

A Gender Drama in American Football Culture: The Case of the Coach's Wife¹

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Abstract

This article explores the issue of gender construction and gender display for American Football Coaches' Wives, and examines the gender role of football coaches' wives through a dramatic lens. Through a Pentadic analysis, developed by dramatic theorist Kenneth Burke, of the American Football Coaches' Wives Association's (AFCWA) convention space and publications, the article reveals motives for the allotment of space and for wives' subsequent publication materials. Finally, the paper draws conclusions about what the football coaches' wives' rhetoric says about how they view their gender role in the culture of American Football.

In 1989 a group of women who were married to football coaches met at the American Football Coaches' Association (AFCA) convention in Nashville, Tennessee and decided to form a support group. They asked the AFCA for a meeting room at the AFCA convention. Soon, what started as a single hospitality room for wives who were waiting for their husbands to finish in their meetings became three rooms including a meeting room for panel discussions, a business room for developing bylaws and a mission statement, and an official room for the American Football Coaches' Wives Association (AFCWA) convention. The AFCWA's motto, 'what we are all about is Camaraderie, Support, Information and Service', describes not only their purpose at the convention, but also their many publishing activities throughout the years. The formal panels and discussions at their convention include lectures on financial planning and football recruitment rules, and discussions on how to help children cope with moving so often. Each year the AFCWA donates money to, and visits, a children's hospital close to where the convention takes place. Their publication of a cookbook/scrapbook put together by over 160 football coaches' wives provides the funds for such endeavours. The cookbook, *Winning Seasons: A Collection of Recipes and Memories*, and the newsletter, *The Support Staff*, both provide rich material for rhetorical analysis. Because football is a 'man made' and 'man played' sport, it is intriguing to find a feminine presence in the form of a cookbook and wives' organised attendance at the coaches' convention.

For many men, football allows for violence and male bonding (Nelson, 1994), however, for women, football often means competing for men's attention, or worrying about boyfriends, husbands or sons on the field. In this

article, I examine what football means for women, particularly women who are married to men whose life revolves around the game. More specifically, through a rhetorical analysis of the AFCWA's space at their convention and analysis of their publications, I explore the issue of gender construction and gender display in the lives of football coaches' wives. In my analysis, I argue that a Burkean pentadic (Burke, 1962) analysis provides the best insight into the gender drama of the AFCWA space and publications.

I use the pentad because it is concerned with determining a person's motive for producing their rhetoric. I contend that the space the AFCA gives to the AFCWA at the convention functions to contain the wives' rhetorical activity. I assert, however, that the AFCWA's motive for publishing works by coaches' wives stems from the fact that they have been marginalised throughout football's history. The publications serve to indoctrinate and provide support for new football coaches' wives. The more extensive purpose is threefold: First, the publications emphasise wives' value to football through descriptions of events and organisational plans. Second, the publications indoctrinate new members into proper gender behaviour through the regaling of present members' experiences. Finally, the publications express support to other wives through accounts of their fellow members' infallibility.

Michael Oriard (1993) examines the gendering of football in the United States at the turn of the twentieth century arguing that many people believed American society was becoming effeminate due to the onslaught of industrialisation. Before industrialisation, societies generally integrated domestic and money-making work life (Oakley, 1974). During the age of industrialisation, the historical doctrine of 'separate spheres' emerged. Men increasingly were encouraged to leave the home for work and women were progressively confined primarily to the domestic sphere. The movement of the concept of work from home to factory caused a major crisis in the life and unity of the family because it fostered male identification with things outside the home such as politics, business, and particular forms of entertainment (Campbell, 1989). Thus, as women began to take over the home and because it was hard for men to completely abandon the idea of home as their space, intellectuals of the time were haunted by the idea that society was becoming effeminate (Oriard, 1993). Football and other 'manly' sports encouraged a strictly male gendered display and intellectuals welcomed this display because of the roughness involved.

Football helped to perpetuate the separate spheres doctrine in two ways. First, football and other 'manly' sports provided an arena where men were once more masters. Second, because women were allowed no role in football-as-athletic-contest, they were relegated to the sidelines, which implies that in sport men are performers and heroes, women are watchers and admirers (Oriard, 1993). This phenomenon also extends into other arenas of public life.

Even though the football coach's wife is relegated to the sideline, her role as football coach's wife is a job in itself. As found in politics, the general public is often fascinated with the wives of public men – consider Jackie Kennedy (Gillespie, 1990). The public may not realise, however, how essential the wife's life may be to her public husband. When men act in a man's world, they hope to find fame and esteem there and so receive the public rewards of society, but it is women whom the pattern designates to be givers of private joys, healers of wounds, sufferers in public, replenishers of pride and courage and honour. (Janeway, 1971: 196). It is easy to see why this role is so important in the sports world where coaches' jobs hang on wins and losses. When a coach comes home from a defeat, it is the wife's job to know how to pick him up again. Yet, the role of the wife of a public person extends beyond the private realm. While entrenched in her private duties of home and family, she is also expected to make public appearances.

Janet Finch (1983) shows that certain features of men's employment typically impose structures and constraints upon wives' lives. Foremost, there are time elements with which a wife must vie. This is especially evident in men's jobs that do not have set hours; and so, the husband is either gone most of the time, or brings work home, or at least always has work on his mind (Finch, 1983). Another structure some jobs impose on wives has to do with the work characteristics and whether the occupation requires certain social obligations and public appearances. The public wife represents an important aspect of the American social fabric. For instance, when the wife of a politician is present at an event, it signals that the event is important (Gillespie, 1990). In fact, Americans have come to consider a politician's wife as a cultural icon. This is also the case with the coach's wife. Teresa Goodwin Phelps (1994: 11-12), wife of former Notre Dame head basketball coach Digger Phelps, describes her life as a 'lovely wife':

Lovely wives – as TV commentators invariably call us – women whose lives are intimately affected by the vicissitudes of sports. We are expected to be present at all the games, we sometimes lead the cheering, we welcome sports (personified as players, fans, sportswriters, coaches) into our homes. Many coaches' wives are lovely, but sports announcers use it as if it were a single word – '*lovelywife*' – used to stand for a certain kind of woman: trivial, irrelevant, interchangeable.

The concept of 'lovelywives' reiterates the approved gender behaviour for coaches' wives in the US. In other words, our culture expects women to stay on the sidelines during a football game. When women do walk on the field of play, as some peewee (primary school age) through high school teams have allowed, or enter the locker room to report on the game, controversy abounds.

The separation of the sexes in the world of sport is by no means an unfamiliar idea in sports scholarship. Many analysts have noted the role sport plays in gender separation and identification (cf. Nelson, 1994; Bryson, 1994; Oriard, 1993). Other sports scholars have examined the idea of sport as performance (Miller, 1999; Raitz, 1995), and gender scholars have demonstrated that gender itself is a performance (West & Zimmerman, 1987; Butler, 1990). Our display of gender is based upon our understanding of the conventions that we have learned through social interaction. Conventions are the idea that it is normal for men to own property, to have a dominating presence, or to play football. Thus, 'doing gender is an ongoing activity embedded in everyday interaction' (West & Zimmerman, 1987: 130). In this sense 'gender is in no way a stable identity or locus of agency from which various acts proceed; rather, it is an identity tenuously constituted in time – an identity instituted through a stylised repetition of acts' (Butler, 1990: 270).

Judith Butler (1990) maintains that gender is an idea, constituted by acts that conceal their own genesis. In other words, gender is supposed to be natural, inherent, and our gendered displays are performed in a way that embodies naturalness. In this way, when we enact our gender, we are not supposed to see the differences between sex and gender. Butler (1990: 279) argues that gender is not inherent or natural, that gender is not inside us, but 'irretrievably outside'. By this she means that gender is socially compelled and it is not real in the sense that it is not individually determined. Sport is one societal aspect that compels our gendered performance. For instance, while growing up, girls and boys learn that in the supposed 'natural' order of things, there are some sports more suitable for one sex or the other. This organisation of life is reconstituted day in and day out as girls are taught to cook and clean and boys are taught to do yard work and improve their sports skills. And, just as boys begin to learn the layout of a football, soccer, or baseball field with endzones, goals, and bases, girls often begin to learn the layout of the home – what goes in the kitchen and the living room.

Simone de Beauvoir (1971) explains that because men and women have never been equal in the history of the world, with men as the dominators, that humanity is male and man defines woman not in herself, but relative to him. Women 'live dispersed among the males attached through residence, housework, economic condition, and social standing to certain men – fathers or husbands – more firmly than they are to other women' (de Beauvoir, 1971: p. xxii). Women are constituted as something Other than male. De Beauvoir (1971) continues by asserting that much male rhetoric is focused on keeping women in their place by lavishing them with eulogies about the merits of the truly feminine woman that turns out to be the submissive woman.

When an individual performs his or her gender, that performance is infused with motive. The motive may be to play their gender correctly in the eyes of society, in order to be accepted by that society. It is the case for women

that they may play the proper role of *Other*. Dramatist Kenneth Burke (1962: xv) spent a lifetime trying to answer the question, 'What are people doing and why are they doing it?'. He called his method of inquiry 'dramatism' because 'it invites one to consider the matter of motives in a perspective that, being developed from the analysis of drama, treats language and thought primarily as modes of action' (Burke, 1962: xxii). In other words, Burke believed that 'humans develop and present messages in much the same way that a play is presented' (Foss, 1996: 456).

A dramatic analysis of the AFCWA's publications can provide a framework for determining how gender performance in sports occurs in ways other than on the field. Oriard (1993) has addressed how the American popular press from 1880-1910 aided in gender construction through articles about football. Until now, there have been no documented studies on whether or how meetings to discuss aspects of football and publications from those who live in the football world have contributed to gender construction. While Butler's work on gender and performativity is helpful in this endeavour, I propose to use Burkean methodology because the AFCWA has more often chosen public action in the form of the written word rather than bodily performance. There are certainly performative elements within the publications, but Burkean analysis is constituted toward written literature, which is the focus for this article. The pentad is also a well-known strategy for analysing discourse by focusing on how it attributes motivation to human action (Blakesley, forthcoming). Certainly, in a continuation of this study, a use of Butler's (1997: 7) contention that 'language is life' would be appropriate in an analysis of personal interviews with football coaches' wives. The rhetorical artefacts I use to demonstrate the usefulness of the pentad in this essay include first, my own experience of the 1999 AFCWA's convention space; second, the AFCWA's publication, *Winning Seasons: A Collection of Recipes and Memories*; and third, seven issues of the AFCWA's newsletter, *The Support Staff*.

A Pentadic Frame

Kenneth Burke (1962) believes that all life is drama and by putting one's drama into writing, it exploits the events. This is because the writer is explaining his or her view of the event in that writing. When a playwright develops a drama for the stage he or she is exploiting everyday events on that stage. When a writer produces text specifically for publication, the drama is exploited even further. Burke was quite intrigued by the question of motive in a person's actions and/or discourse. Similarly, I am intrigued by a group's motive to publish material by and about themselves. Perhaps the motive is fame and fortune, but I contend that the answer more often lies with issues of legitimacy. Telling one's story helps to legitimise one's existence. Burke (1962: xv) develops his pentad as:

five terms as generating principle of our investigation. They are Act, Scene, Agent, Agency, Purpose. In a rounded statement about motives you must have some word that names the act (names what took place, in thought or deed), and another that names the scene (the background of the act, the situation in which it occurred); also, you must indicate what person or kind of person (*agent*) who performed the act, what means or instruments she used (*agency*), and the *purpose*.

Of course, just naming the five components does not constitute an analysis of an artefact. The analysis comes in exploring the relationships between the five elements of the pentad. Mainly, a critic is interested in how each element has influenced other elements. Burke found that particular texts tended to highlight one of the five elements of the pentad as the privileged term (Blakesley, forthcoming). Determining what a rhetor privileges in their texts helps a critic get to the heart of their motive. In the case of the football coaches' wives, I argue that the scene of the convention influences the other four elements in the pentad. Specifically, the scene influences the act of publishing.

The Agent and The Scene

Explaining how the publications of the AFCWA fit into the Burkean pentad is intricate. The *agents* are, of course, the AFCWA members, however, the *scene* or background for this drama requires more detail. The AFCWA is auxiliary to the AFCA. The AFCWA's initial purpose was to help new wives understand the trials and tribulations they would face in their new role, including: constant moving, dealing with a small household income, being both mother and father to children, and dealing with the feeling of being alone quite often in their married lives. The initial group of ten has grown to over five hundred in the last decade. Not all members make it to the convention each year, but all receive the AFCWA newsletter, *The Support Staff*, three times a year. The above historical background information and where the AFCWA members meet when they congregate at a convention constitutes the *scene* for this rhetorical analysis. Having attended the 1999 meeting in Nashville, Tennessee, I have first-hand knowledge of this scene. In the Opryland Hotel in Nashville, the meeting areas for the AFCA were set up similarly to rooms at many academic conferences. Each room had a front table with tablecloths and skirts, a podium and overhead projector. Many rooms had television and VCR units and each room had rows of chairs for about twenty-five observers.

In comparison, the meeting area for the AFCWA was drastically different. First, whereas the meeting area for the AFCA was spread throughout the entire hotel, the meeting area for the wives was segregated from the AFCA convention and relegated to one wing with two large rooms and a large hallway. Registration tables were set up in the hallway, and the officers for the

AFCWA had named one of the other rooms 'The Hospitality Room', and the remaining room they had deemed 'The Business Room'. The hospitality room contained a number of round tables with tablecloths and eight chairs at each table. Each table also had a centrepiece of a pot of silk flowers with a wooden football sticking out. Each wooden football had a yellow ribbon tied in a bow around it. The hospitality room also had one rectangular table loaded with pastries and beverage urns. The AFCWA business room was set up much like the AFCA meeting rooms in the other parts of the building; however, this meeting room had over one hundred chairs set up in rows instead of just the twenty-five or so chairs set up in the AFCA meeting rooms. The AFCWA business room did not have a front table, but it did have a podium set up, which designated the front of the room.

The differences and similarities of the coaches' and the wives' respective meeting rooms is rhetorically significant. Feminist critics would probably argue that by diminishing their amount of space, the AFCA is purposefully trying to keep the AFCWA in a subordinate role and emphasise the AFCWA's status as Other. Having fewer rooms all in one place reminds the AFCWA members that they are just an auxiliary group. Because their meeting rooms are separated from the AFCA's rooms, this also communicates that wives are to stay out of their husband's way, or to stay on the sidelines. The very existence of a hospitality room may serve to trivialise the proceedings at the AFCWA's part of the convention. While social gatherings tend to be a part of every kind of conference, Americans tend to value the business or learning aspect of a convention over the entertainment aspect. When their coaching husbands do come to the AFCWA's section of the convention, they come only to the hospitality room. To the men, the hospitality room is seen as the AFCWA's main accomplishment or purpose. Equating their function with hospitality serves to emphasise the AFCWA's auxiliary status to the AFCA. Additionally, having only one room for business meetings also may communicate that less importance is given to the business conducted by the AFCWA.

What the wives do with their setting or *scene*, however, communicates much about how they view their gender role in the American football culture. First, having their own registration helps members to see themselves as their own organisation. In the United States, paperwork tends to legitimise an event or action. In effect, having paperwork says that while the AFCWA may be auxiliary to the AFCA, their agenda is all their own. Second, the set-up of the hospitality room reiterates the mission of their organisation. Once again, the AFCWA's mission reads, 'what we are all about is Camaraderie, Support, Information, and Service' (AFCWA, Summer 1999: 8). The hospitality room allows for, even encourages, members to get together in groups around a table to share and support each other. Finally, The AFCWA continues its theme of camaraderie and support in the business room. A sense of camaraderie and support incorporates inclusiveness. By allowing more than just 25 or so people

into the room where they conduct business, the AFCWA in effect communicates that 'all are welcome'. It also suggests that the AFCWA expects or at least anticipates more involvement from their members since all sessions are plenary. Thus, major decisions are not limited to participation by a few. Through their use of convention space the AFCWA reasserts their mission and reminds observers of their accomplishments. This leads to the *act* of the pentad because the *act* also reiterates the AFCWA's mission time and time again.

The Act and The Agency

The *act* of the AFCWA is the writing of the publications themselves. The publications were born of the *scene* described above. I contend that because the AFCA tries to limit the functions of the AFCWA through the *scene*, that the AFCWA in turn tries to broaden their scope through their *act*. The *agency* is a dynamic feature interwoven throughout the *act* of publication. The *agency* comes in the form of the types of writings found throughout the *act*. Publications include the newsletter and the cookbook/scrapbook. Within the cookbook are various examples of prose and poetry that I judge as *agencies* themselves. Each *agency* the AFCWA engages has a unique *purpose* that I discuss in the conclusion. One may argue that the *act* of publishing in the traditional feminine form of a cookbook or newsletter does not expand the AFCWA's scope, but instead serves to further constrict their rhetoric, however, it is often through such traditional acts that marginalised groups are able to have their message heard by outsiders. This requires feminist critics to change our own traditional mode of thinking from perceiving traditional feminine acts as compliance to *Otherness* to perceiving such acts as using a traditional mode to achieve voice in a patriarchal society. The following analysis demonstrates how the AFCWA uses its publications as a voice of social change within the dominant AFCA. Because publication of one's ideas is a beginning path to authority, by acting through publication the AFCWA begins to change their own value within the AFCA.

Within the *act* of publication are various themes that emerged through the artefacts. The two themes examined in this essay are labelled: 'Supporting Each Other' and 'Supporting Their Husbands'. Cluster analysis, in the form of the 'cluster-agon' method, is also a Burkean offspring. It is a 'statistical' way of viewing a written work. Burke (1973) believed that if one were to tally up or track the number of ways an author refers to a certain term, one could understand the symbolism behind those words. Burke (1973: 20) writes:

The work of every writer contains a set of implicit equations. He [sic] uses 'associational clusters'. And you may, by examining his work, find 'what goes with what' in these clusters – what kinds of acts and images and personalities and situations go with his notions of heroism, villainy, consolation, despair, etc. And though

he be perfectly conscious of the act of writing, conscious of selecting a certain kind of mood, etc., he cannot possibly be conscious of the interrelationships among all these equations. Afterwards, by inspecting his work 'statistically', we or he may disclose by objective citation the structure of motivation operating here.

When describing the conducting of a cluster analysis, Sonja Foss (1996) explains that the critic must identify key terms in the artefact. She also instructs critics to chart clusters around each key term. Foss (1996) explains that these clusters will help the critic determine how the rhetor views the key term. This method is useful in conjunction with the pentad because it highlights privileged elements. The privileged element for football coaches' wives is the *act* of publishing. Through cluster analysis a critic can determine how the rhetor's language helps in privileging individual elements of the pentad.

Method

The cookbook consists of almost one thousand recipes by over 160 football coaches' wives. At the end of each recipe, the contributor also includes a favourite quotation or anecdote, typically a story from her life in football. In addition, each section of the cookbook (the appetisers, the accompaniments, breads, desserts and main dishes) contains an article about a specific coach's wife, an article about their lives in general, written by a coach's wife, or a poem by a coach's wife. The final chapter or section in the cookbook is filled only with these kinds of sentiments. This section was titled, 'Wit and Wisdom From the Wives: Poems, Recollections and Prayers'. Analysis focused on these sections of the cookbook. Each newsletter had a letter from the President; updates from the Treasurer and Membership Recruiter; various articles about coaches and coaches' wives' accomplishments since the last newsletter; births and deaths in the AFCWA community; an article or two about what to look forward to at the next convention; and an article by a financial consultant who also sponsors the hospitality room at the convention.

Publications were analysed to identify key terms. These are terms that occur numerous times within a text and terms the critic deems significant. I determined that the theme, 'Supporting Each Other', would most likely be apparent whenever the key terms 'support', 'wives', 'help', 'we', 'share', 'give', 'love' and 'friendship' appeared. These terms occurred most frequently and all are tied to the idea of supporting or encouraging another person or they refer directly to the wives' group. Similarly, I determined that the theme, 'Supporting Their Husbands', would most likely occur in conjunction with words such as 'husband', 'marriage', 'coach', 'game', 'team', 'football' and 'season'. These words refer directly to the husband or to aspects of his job.

All analysis was performed through numerous readings of the artefacts. This analysis showed that each theme had cluster terms surrounding the key terms. For the 'Supporting Each Other' theme, the cluster terms were those that expounded upon what it would mean to 'support' each other and ways the women referred to one another other than by using 'coach's wife'. Similarly, the second theme, 'Supporting Her Husband', had numerous cluster terms that helped me understand that theme: most often these were explanations of what the coach's wife was expected to do for her husband, her family and the team because of her husband's job.

Another topic that needs to be addressed here is the typicality of the women who are a part of publishing this material. Certainly there are more coaches' wives than the five hundred who belong to the AFCWA, and I do not contend that the findings from this study be attributed to all football coaches' wives in the country. I do, however, argue the case that women who happen to be married to football coaches in the United States are likely to have similar life experiences because of the gendered position of football in American society. In addition, I have found through discussions about this study with coaches' wives who do not belong to the AFCWA that they agree with most of the rhetoric from the AFCWA.

Supporting Each Other

A significant finding in this analysis is how the coaches' wives refer to one another in their publications. In *The Support Staff*, members wrote about their experiences with other coaches' wives. When referring to their fellow coaches' wives, they used many terms of endearment. For instance, 'sister', 'sisterhood' and/or 'sorority' is mentioned at least once in each of the seven *Support Staff* issues analysed. These terms were always clustered around the key terms 'support' and 'coaches' wives'. But there were also more terms clustered nearby that help to determine what it means to be a 'sister' in this particular group. Since 'support' is the main thing coaches' wives do for each other, the implication is that sisters do the same. Sisters are, however, also 'ladies out there who know how we feel and what we go through'. Sisters provide a 'sense of belonging . . . and of camaraderie'. The AFCWA even designed a trophy, which gives tribute to their sisterhood. The trophy 'is a pitcher, symbolizing a woman's generosity, set on a solid oak base, which symbolises the nurturing and love that each woman receives from the sisters in our association'. Finally, sisters help to renew each other's sense of 'gratitude for being a coach's wife'. It is through 'fun and camaraderie . . . sharing and community' that coaches' wives become and remain sisters (AFCWA, Fall 1998: 5).

Those who used the term 'sister' when writing in the newsletter were more likely to be 'founding mothers' of the organisation or current officers of the AFCWA. Using the term 'sister' to describe other coaches' wives serves to remind younger wives how they should treat their fellow wives. It also serves

as a way for those who may be perceived as unapproachable or as superiors in the organisation to publicly announce themselves as equals, thus inviting inclusiveness and reiterating their mission statement. And while some may equate 'sisters' with siblings and thus sibling rivalry, the frequent use of the term 'sister' clustered around 'support' or 'camaraderie' reminds coaches' wives that even though their husbands may be rivals during the football season, that rivalry has no place within the AFCWA.

Ironically, Carolyn Allen (1997), the wife of a Texas high school football coach, explains that a wife's loyalty must always lie with her husband. While this publication is not from the AFCWA, many of the wives I talked with casually at the AFCWA conference suggested I read it. Paradoxically, in *Webster's Dictionary* 'sisterly' means to be 'friendly, kind, and affectionate' (Guralnik, 1976: 1332), while 'brotherly' means to be 'friendly, kind, and *loyal*' (Guralnik, 1976: 181, emphasis added). This implies that men must be loyal to one another and women should be kind to one another, but loyal to men. The AFCWA's use of the term sister conflates the notions of sisterly and wifely obligations. A sister stands by her other sisters while a wife stands by her husband. *Webster's* definition, however, gives the AFCWA a way out of that dilemma. The AFCWA publications do not make being friendly and being loyal mutually exclusive. The publications never give members an ultimatum of loyalty to husbands or loyalty to the AFCWA. Such a request would be the antithesis of the camaraderie the group purports to uphold.

Other terms that the wives use to refer to each other problematise sisterly relationships. For instance, one member describes her 'sisters' as her 'Guardian Angels'. Many wives write about prayer in the different publications, but very rarely do they write about praying for each other; they usually write about praying for their husbands, their husbands' teams and their families. The most frequent type of prayer mentioned is when wives pray for strength to make it through the season themselves. Yet, they always send 'wishes' to each other for a successful season – knowing that each Saturday, half of the football teams in the United States will have to lose:

My wish is that you have fair officials who can actually tell who has the ball, loyal fans who are smart enough to know that you don't put the ball in the air when you are leading by five points and there is less than a minute to go in the game, dry fields that let your running backs keep their feet, and AT LEAST nine victory parties (AFCWA, 1996: 94).

Saying 'prayers' for their own loved ones and sending 'wishes' to their sisters in the AFCWA sends a signal to readers about where the individual authors' loyalties lie without forgetting their commitment to support for the AFCWA. Additionally, the term 'Guardian Angel' is used as a metaphor for guarding

other member's gender role as coaches' wives. Because the wives are constantly surrounded by masculinity, the coaches' wives may feel a need to emphasise their femininity. Guardian angels are supposed to protect the sanctity of the one they guard. This sanctity is linked to the purity or piety expected of women in the Victorian Age. Guardian angels are also a guiding spirit of influence. In other words, not only do guardian angels protect those in their care, but they also influence other's decisions.

In *The Support Staff* there is constant reference to the qualities found in a coach's wife. Those qualities are easily summarised by AFCWA member Joyce-Anne Hamilin in *Winning Seasons*: 'A football coach's wife . . . is dedicated, loyal, committed, loving, a youth care giver, a supporter, a hostess, a cheerleader, an organiser, a fan, a confidante, a team Mom, and she is strong and independent' (AFCWA, 1996: iii). This goes along with the 'Founding Mothers' purpose for the AFCWA: 'Each of us [founding mothers] wanted to help out the younger coaches' wives, to give back something of our experience to make their lives a little easier' (AFCWA, Summer 1998: 4). This was to make younger wives' lives easier and to nurture behaviour the older wives deemed appropriate for coaches' wives.

Elsewhere in *The Support Staff* and the *Winning Seasons* cookbook, the coaches' wives continue the theme of support for each other. Indeed, the name of the newsletter exemplifies this concept, however, 'support' for each other is often figuratively tied into the 'support' of football in general. The sports metaphors in the publications abound. These metaphors serve to reify the women's connection to football; thus, football permeates all they do. When planning to organise the AFCWA, the founding mothers explain that they 'devised a game plan' (AFCWA, Summer 1998: 4). At the convention, the women put together presentations that are summarised in the newsletter. Some of the titles of those presentations include: 'Basic X's and O's for Women', 'Seasons of Opportunity' (based upon a football season not a season of the year), 'The Opening Kickoff', and 'Extra Points'. Similarly, in the cookbook, many of the wives gave 'sports names' to their recipes. Some examples include: 'Victory Meatballs', 'Pigskin Pickin's', 'Sideline Specialties', 'Pigskin Pineapple Party Pizza', 'Game Day Beef Stew', 'First String Chilli' and 'Last Down Pumpkin Bread'. In addition, the AFCWA members often refer to each other in all their publications as 'teammates'. They tell personal stories about each other and how other coaches' wives have helped them in difficult times. For instance, Liz Mullins says of her co-editor for the cookbook, 'To me, you're better than Joe Montana on 4th and Long' (AFCWA, 1996: iii). They encourage each other by using football metaphors: 'just holler and someone can offer suggestions because they have been in the same 'fourth down and a yard to go' situation' (AFCWA, 1996: 94).

One motive for using sports metaphors when describing more mundane aspects of their lives in the publications is to juxtapose and thus equate their everyday lives with the supposed importance of their husbands' jobs. Thus, recipes become as important as plays in the teams' play books. These metaphors, however, also confuse the issue of loyalty once again. The wives equate mundane aspects of their lives (cooking) with football to show loyalty to women's everyday lives. Simultaneously, the wives equate their various daily hardships with plays in football making light of the situation by making it into part of a game. Using sports metaphors to diminish the weight of their hardships shows the wives' loyalty to their husbands by making the hardships caused by his job seem less obtrusive. Football coaches' wives cannot allow their troubles to take over their football lives, because this may ruin their husbands' careers, so they must turn the problem around rhetorically.

This is where the true 'support' of other wives comes 'into play'. They joke about being alone, because football takes the coach away from home so much. They give themselves nicknames that describe this situation. For instance, my own mother calls herself 'a married single'. A more severe name and system of support is described in *Winning Seasons*:

Pam Helton hosted a 'Football Widowed Wives' dinner during two-a-days. Annually, the wives gathered, reviewed family game plans, recruited ideas from one another on 'widowhood' and shared our wins, losses and ties of motherhood. Our coaches call the plays on the turf, but in our 'wives' huddle', we have some 'secrets' that no opponent would dare to challenge.

My best buddy, Pam, chose the 'option' along with her coach to 'play' on another field, but our friendship never took a timeout. I intercepted the hostess apron, carried it and ran. The tradition has continued as we 'Football Widowed Wives' team together each year and long to hear that whistle blow (AFCWA, 1996: 319).

Adopting football language aids in legitimising their role in the football community. Because they are so often left alone by their football-coaching husbands, it is easy to see that they may fear being forgotten by the masculine football community. By organising, through the AFCWA and through individual team's wives' groups, these women not only become a force that cannot be ignored, they find purpose in their togetherness and produce a rhetoric that reinforces their gender's status in football while legitimising their existence. This is what football coaches' wives do for each other. In 'Supporting Their Husbands', however, the analysis reveals what the wives' publications say about the expectations for a football coach's wife in supporting her husband and his team.

Supporting Their Husbands

The analysis of the theme, 'Supporting Each Other', addressed the issue of a football coach's wife's loyalty. According to Carolyn Allen, the wife's loyalty should lie with her husband. Loyalty is one term found clustered around the key terms 'husband' and 'marriage' in the theme 'Supporting Their Husbands'. According to the wives themselves, two of the most important qualities in a coach's wife are independence and the ability 'to be prepared for anything' (AFCWA, 1996: 17; AFCWA, Summer 1999: 1; Spring 1998: 6). Not coincidentally, in their autobiographies, a number of football coaches admitted that these were qualities they looked for when searching for a wife. For instance, Bo Schembechler (1989: 181), former head football coach at the University of Michigan, explains: 'it became pretty apparent that this was the right woman for me. She was smart, independent'. And Joe Paterno (1989: 78), head coach at Penn State University, reminisces about when he realised that his future wife would be the perfect coach's wife: 'She was very bubbly and would say whatever came into her head, which I liked. I could see her smarts, especially when I went out to her house and saw what kind of a leader she was among her roommates'.

In the football coaches' wives' publications, these qualities take on a new meaning because the wives attributed the terms themselves. Many wives submitted poems to the *Winning Seasons* cookbook/scrapbook. These poems address all the expectations in curious ways. For instance, the wives' interpretation of independence is expressed differently in their poems from their husbands' autobiographies. Wives interpret independence as being alone, not necessarily as being a leader. One poem explains in a few of its stanzas:

I had a baby all alone
Where's my husband-he wasn't home.
It was a girl but how would he know
'Cause he was out recruiting in the snow.

It was my birthday, I had a date
My husband phoned, he said he'd be late
And wouldn't you know I got a call
My husband said he ain't coming at all!

Our kids wake up and they complain
Where's my Daddy-he's gone again
But never fear, Mommy's here
To wipe away those tears and fears.

To all of this there's ups and downs
Lots of smiles and lots of frowns

You know we wouldn't change our lives
'Cause we are proud to be coaches' wives
(AFCWA, 1996: 108).

In the last stanzas of her *Poem*, Lyndi McCartney (AFCWA, 1996: 28) explains

I want to be understanding and truly fair
With the pressure you're under I am aware
I have to do so much when I'm not 'a pair'
I need you to show me you really care.

I'll keep things going at home as we planned
While you work and travel all over this land.
Loving you is a joy and especially grand
Because God is holding us in
the palm of His hand.

It is in the poetry where the Burkean idea of agency dominates. *Agency* refers to the means the *agent* uses when performing the *act*. Through poetry, members reveal the most devastating aspects about being married to a coach, and yet almost every poem ends on a happy note. Poetry provides a means for venting frustration in a fun and lyrical tone. The poems are a means of expressing every trial and tribulation and a means of coping with those hardships. As the wives write their poems they also realise all that they have accomplished and all that they are able to withstand. When the wives submit their poems for publication it also serves as an agency for legitimising their existence.

There were fourteen poems published in the cookbook. Seven were strictly about being a football coach's wife. Four more were about football in general, and there were three poems that were not about football. Many of the poems about being a football coach's wife are melancholy in tone. In addition, the poems demonstrate the wives' loyalty to their husbands because in each of these poems, the poet always accepts her fate and fulfils the expectations set out for her. Poetry allows the wife to illustrate both her frustration and her loyalty. The commonality among the poems also serves to bind the wives together in their 'sisterhood'.

Kenneth Burke (1966: 29) spent much time contemplating the intricacies of poetry, explaining:

as for poetics pure and simple: I would take this motivational dimension to involve the sheer exercise of 'symbolicity' for its own sake, purely for the love of the art . . . some occasions, in connection with aesthetic activities, we humans might like to exercise our prowess with symbol systems, just because that's the kind of animal we are. I would view the poetic motive in that light.

This can also be understood to mean that all humans have some desire to be poetic at some time in their life. And if the average person has had a desire to be poetic, he or she would be less likely to judge others in their own attempts at poetry. This does not mean that people will not judge the talent of the poet, but that they are less likely to ridicule the attempt of writing poetry. What I am alluding to here is that while a coach's wife may be accosted for saying publicly what she does not like about her husband's job, if she puts it into poetry, she is less likely to be reprimanded. Thus, the literary form of poetry offers a protected forum for a coach's wife's negative feelings.

At the same time, the above poetry gives readers an idea of the jobs the coach's wife is expected to perform in order to show support for her husband. She must endure the loneliness, but she is also expected to do most of the work. As one coach's wife who wished to remain anonymous put it:

It's life filled with laundry
to do in an hour.
Of packing his suitcase
while he's in the shower.

Raising the children
the best that I can.
Explaining...their coaching daddy
is one busy man.

Learning to do everything
for myself.
Change tires, cut wood
put up a shelf (AFCWA, 1996: 162).

Of course these are all things that many wives are expected to do, though one difference may be that coaches are rarely at home. The other difference is that coaches' wives are expected to do other jobs specifically for their husband's team – for the 'usual coach's wife charge of zero' (AFCWA, 1996: 200).

Most often the coach's wife serves as a hostess for recruits and their families or for other football coaching families, hence the publication of a cookbook. One's initial reaction to a women's group producing a cookbook may be, 'Oh well, women are more likely to cook, and a lot of women's groups produce cookbooks. What's so different about this one?' In the AFCWA, however, the members are often expected to cook at a moment's notice. Therefore, the *Winning Seasons* cookbook takes on a whole new meaning. While it was published as a fundraiser, it was also published in hopes of helping each other with quick and easy recipes for crowds, or forlorn children who have not seen their father in a while. Each section of the book has a

football metaphor title instead of the usual 'Appetisers', or 'Main Dishes'. For example, there is 'Sideline Specialties', 'A Tailgate Favourite', and 'Dinner without Dad', which, although not a just football metaphor, certainly a descriptor of the football life.

Giving such names to their dishes and course titles makes the book more fun. This helps to make their jobs seem more fun to themselves and to readers of the cookbook. Through poetry and football metaphors, coaches' wives are able to express their negative feelings while also expressing support for their husbands and the football community.

Conclusions and Implications

Once again I turn to the purpose of the AFCWA's publications. As I have argued, the purpose of the AFCWA and their publications is to legitimise their existence and give voice to their work within football culture. Because men dominate the culture in which they live, the football coaches' wives will look for ways to express themselves and help them to cope with the dominant culture. Sometimes these expressions will be loud, or even violent; and, at other times, groups will find their way to voice through more accepted, even obsequious tactics. Some tactics may be elusive and quite clever and the subtlety is amazing. Such is the motive, whether conscious or not, of the American Football Coaches' Wives Association. The apparent wholesomeness of the cookbook conceals the richness of the wives' display of negative feelings toward football. The supposed triteness of a newsletter allows the AFCWA to disguise their formal planning. In fact, the AFCWA's detailed descriptions and accounts of their official formation and subsequent conference meetings demonstrate their value to readers of the publications.

The publications must also function as reifying elements for new and future AFCWA members. In order to keep the organisation alive, future members must continue the same or similar practices, or risk alienation by the AFCA. In this sense, the publications help to indoctrinate new members by teaching them expectations of behaviour by reiterating the same messages through different *agencies*. By following somewhat traditional guidelines for women and keeping to subtle rhetoric, the AFCWA can no longer be seen simply as the *Other*. What this indicates is that the male sport of football does not fully separate the masculine from the feminine. Instead, this analysis shows that football coaches' wives have found a way to legitimise their existence and have found a place of honour and respect within an all male sports organisation.

NOTE

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