlon was how she refilled herself so she could attend to the needs of others. Along with discipline and a healthy lifestyle, Tina felt that taking the time for herself to train was a good practice that she wanted to pass on to her children.

Other triathletes spoke about their training in similar terms, however, stay-at-home mother Faye added a spiritual dimension to her escaping through exercising. Faye stated, "You just kind of have that mindset especially when you're home with kids. [...] It's like OK I need to go for a run because I'm going to say stuff I ought not to say. If I can go run and have some time with the Lord, he's going to fix me up real well and I'll be ok to come back." Similar to Tina and Amanda, Faye recognizes that sometimes she needs to have a break from the demands of parenting and triathlon serves that need for self-care. Along with using training to relieve stress and have time alone, Faye also uses the time to refill herself spiritually, and allow God to "fix" her. Faye believes that spending time with God through training allows her the strength or patience to go back to her family and be a better mother and caretaker. Using sport and triathlon as a way of connecting with God or to evangelize was another common theme throughout my interviews and was another dimension that added meaning and fulfillment to the female athletes' training.

Training as God time. In addition to using, training as personal time to recharge from stressful experiences, Faye also spoke at length about using her long training rides or runs as time to spend with God. When training for the Ironman distance race, she became accustomed to

having long periods of time for spiritual connection. After completing her Ironman she was no longer doing the long training sessions, and she immediately began to notice a difference. She explained,

“I found that what I was missing more than anything was my quiet time.

[Training] began to be my quiet time with the Lord and [I liked] taking my iPod out with praise music on or [...] sermons on. So I went through a pretty rough year of spiritually trying to figure out, now that I’m not biking for 5, 6 hours, what do I do to have time with the Lord?”

As discussed above, Faye often felt “mom guilt” when gone for long periods of time training. However, not having those long hours of training became a challenge for Faye because she no longer had her usual time to commune with God and recharge spiritually.

Beth also, whom often experienced interpersonal conflict with her family for the time she spent away from home, used her training time to connect with God. She explained, “I feel like when I am training I am most who God has called me to be.” When deciding whether or not to join FCA Endurance, Beth debated if she was simply placing a “Jesus label” on something that she enjoyed doing as a way to justify her hobby. However, she came to the conclusion that it was not about having a “Jesus label,” rather, she stated, “this is who I am and this is who God created me to be and I want to honor him in that.” In other words, if Beth were not training she would feel like she was not using the gift God had given her, and she would be missing a spiritual connection with God.

In a similar way, Gail who used training to reduce stress, also used it as a way of communing with God. She stated “I like being outside. That’s [...] where I feel closer to God, is being outside. So it gives me a purpose to be outside other than just sitting there and being

bored.” Finally, Heidi discussed how triathlon training and using a Bible study called PACE (The Pain and Agony Christ Endured) helped her to not only push through her hard workouts, but also become closer to God. Heidi had gone through some personal struggles, such as divorce and losing her mother to Alzheimer’s. Her triathlon training served as an outlet and a way to connect with God, which helped her to endure those hard times. About her triathlon experience, Heidi stated, “I’m thankful because it definitely has brought me, in my mind, [...] much closer to God. And it’s given me new friends. And it’s an experience that you can share with a lot of people, and I’ve been able to share it with all three of my kids. So it’s something I know I’m going to keep trying to do as long as I can.” Triathlon has brought Heidi fulfillment on a spiritual and relational level, bringing her closer to God, friends, and family.

Even FCA staff, who although not specifically training for a sport or race, talked about using their workout time as a way to connect with people and evangelize outside of their job with FCA. For example, Karen shared that she worked out at least five days a week, at a local gym with a friend of hers who is a personal trainer. Karen stated that the gym is a “great networking community for me because the people there are already interested in health and fitness and sports.” Karen uses her job as an FCA staffer, which combines sport and faith, as a way to connect with and evangelize to others at the gym. The two professional triathletes, although very competitive talked about how their performance at the race was not the most important aspect, rather using their visibility and platform as a professional to connect with people and evangelize were more important. Finally, Tina who is the FCA Endurance huddle leader in her area, discussed how she was chosen by the FCA Endurance overall leader to attend a triathlon race for the purpose of evangelizing. She spoke positively about the experience and how having a different focus besides her performance as an athlete added meaning to the race for her.

Ultimately, multitasking by combining athletic training with either family, personal, evangelism, or God time, helps the FCA female athletes to find greater meaning and fulfillment in their sport. Because the training these women are involved in is time consuming and physically demanding, having an extra purpose or motivation to train, allows them to continue engaging in the sport and find emotional, physical, relational, and spiritual wellbeing. The female FCA staff also found purpose and meaning in their jobs and despite the emotional and time demands their jobs placed on them, they ultimately liked that they can combine two things that they're passionate about, sports and Jesus.

Faith and sport. As described above, Susan grew up playing sports and continued her athletic career in college. Her father was a coach and her husband is also a coach. Sport has certainly shaped her life in various ways, especially in that she has chosen a career that focuses on the sports world. When I asked her what she likes most about her job she enthusiastically stated,

“When you put my two favorite loves which is sports and Jesus and you put them together and that’s actually a job [...] I can’t believe I get paid for this. Because I feel like this is what I would do anyway. Is to speak and do bible studies and love on the athletic world of females and from coaches to coaches’ wives and families. [...] that’s my favorite thing is that I get to do what I absolutely love and that’s use the platform of athletics to share Jesus.”

Susan loves the fact that her job is to share her faith within a sport context because those are the two things she is most passionate about. Diana also talked about loving her job because she loves sports and likes being able to share her own experiences as an athlete. For example, Diana said,

“I understand the language they speak and I understand the struggles and I love being there saying, ‘hey I know how to work through struggles [...] I know the answer about how to get through life.’ [...] I just love being around, the whole sports arena. So it’s just a blessing for me.”

Many of the female staff spoke about their jobs as a calling from God, and they enjoyed the fact that they were fulfilling their calling. Patti, for example, who at first thought a man should be in her position, spoke about how she has come to feel called by God. When I asked her what she like most about her job, she explained, “what I like most is that I’m doing what I feel called to do, and therefore, I just feel like I’m growing in the Lord [...] and seeing things come together. Seeing camps be successful and seeing the work, seeing our vision play out.” Patti goes on explain that she has seen the impact of her work through people coming to know God. Hannah also talked about how she loves that what she is doing is bringing people to Christ. Her previous corporate job focused on making the company a profit and now she gets to focus on something she finds more meaningful—sharing her faith.

Even with the various demands and roles FCA female staff and athletes are called to fill, they have found purpose and meaning in their work with FCA and athletic pursuits. This is done by drawing on their evangelical belief system, which values family, relationships with others, and evangelism. Also, in the case of Susan, FCA has provided female married staff with tools for negotiating family life, relieving some of the burden of the second shift of labor.

Conclusion

As the interviews demonstrate, female Christian athletes and staff within FCA have to manage inter-role conflict between their family, work, and leisure activities. Using a multilevel approach I have shown that this conflict is shaped by the larger socio-cultural expectations

placed on women as mothers and wives, and FCA as an evangelical organization with a Christian faith system and conservative gender ideologies. Both of these larger factors influence the type of inter-role challenges individual female staff and athletes face within FCA, as well as the ways in which they negotiate the various demands placed on them. Ultimately, traditional gender ideologies of our larger culture, and evangelical subculture in particular, alongside the shift of evangelical women working outside the home, occupying leadership positions in FCA, and engaging in athletic training, all collide to create a complex position for evangelical female athletes. In order to manage this complexity, women in FCA rely on strategies such as multitasking and faith in order to create meaning and purpose while navigating their various and demanding roles.

Chapter 6: Conclusion

Summary

The purpose of this study is to understand the gendered expectations female athletes in FCA face and how they negotiate these expectations given their position as athletes and evangelical Christians. Through textual analysis of the *FCA Magazine* and in-depth interviews with athletes and staff in FCA I examine how gender is performed and negotiated by women at the intersection of sport and evangelical Christianity. Specifically, chapter two examines the representation of male and female athletes in the *FCA Magazine*. Athletes are presented with gender complexity, instead of the strict gender binary that is often present within mainstream sports media. However, similar to mainstream media, heterosexuality is reinforced especially for female athletes for whom combating the “image problem” remains a pervasive problem. Heterosexuality is emphasized in the 2010 “Bold and Beautiful” article by encouraging female athletes to perform femininity at least when off the field or court. The article presents a confusing message for female athletes in that they are expected to embody masculinity in order to perform well in their sport. Aside from their role as an athlete, they are expected to perform femininity while at the same time not placing too much emphasis on their outward appearance. Furthermore, in chapter two I argued that racial stereotypes are reinforced, specifically in regards to black women who are represented in non-feminized sports such as basketball before white women. In this way black female athletes pave the way for white women to play more masculine sports such as hockey and wrestling. Pictorially black female athletes are also presented as more aggressive and more muscular athletes than white female athletes further underpinning racial myths.

Chapter three continues to examine the *FCA Magazine* by analyzing the advice given to athletes regarding romantic relationships. I argue that traditional gender roles within the family are primarily upheld with women encouraged to act in a supporting role to their husbands and men expected to act as leader and provider. One major finding is that “servant leadership” and involved fatherhood, which were promoted by the Promise Keepers in the 1990s, is depicted in the *FCA Magazine* as early as the late 1970s. This finding suggests that the Promise Keepers did not necessarily originate this new type of masculinity, rather they borrowed their gender ideals from previous evangelical ministries such as FCA. It is significant that an evangelical sports ministry was partially responsible for this shift in evangelical masculinity, given that historically evangelical sports ministries that were part of the muscular Christianity movement primarily upheld hegemonic masculinity and gender hierarchy. In Chapter three, I also argue that although women are expected to fulfill traditional roles within the home, they are given a voice and authority through writing women’s-only advice columns focused on women’s issues. These women writers are not necessarily pushing the boundaries of traditional femininity, and in many reinforce gender norms by taking women’s domestic work as a given; however, women are looked up to as experts on women’s issues and respected for their advice on living a godly life, particularly in regards to romantic relationships.

Chapter four analyzes how the female athletes I interviewed navigate this “image problem.” Female athletes in general, and Christian athletes in particular, circumvent the “image problem” primarily by emphasizing femininity when “off the field” and by highlighting their heterosexuality. As members of FCA, an evangelical sports ministry that has a strong stance against homosexuality, heterosexuality was assumed by my interviewees through their privileging of same-sex discipleship and by maintaining physical and emotional boundaries with

male friends and co-workers. The “image problem” is further complicated by what I call the “modesty problem,” which stems from Christian doctrine that discourages placing too much emphasis on one’s physical appearance. The modesty problem was demonstrated by my interviewees through the reoccurring theme of female athletes struggling with self-esteem, body image, and eating disorders. Despite the challenges in navigating gender as female Christian athletes, I argue that my interviewees were able to find micro-empowerment through their sport participation. Micro-empowerment is possible for the women in FCA partially because of their racial and economic privilege, but their experiences as athletes has taught them valuable skills that has helped them be successful in other parts of their lives.

Chapter five investigates how female staff and athletes in FCA negotiate inter-role conflict as mothers, wives, athletes, and paid laborers. Using a multilevel theory of inter-role conflict, I argue that the specific challenges my interviewees face are shaped by socio-cultural expectations of women and the traditional gender ideology that informs evangelical communities. I also argue that my participants utilized multiple strategies to cope with work-family-leisure conflict, such as faith, spousal cooperation, and multitasking. Multitasking in particular was a common strategy for my interviewees. In general, researchers have found that multitasking induces stress, however, FCA female staff and athletes were able to combine their work and leisure activities with family, God, and personal time. These positive forms of multitasking allowed my interviewees to find fulfillment on multiple levels despite the challenges in balancing their various roles.

Contributions to the Literature

My findings in chapters two and three are significant in demonstrating how FCA provides its athletes various options in terms of gender performance. Men and women are not relegated to performing traditional femininity or hegemonic masculinity respectively as would be expected in an evangelical context. In this way, the *FCA Magazine*, unlike mainstream sports media, is a space where athletes break with prescribed gender norms. However, my findings also demonstrate how FCA is influenced by homophobia and especially lesbophobia within women's sports. Female athletes are given leeway in how they perform gender, but any performance of masculinity is relegated to "on the field," in order to ensure heterosexuality in female athletes.

Chapter three specially contributes to the growing body of literature analyzing how women in conservative religious organizations manage to find power and agency. Despite the traditional gender roles encouraged by FCA, women are respected and looked up to when it comes to issues that specifically affect women. In this way, FCA provides outlets for women to develop leadership and authority as Christians.

My findings in chapters four is significant in that it demonstrate how female Christian athletes are active agents in shaping their performance of gender. Chapter four highlights how despite the challenges female athletes in FCA face in navigating the "image problem" and the "modesty problem," they are able to find empowerment, acceptance, and confidence through their participation in sport. Instead of feeling contained by these various obstacles in navigating gender as athletes and Christian women, they embrace sport as a site of encouragement and positivity. Chapter four further contributes to the literature with my development and use of the theory of micro-empowerment. To date scholars have failed to analyze the impact sport has on Christian women, or how they exactly engage with athletics. I have found that their involvement

is complex, but ultimately they are able to integrate their athletic identity with both their gender and religious identities.

Chapter five is an important contribution to the literature on inter-role conflict, since scholars have failed to study how Christianity, sports, and gender intersect and produce unique challenges for female Christian athletes. Understanding how women in FCA navigate inter-role conflict is the first step in creating strategies to help female athletes and staff live fulfilling lives in more equitable work and family environments.

Recommendations for Future Research

My study of FCA suggests several areas for future research. From chapter two, one of the major questions left unanswered is why FCA chose to emphasize female athletes' femininity in 2010? Further investigation is needed into what types of conversations were happening within the editorial staff that created the "Bold and Beautiful" article. Blazer (2015) found that in 2006 there was a major shift in editorial staff at FCA with the hiring of more female writers and editors. How does the emphasis on femininity and the underlining fear of lesbianism relate to this influx of more women on staff? Finally, in the early 2000s there was a sharp increase in evangelical literature wrestling with homosexuality with many coming out as gay or in support of gay Christians. Is there a correlation to this increase in evangelical literature and "Bold and Beautiful"?

One way to answer these questions would be to interview *FCA Magazine* writers and editors. Areas of inquiry may include how they determine or find stories and if they experience conflict between their personal beliefs versus organizational beliefs. Blazer (2015) touches on this in her work, but does not fully explore these questions, as she did not comprehensively

interview FCA staff. Therefore, this area of research could be especially fruitful in revealing the motives behind the stories and gender representations in the *FCA Magazine*.

Another major area for further research would be to investigate how men in FCA navigate gender and how it compares to non-Christian male athletes and their female counterparts in the organization. Although male athletes do not have to navigate the “image problem,” what challenges do male Christian athletes face in terms of gender and sexuality? It would also be productive to analyze how closely male athletes in FCA conform to the representations of men in the *FCA Magazine*. Specifically, scholars should analyze men’s practice of “servant leadership” and involved fatherhood and how they experience and alleviate inter-role conflict as fathers, husbands, athletes, and paid laborers.

Finally, further investigation is needed to fully understand the intersections of race and gender that occur within FCA. Specifically, research is needed to distinguish how race is implicated in the construction of gender, as well as the challenges people of color face within FCA—an organization that has relied on white, male leadership since its inception. This research is needed in order to assist FCA in supporting men and women color as staff and athletes as it intentionally seeks to increase its minority population in a predominantly white organization.

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- Figure 1: Why is this girl crying? (1973, March). Why is this girl crying? *The Christian Athlete*, cover.

Figure 2: The young competitors 1. (1977, July/August). *The Christian Athlete*, 28.

Figure 3: The young competitors 2. (1977, July/August). *The Christian Athlete*, 29.

Figure 4: Charlotte Smith. (1998, January). *Sharing the Victory*, 8.

Figure 5: Tamika Cathings. (2007, June/July). *Sharing the Victory*, 10.

Figure 6: Bold and beautiful (2010 March). *Sharing the Victory*, 16-17.

Figure 7: Jan Ripple. (1993, December). *Sharing the Victory*, cover.

Figure 8: Make yourself. (n. d.) Pinterest. Retrieved from

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Appendix

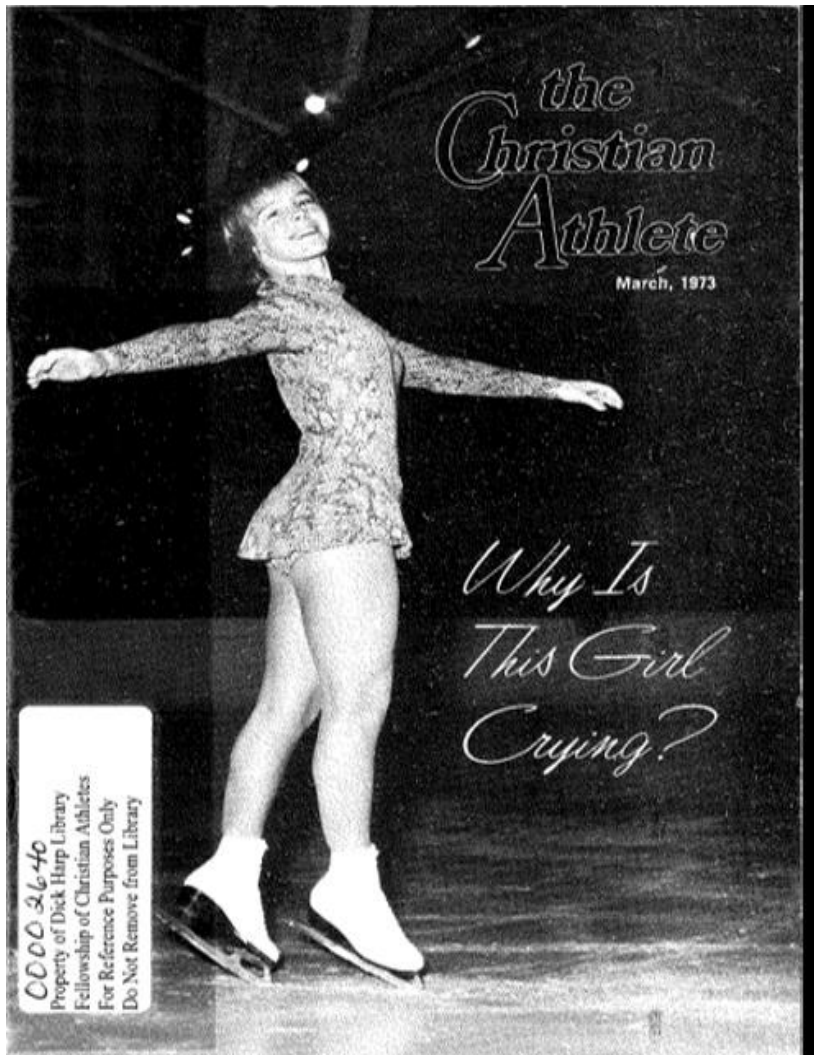


Figure 1: "Why is this Girl Crying?"



Figure 2: The Young Competitors 1



Figure 3: The Young Competitors 2



Figure 4: Charlotte Smith



Figure 5: Tamika Catchings

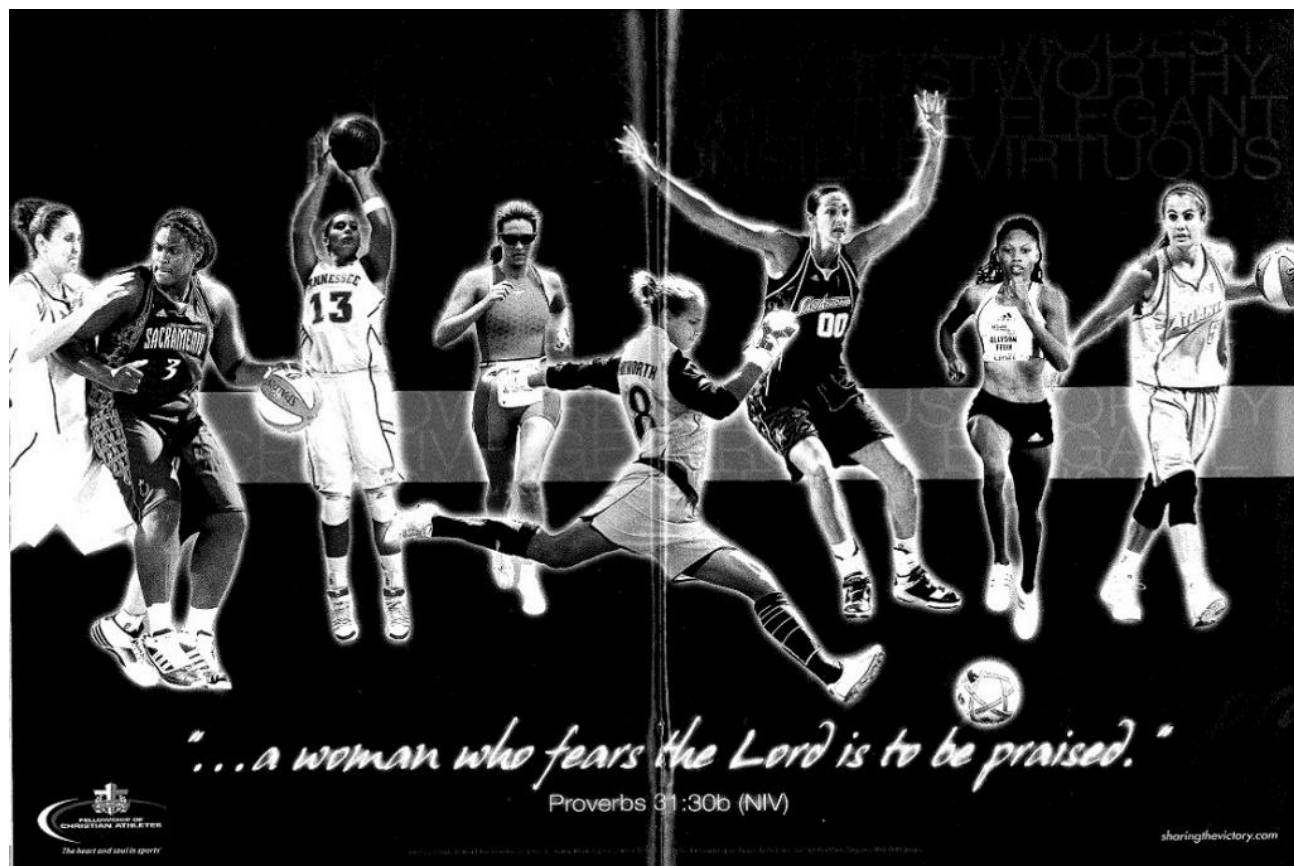


Figure 6: Bold and Beautiful

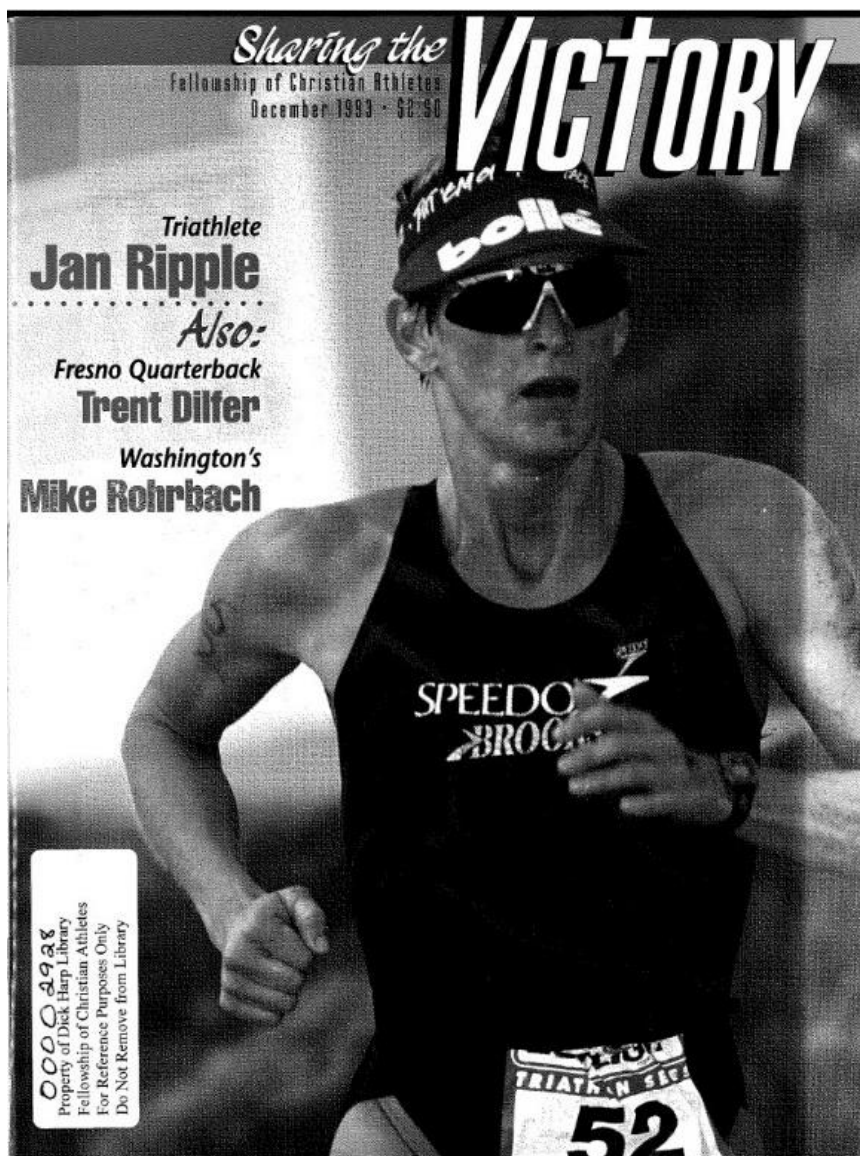


Figure 7: Jan Ripple



Figure 8: Make Yourself

| Sociocultural (society and culture at large) | Organizational/Structural (FCA and evangelical subculture) | Individual (family, personal lives) |
|---|---|--|
| Cultural expectations for mothers and wives (women expected to perform more household labor and childrearing tasks) | Time demands and stress of FCA job | Women value traditional roles |
| Gender Ideology | Emotional demands of job | Women value work and/or athletic training |
| Cultural expectations for women on the job (expected to perform more emotional labor) | Lack of women in FCA | Women are more likely to do more household labor |
| | Valuing of same-sex mentoring | Family structure (single, married, children, or no children) |
| | Conservative gender ideology | |

Table 1: Multilevel Factors that Influence Inter-role Conflict