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MEDIA, FANDOM, AND CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY:
AN ADVERTISING CAMPAIGN TO REFRAME DOMESTIC VIOLENCE IN
THE NATIONAL FOOTBALL LEAGUE

A Project
Presented to
the Faculty of the Communication Division
Pepperdine University

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Arts

by
Megan Mariah Jefferson

July 2018

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This project created by

MEGAN MARIAH JEFFERSON

under the guidance of a faculty committee and approved by its members, has been submitted to and accepted by the graduate faculty in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

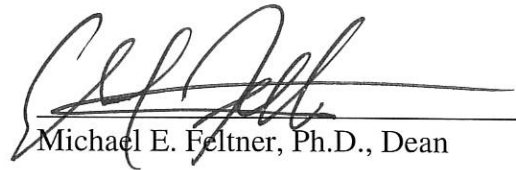
July 2018

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MEDIA, FANDOM, AND CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY:
AN ADVERTISING CAMPAIGN TO REFRAME DOMESTIC VIOLENCE IN
THE NATIONAL FOOTBALL LEAGUE

by

Megan Mariah Jefferson
July 2018
Dr. Ginger Rosenkrans, Chairperson

ABSTRACT

The National Football League's (NFL, the league) 2014 domestic violence crisis involving Ray Rice and Adrian Peterson is a case that prompted individuals—from news analysts to current and former NFL players to average citizens who were fans and non-fans of the league—to express their concerns online regarding the NFL's domestic violence policies.

Using Social Identity Theory, Attachment Theory, and Social Marketing Theory as the theoretical foundation, this project conducted a thematic-content analysis of 300 social media posts and comments on online news reports to determine (a) what public perception of the NFL was in regard to its 2014 domestic violence scandal was; (b) what the public wanted the league to do to effectively address domestic violence in their organization; and (c) how public response to the crisis impacted the NFL's corporate social responsibility (CSR) efforts regarding domestic violence.

Respondents reported a perception that the NFL was apathetic toward the seriousness of domestic violence as well as a desire for the league to institute a policy in which players who commit domestic violence are suspended for more than two games for the first offense and are banned from the NFL for the second offense. Responding to the public outcry, the NFL executed organizational-level changes via improved corporate social responsibility (CSR) efforts regarding the league's domestic violence policy.

The campaign component of this project aimed to reframe the NFL's reputation in relation to domestic violence from being viewed as an organization solely focused on generating profits to an organization that considers its constituents' concerns when making organizational decisions. The ads with a campaign theme of #OnTheClock acknowledged the NFL's mis-steps regarding domestic violence and outlined the league's efforts to address domestic violence while encouraging viewers to follow the NFL's ongoing work to combat domestic violence.

CHAPTER 1

Introduction

The NFL has the number one fan base of all major professional sports in the United States with 185 million Americans indicating they are fans of professional American football (“Media Kit,” 2016). The NFL is one of the world’s best attended sports leagues with an average of 67,591 fans per game (Agence France-Presse, 2013), and leads baseball by 18% as America’s favorite sport (Shannon-Missal, 2016). The league’s channel, NFL Network, brings in 32 million viewers, with its digital properties averaging 67 million overall unique visitors in 2016 (“Media Kit,” 2016). The NFL’s social media following is also among the largest, with almost 20 million followers on Twitter, over 16 million on Facebook, 6.2 million on Instagram, and nearly 20 million on YouTube (“Media Kit,” 2016).

However, over the last 15 years, the NFL has faced several issues that continue to negatively impact public perception of their organization, including an impression the NFL has not properly handled players’ concussions (Breslow, 2014) since Dr. Bennet Omalu first discovered chronic traumatic encephalopathy (CTE), a progressive, degenerative disease set off by repeated head trauma, in the brain of former Pittsburgh Steelers center, Mike Webster, in 2002 (Scutti, 2016). Also among these issues are the NFL’s struggles to properly address domestic violence in their organization, on which this study will focus (Harwell, 2014). 2014 was a year in which the NFL experienced several domestic violence cases involving some of their players, most notably Carolina Panthers defensive end, Greg Hardy; Minnesota Vikings running back, Adrian Peterson;

and Baltimore Ravens running back, Ray Rice (SI Wire, 2014). The Ray Rice incident was the most high-profile case, as there was video evidence of him striking his fiancée, Janay Palmer, in the face and then dragging her out of an elevator while she was unconscious. “It is truly disturbing: at one point the elevator keeps closing on the motionless fiancée’s feet. Considering his actions, Rice’s light punishment [from the NFL] is a joke” (Dockterman, 2014). The NFL suspended Rice for only two games following the incident. While the league claimed they did not see the full video of the assault until much later into their investigation, many in the media and public believed the NFL saw the video, but did not value the seriousness of domestic violence enough to punish Rice appropriately.

Therefore, this project proposes an advertising campaign for the NFL that addresses and reframes the league’s reputation regarding its handling of domestic violence in the organization. This document outlines and explains the ad campaign based on paid media, social media, and owned media (i.e., company-controlled media). The campaign research, planning, and produced materials follow in later sections of this document. The following sections describe the rationale for the project, as well as the coinciding campaign’s rationale and objectives; the theoretical approaches; and the scholarly contribution of this project.

Project Rationale

This project analyzes social media posts made in reference to the NFL’s 2014 domestic violence crisis involving players such as Adrian Peterson and Ray Rice as part of a thematic-content analysis in order to determine: (a) the general consensus regarding

the league's reputation as it relates to domestic violence; (b) the preferred steps the NFL should take to address the issue; and (c) how the public's response to the crisis impacted the NFL's corporate social responsibility (CSR) efforts. The study therefore relies on an analysis of identity, media, and public relations theories in an effort to convey to corporations and strategic communication practitioners the importance of studying how consumers' attachments (or lack thereof) to certain brands, along with media coverage, (particularly on social media), during an organizational crisis can have deep and lasting impacts on a company's reputation in the marketplace.

The NFL's response to domestic violence in its organization is significant because it has emerged as a key topic in news media, particularly given social media's ability to share stories on a wide scale and at a rapid rate. Social media's influence on news media, therefore, indicates how much negativity the NFL and similar organizations must overcome, in order to not only remain a leader in American sports and entertainment, but also to grow its fan base (Perrin, 2015).

This project is intended to be an example of social marketing within the realm of advertising that organizations can reference when assessing their business strategies during a public relations crisis. As part of the development of the social marketing campaign, perceptions of the NFL through social media including Facebook and Twitter are analyzed. There has been a recent pattern of consumers increasingly preferring to patronize companies and brands with pro-social messages and ethical business standards (Landrum, 2017). Stakeholder management claims that creating compatibility between organizational and stakeholder priorities produces a good fit between the organization

and its environment as well as increases the probability of the organization's success (Wolfe et al., 2005).

Consequently, three advertisements will be created for the NFL that address the public's concerns regarding the league's handling of domestic violence, including steps the league is taking to rectify the issue. These advertisements can serve as examples of how organizations facing similar problems should consider their audience's backgrounds, concerns, and desires in how companies conduct their businesses.

Campaign Concept and Objective

The ad campaign for this project is complementary to the NFL's anti-domestic violence television (TV) ads created in partnership with No More, an anti-domestic violence and sexual assault organization. This campaign aims to reposition the NFL from being viewed as an organization that is solely focused on generating more revenue, to an organization that considers its constituents' concerns regarding NFL players' involvement in domestic violence, when making decisions regarding the league. Individuals in this study who expressed their opinion of the NFL's 2014 domestic violence crisis via social media outlets, such as Twitter and Facebook, or in the comment sections of online news articles generally viewed the league as apathetic toward domestic violence. Research also showed that the general public stated a preference for the NFL to suspend first-time domestic violence offenders and ban second-time offenders for more than two games. The theme and tagline of the campaign is, "Because for us, doing what's right will always be #OnTheClock." While several taglines were considered for this campaign including, "Bridging the Gap," "Take Action," "Together We Can," and

“Because We Care,” the tagline, “On The Clock,” because it was a play on league terminology, and came from the goal of positioning the league as an organization that not only acknowledges its power and influence, but uses both to enact positive changes.

This campaign features messages that first acknowledge the NFL’s mishandling of the Rice and Peterson domestic violence cases; then the messages briefly outline the steps the league has taken to correct their mistakes regarding domestic violence; and lastly, they describe the NFL’s desire to make positive, lasting changes in how the league handles domestic violence, as well as how the public and media view the organization. The campaign is designed to show organizations, advertisers, and public relations (PR) practitioners a way they can effectively address consumers’ concerns during public organizational crises using Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) Theory.

CHAPTER 2

Theoretical Approaches and Literature Review

To fully justify and empirically support this campaign, it is important to consider the theories and research that informs the project and its purpose. As previously stated, the current project analyzes the role that identity, media, and public relations theories have in potentially influencing public response to organizational crises such as the NFL's 2014 domestic violence crisis. This study also demands an understanding of the impact the power of sport and its unique fandom have on the NFL's brand. Additionally, it requires a consideration of how media coverage of the NFL, particularly its organizational crises, may impact public perception of the league, and the preferred actions the league takes to address organizational crises such as domestic violence, as reported by individuals online via social media and the comment sections of online news reports. This, in turn, requires an analysis of CSR and its role in business, especially when it is adopted as a strategy when an organization, such as the NFL, experiences a crisis.

Theoretical Approaches

This project first evaluates the role played by identity theories such as Social Identity Theory and Attachment Theory play in how individuals interact with and respond to brands, regardless of whether or not an organization's brand is experiencing public admiration or a public crisis. Researchers' studies on sport branding have a theoretical background in Social Identity Theory and Attachment Theory, as both theories propose that what motivates individuals to become sport fans is linked to how

organizations like the NFL manage their brands and encourage consumers' connection to the company (Hogg, Terry, & White, 1995). Cognitive Dissonance Theory is also explored in order to provide an explanation of why some individuals continue supporting an organization even when that same organization experiences a public organizational crisis. Next, media theories, including Agenda Setting Theory, Framing Theory, and Uses and Gratifications Theory, are described. Lastly, public relations and business theories such as Image Repair Theory and Social Marketing Theory support the current project's aim to be an example of social marketing within the realm of advertising that organizations can reference when assessing their business strategies, especially those that relate to CSR, during a crisis. The strategies of Image Repair Theory have been used in a variety of industries and were exercised by NFL Commissioner Roger Goodell during the NFL's 2014 domestic violence crisis. Social Marketing Theory applies traditional marketing strategies and principles to social goals while emphasizing the importance of businesses knowing their target audience's desires in order to develop a successful ad campaign.

“Sports and the mass media enjoy a very symbiotic relationship in American society” (McChesney, 1989, p. 49). Schramm and Klimmt (2003) state that, “sports have become an integral source of entertainment for contemporary societies because spectator sports have every single ingredient of delightful entertainment” (p. 61) including: “show elements with links to arts, like skating or dancing” (p. 61) and sex appeal, “bodies in action and on display” (p. 61). Thus, sports teams showed an early interest in using media coverage, from print (newspapers and magazines) to radio, to television, to convey

information regarding their organization (Lever & Wheeler, 1993). However, the relationship between sport and media has evolved from being an interdependent relationship to one that can be less cooperative, particularly when the media's news cycle is crafted in response to the public's interest in scandals, an interest that is increasingly reported online through social media and in the comment sections of news websites.

While having eight theories to ground this project may seem like overkill, collectively, they demonstrate the breadth of the intersection between sports phenomena and communication issues of identity, media, and corporate social responsibility. While this project's primary aim is the development of a social marketing campaign for the NFL, as opposed to theoretical testing or expansion, the range of theories provides a broad framework that directly inform the campaign. Each theoretical perspective plays a specific role in either analyzing perceptions of the NFL or offering important insight into the social marketing campaign this project proposes.

Social Identity Theory

British social psychologists, Henri Tajfel and John Turner developed Social Identity Theory (1979), which is "an interactionist social psychological theory of the role of self-conception and associated cognitive processes and social beliefs in group processes and intergroup relations" (Hogg, 2016, p. 3). This theory helps explain intergroup behavior in relation to self-esteem. It builds on the notion of identification, which is a cognitive state where the individual comes to view himself or herself as a member of a social entity (Bergami and Bagozzi, 2000). One's social identity derives from the social categories to which he or she belongs, such as team membership

(Bhattacharya, Rao, & Glynn, 1995; Tajfel & Turner, 1985). Hogg (2016) notes the following:

Social Identity Theory has been significantly extended through a range of sub-theories that focus on social influence and group norms; leadership within and between groups; self-enhancement and uncertainty reduction motivations; deindividuation and collective behavior; social mobilization and protest; and marginalization and deviance within groups. (p. 3)

As applied to sports, Rees, Haslam, Coffee, and Lavalley (2015) note Social Identity Theory groups serve not just as features of sporting contexts but as elements that can be incorporated into a person's sense of self and powerful determinants of a person's sport-related behavior. The theory is the basis for sports group behavior; formation and development; support and stress appraisal; and leadership (Rees et al., 2015). For example, if an individual is motivated to participate in sports fandom (i.e., be a sports fan) by social interaction with her classmates who are football fans, she would associate and identify herself with football fans in order to gain access to her desired social group and fulfill her need for social interaction. Likewise, some respondents in the current study reported the NFL was a part of their self-concept because the respondent's favorite team felt as if it was *their* team (sports group behavior), and the respondent felt "their" team's struggles and triumphs as if they were the respondent's own (sports group support and stress appraisal) (DonnaDraper, 2014a; LtCmndHipster, 2014). Thus, perceived membership in a social category contributes to one's social identity (Hogg, Terry, & White 1995).

Attachment Theory

Attachment Theory focuses on the “mental representations that center on the regulation of the fulfillment of attachment-related needs, namely the maintenance of closeness and felt security in valued relationships” (Collins, Ford, Guichard, & Allard, 2006, p. 2). This attachment is reflected in consumers’ behavior toward goods and services (Ball & Tasaki, 1992), as people develop attachments to products because those products are symbols that indicate one’s character to others as well as reminds one of who she or he is (Wallendorf & Arnould, 1988). Furthermore, attachment is an important construct in the study of branding because the degree of emotional attachment to an object or organization relates to the nature of consumer interaction with the object (Thomson, McInnis, & Park, 2005).

Much Identity and Attachment Theory research has been applied to sport fandom (Wann & Branscombe, 1993; Guttman, 1986; Mann, 1969; Cialdini et al., 1976). It is also applied to sport brand research (Carlson, Donovan, & Cumiskey, 2009; McClung, Eveland, Sweeney, & James, 2012). Carlson and colleagues (2007) found the following: (a) brand personality dimensions of wholesomeness and successfulness are mediated through prestige to predict consumer identification with teams; (b) the dimensions of imaginativeness and toughness positively influence identification with the team; and, interestingly, (c) the successfulness dimension has a negative influence on identification with the team. The combination of sport media (i.e., television and Internet) along with sponsorships can develop consumer attachment to brands and consequently increase sales for sports leagues and teams (McClung et al., 2012). These findings become important

when one considers the NFL fans and their connection to the organization's brand. Some respondents in the current study acknowledged that their attachment to the NFL meant they would not stop watching the NFL following its 2014 domestic violence crisis, despite some individuals' calls to boycott the league due to the NFL's lenient punishment of Ray Rice following his domestic violence incident (coffeebeanqueen, 2014; Stephanie Cobb, 2014).

Agenda Setting Theory

Agenda Setting Theory claims traditional media has a direct and powerful impact on viewer attitudes (Shaw, 1979). The audience is seen as a passive subject waiting to receive information from media, and the audience, in turn, begins emulating the media by repeating what the audience has heard. This theory focuses on the audience's need for information or information hunger (Pearson, Nelson, Titsworth, & Harter, 2011), whereby people's habitual exposure to various media channels plays a significant role in shaping the views and opinions of people on a variety of issues. Agenda setting gratifies the desire of people to acquire new and timely information. The needs of an individual may be intrapersonal or interpersonal in nature. This theory posits that intrapersonal needs are fulfilled by providing facts and figures that satisfy the audience's need to know, whereas the audience's interpersonal needs are satiated by engaging in face-to-face dialog on a particular topic or through online feedback in the form of reviews, tweets, and Facebook posts.

The three main components of the agenda-setting process are (a) media agenda, (b) public agenda, and (c) policy agenda. All three components are guarded by gate

keepers such as news editors and producers, as well as influential media outlets such as ABC, NBC, and CBS, and social media sites like Facebook and Twitter.

The key agenda-setting role of the media may be the promotion of social consensus on what the agenda is, whether it is the traditional agenda of issues or something that has the capability to arouse a reaction from the masses and rather than a small segment of the population (McCombs & Shaw, 1993). The public agenda referred to by this theory is what creates the mass appeal in any news story, but it is the media that provokes ideas in the minds of the public and prompts a reaction from them. The media agenda and public agenda work simultaneously to create an atmosphere that is conducive to making a news story that will encourage changes at a societal and organizational level in any culture (Walgrave & Van Aelst, 2006). Additionally, how a reporter frames an issue sets an agenda of characteristics that can influence how society thinks about it. When mass media emphasize a topic, the audience receiving the message will regard this topic to be important (McCombs & Shaw, 1972).

The dynamics of the policy agenda component of Agenda Setting Theory was researched by Wood and Peake (1998), who found the public perception of a news event was largely influenced by the news media. The dynamics of this cause-and-effect relationship between public perception and the news media leads to policy-level changes in the society where such changes are taking place. Islam and Deegan (2011) found that industry-related social and environmental issues that attract the greatest amount of negative media attention cause corporations to react with positive corporate social and environmental disclosures, particularly in sports. Therefore, the three components of the

Agenda Setting Theory synchronize to create a news event that is not only newsworthy, but also has the ability to lead to policy changes, such as the NFL's ultimate actions in response to its 2014 domestic violence crisis, including the six-game suspension for first-time offenders and the lifetime ban from the NFL for second-time offenders, suggests.

Framing Theory

The media coverage of the NFL is also explained by Framing Theory, which “is concerned with how the media presents information to an audience and how the selection of one method or content of presentation over another affects how an audience perceives a person, event or issue” (Kaid, 2010, p. 461). Framing Theory considers the power conflicts that lead journalists to use certain frames over others, and it considers the factors associated with the audience's active interpretation of the texts that embody frames (Gamson, 2001).

Kohut (2001) notes that sports and crime stories are two of the most prevalent and widely followed segments in the news. Moreover, when an athlete is accused of a crime, “national headlines follow” (Mastro, Blecha, & Seate, 2011, p. 526). Likewise, social media alters “the parameter of crises” (Ott & Theunissen, 2015, p. 98) by increasing its pace, scope, and impact (Zhao, 2016). “Unprecedented accessibility to means of communication offered by social media especially aggravates organizational crises to an unparalleled level of complexity” (Zhao, 2016, p. 42). Zhao's (2016) application of Framing Theory to crisis communication revealed five frames which develop from traditional media coverage of a crisis: (a) problem identification, which defines or describes crises as either an “ordinary criminal case” or a “religion-related criminal case”

(p. 51) such as a cult; (b) attribution, which notes who should take responsibility for the crisis; (c) human interest, which “lends a human face, feeling, and concern to the online discussion of the event” (p. 51); (d) sentiment, which shows “intense emotional expressions that induce public anger, sadness, or sarcasm by using visual or video information” (p. 51); and (e) contested public opinion, which “stresses contested viewpoints and positions among individuals and social groups” (p. 51).

Zhao’s findings are applicable to the league’s domestic violence crisis, as the Rice incident, for example, would be identified as “an ordinary criminal case” (problem identification), but an incident that individuals passionately reported via social media and online comment sections (human interest) could have been avoided had Commissioner Goodell responded (attribution) more rapidly and more harshly to the Rice incident, which had included video evidence of Rice’s wrongdoing (sentiment). When applying Framing Theory to the NFL’s 2014 domestic violence crisis, individuals should consider how the emotionally-laden language used in headlines regarding the league and its position on domestic violence, including “The National Football League [is] in *full damage control* mode” (Burkey, 2014); and “Now to those *scandals* rocking the NFL, *embattled* Commissioner Roger Goodell meeting with all the owners for the first time on Wednesday to address those off-field *problems*” (Corn, 2014), can influence how individuals identify the problem(s) an organization faces; attribute blame for the problem(s); discuss the problem(s), particularly online; and express their concern(s) regarding the problem(s).

Uses and Gratifications Theory

Uses and Gratifications Theory (U&G) asserts that the media serves as a medium to satisfy the needs and wants of the people (Ruggiero, 2009). People choose information that gratifies their needs and wants based on their interests and what benefits them (Cascio, 2016). This perspective stresses that motives, attitudes, and behaviors related to media consumption vary by individual or group (Papacharissi, 2009).

U&G studies often share a common frame of analysis that focuses on motives; social and psychosocial antecedents; and cognitive, attitudinal, or behavioral outcomes (Papacharissi, 2009). “Motives present general dispositions that influence people’s actions taken for the fulfillment of a need or want and behavior” (Papacharissi, 2009, p. 139). For example, Rubin (1983) identified nine recurring television motives: relaxation, companionship, entertainment, social interaction, information, habit, pass time, arousal, and escape. These motives are not unlike those found in sport fandom research, which will be detailed later in the literature review of this document.

Contemporary studies on U&G explore dominant trends in the theory and apply the framework for the study on newer media and genres such as social media. Haridakis (2002) found that viewer characteristics such as previous experience in committing crime were stronger predictors of aggression than televised violence. Boyle, Schmierbach, Armstrong, McLeod, Shah, and Pan (2004) added that negative emotional response was a strong predictor of motivation for information-seeking and reducing uncertainty, particularly following September 11, 2001. Hardy and Scheufele (2005) combined research on computer-based communication along with U&G to understand how

exposure to hard news combined with interpersonal communication could lead to greater participation in public affairs. These U&G based studies are relevant to the current project given its focus on factors influencing how the public expressed their thoughts regarding the NFL's 2014 domestic violence crisis via social media.

Image Repair Theory

Public outcry certainly affects the way organizations respond to crises, and the NFL is no different. During the 2014 Ray Rice domestic violence case, the league was hesitant to comment on the issue (Maine, 2014), with NFL Commissioner Roger Goodell explaining that the foundation of any of his disciplinary actions against a player was based on “the facts” (Bien, 2014) of a case. Therefore, he would not discipline Rice until law enforcement provided a comprehensive assessment of Rice's altercation with Janay. Goodell attempted to rectify the league's missteps in handling the Rice domestic violence case after his actions ignited backlash from the public. These missteps included Goodell's decision to (a) interview Rice and Janay together during Rice's June 2014 discipline hearing; (b) suspend Rice for only two games; (c) suspend Rice from the NFL indefinitely upon viewing the full tape of Rice assaulting Janay; (d) claim at Rice's appeal hearing that Rice was “ambiguous” (Van Natta, 2014) in his description (even though Ravens General Manager Ozzie Newsome claimed Rice did not withhold any information from Goodell); and (e) formally address the crisis seven months after Rice assaulted Janay during a press conference in September 2014.

The NFL's handling of the Rice domestic violence case provides an opportunity for communication professor, William Benoit's, (1995, 2006) Image Repair Theory,

since previous research applied to sports traditionally focused solely on troubled players and their responses to media coverage regarding their alleged wrongdoings (Brazeal, 2008; Walsh & McAllister-Spooner, 2011; K. A. Brown, Billings, & Devlin, 2016). However, Image Repair Theory is applicable to an organization like the NFL given Goodell's treatment of domestic violence as well as the media's knowledge that the public is more engaged when viewing stories that intersect sports and crises (Kohut, 2001).

Benoit's theory outlines categories of strategies that can be employed to repair image in an event where it has been damaged. The main categories of responses under Image Repair Theory are denial, evading responsibility, reducing offensiveness, taking corrective action, and mortification, with each strategy containing sub-sets of methods (Benoit, 2006).

Within the denial category, Benoit distinguishes between simple denial and shifting blame, wherein simple denial indicates an individual or organization claims they did not perform an offensive act, and shifting blame is defined as claiming some other entity performed the act (Benoit, 2006). The evading responsibility category includes the following tactics: provocation, defeasibility, accident, and good intentions. Provocation is when a person or organization claims that they acted in response to another's act (Benoit, 2006). Defeasibility is when a lack of information or ability is cited as the reason for the offensive act (Benoit, 2006). Accident is a mishap, and good intentions are acts committed in good faith (Benoit, 2006).

Bolstering, minimization, differentiation, transcendence, attacking the accuser, and compensation are all tactics within the reducing offensiveness strategy. Bolstering is when a person or organization stresses their positive traits to overshadow the offensive act (Benoit, 2006). Minimization defines the act as less harmful than believed by the public (Benoit, 2006). Differentiation is when an act is portrayed as less harmful than similar acts (Benoit, 2006). Transcendence attempts to justify the act through appeals to values (Benoit, 2006). Attacking the accuser reduces the accuser's credibility (Benoit, 2006). Compensation reimburses the victim of the offensive act for the damage caused by the act (Benoit, 2006).

The final two strategies outlined by Benoit are corrective action and mortification. Corrective action is when a person or organization announces plans to repair the damage and/or prevent recurrence of the same offensive act (Benoit, 2006). Mortification is a strategy in which the offender apologizes and expresses remorse for the acts that were deemed offensive to key publics (Benoit, 2006).

During Goodell's September 2014 news conference following the release of the second Rice video, Goodell utilized a number of Image Repair Theory strategies, including corrective action, bolstering, mortification, shifting blame, defeasibility, and differentiation. The commissioner utilized corrective action when he outlined his plan to prevent additional domestic violence cases in the league; bolstering when he claimed the NFL usually "sets an example that makes a positive difference" (Manfred, 2014). While the commissioner apologized and took responsibility for not handling the Rice case correctly, he shifted blame when he claimed the NFL could not address "complex"

(Manfred, 2014) issues such as domestic violence without the “cornerstones” (Manfred, 2014) of law enforcement, the criminal justice system, social service organizations, and families.

Though not stated in the commissioner’s address during this news conference, Goodell utilized defeasibility when he claimed he did not know how TMZ, an American tabloid news website, obtained the full video of the Rice incident, because law enforcement had denied the NFL access to the recording (Manfred, 2014). Additionally, Goodell used differentiation when he indicated Rice’s initial two-game suspension could not be compared to other NFL athletes’ cases because Rice did not have an arrest record prior to his assault (Wawrow, 2014). Therefore, Image Repair Theory may be relevant to this study when one considers what impact was made upon the media and the public’s response by Commissioner Goodell’s use of image repair strategies during the NFL’s 2014 crisis, especially in terms of their perception of the NFL and their acceptance or rejection of Goodell’s proposed actions to address domestic violence in the league.

Cognitive Dissonance Theory

Despite the NFL’s efforts to assume a more CSR-driven image by entering a long-term partnership with the National Domestic Violence Hotline and National Sexual Violence Resource Center (Manfred, 2014) in the aftermath of the Ray Rice scandal, a poll conducted by international news agency, Reuters/Ipsos, found that over 50% of Americans believe brands should drop their sponsorship deals with the NFL in response to how the organization handles players who are accused of domestic violence (Saba,

2014). However, nearly 80% of those same respondents said they plan to continue watching or attending NFL games (Saba, 2014).

Cognitive Dissonance Theory highlights this disharmony, as it refers to situations that involve conflicting attitudes, beliefs, or behaviors that produce a feeling of discomfort (Festinger, 1957). Indeed, people seek information that is consistent with their prevailing beliefs, but avoid information that they know will contradict existing belief structures, known in media studies as selective exposure (Raney, 2006). This theory further proposes that when one encounters information that is inconsistent with their existing beliefs, they experience cognitive distress, which leads them to seek means to alleviate the distress (Festinger, 1957; Raney, 2006). Sport fans are no different. For example, highly-identified game attendees may look for the socially responsible activities of teams to reinforce their fanship, so those activities which contradict those positive feelings (e.g., socially irresponsible actions) will be quickly dismissed (Walker & Kent, 2009). In fact, some respondents who identified as NFL fans in the current study claimed that the NFL shows how it values women through the league's annual "pink out" campaign every October, during which team players wear pink cleats and mouth guards and pink merchandise is sold to support breast cancer research (ladiesman2452, 2014). Other respondents noted the NFL was actively engaged in changing its policies regarding domestic violence by punishing players as necessary for domestic violence (chachaslide, 2014). In other words, highly-identified fans use non-product attributes as a way of rationalizing their entrenched behaviors.

Social Marketing Theory

Finally, the purpose and production of the project campaign partially employs the framework of Social Marketing Theory (Kotler & Zaltman, 1971). Kotler and Zaltman's (1971) Social Marketing Theory is described as the design, implementation, and control of a campaign that aims to influence the acceptability of social ideas and that also involves traditional marketing and commercial considerations such as product planning, pricing, communication, distribution, and marketing research, as well as the use of marketing skills, to help turn current social action efforts into more effective programs that elicit the desired audience response.

Social Marketing Theory applies traditional marketing strategies and principles to social goals. According to Kotler and Zaltman (1971), "The application of the logic of marketing to social goals is a natural development and, on the whole, a promising one" (p. 3). Within Social Marketing Theory, Kotler and Zaltman (1971) emphasize the importance of knowing the audience's desires in both commercial marketing and social marketing as a key to the success of a campaign. Through comprehensive primary and secondary market research, the desires, needs, and opinions of the target audience can be identified; this is evident in the campaign for this project. This ensures the effectiveness of the marketing plan and messages. Careful consideration of the "four P's" (i.e., product, price, placement, promotion) is required for effective social marketing campaigns, as well as for commercial campaigns (Kotler & Zaltman, 1971; Sheth & Frazier, 1982).

For the success of the product, knowing the audiences' desires and needs, as well as packaging the social idea, product, or service in a desirable manner is key (Kotler &

Zaltman, 1971). For the promotion of a product, service, or brand, Kotler and Zaltman (1971) stress the importance of the development of attention-grabbing copy and the selection of appropriate media outlets that effectively and efficiently promote the campaign, including earned media, promotional events, and advertising. Proper placement “means arranging for accessible outlets which permit the translation of motivations into actions” (Kotler & Zaltman, 1971, p. 9). The most recent social marketing studies note that non-traditional media outlets for promotion are also important to the effectiveness of social marketing. Additionally, interactive and digital campaigns help encourage interactivity, feedback, encouragement, clarity, and support (Hill & Moran, 2011).

In Social Marketing Theory, the traditional marketing factors are carefully considered based on target market research. The marketing strategies and tactics of this project’s ad campaign will appeal to the intended demographic due to the formative market research conducted for the plan. This project also includes interactive elements via the call-to-action (CTA) listed on each ad, which further demonstrates these qualities. The current campaign features a fully-developed plan that includes a detailed description of the media placement of paid, shared, and owned materials.

Literature review

This section of the literature review examines the power of sport; sport fandom; brand management; media coverage of the NFL; as well as the rhetorical, dialogic, and social capital approaches to corporate social responsibility (CSR). These topics exemplify how the aforementioned identity, media, and public relations theories inform this project,

as well as the creation of the subsequent campaign to address domestic violence in the NFL and reposition the league's reputation in light of its history with domestic violence. This section also examines how CSR has been utilized in crisis response strategies and, of course, sports.

Power of Sport

Nelson Mandela, the legendary South African activist and politician, said at the 2000 Laureus World Sports Award ceremony, "Sport has the power to change the world. It has the power to inspire. It has the power to unite people in a way that little else does Sport can create hope where once there was only despair" (P. Smith, Dere, & Alexander, 2000). It is true that the pervasiveness of sport in contemporary society is evident in the amount of sport coverage in both digital and print media (Wann, Melnick, Russell, & Pease, 2001), but Mandela's statement highlights the impact sport has on society in terms of developing culture and frequently taking on the form of a religion.

Whether sports help nations, communities or children, they make a difference on a daily basis. Sports undoubtedly provide a platform for people to come together and support their country, particularly international events such as the Olympics and the World Cup. This fact has a greater impact when one considers how, for example, South Africa's 1995 Rugby World Cup victory helped the nation heal from decades of Apartheid (Depta, 2015).

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention reported that one third of children and adolescents were obese ("Childhood obesity," 2012); so, sports leagues like the NFL and Major League Baseball developed programs to help combat childhood obesity by

either introducing youth to sports they otherwise would be unable to play or encouraging children to get active. Economically, the sports industry represents more than simply a billion-dollar business: it has helped local economies via tourism (Depta, 2015), and, according to Economic Modeling Specialists International, has produced 456,000 jobs with an average salary of \$39,000 since 2013 (Burrow, 2013). Additionally, research indicates that because participation in a sport positively impacts mental well-being and self-esteem, individuals who played a sport during their childhood have a better career outlook and perform better in their jobs (Kniffin, Wansink, & Shimizu, 2014). Similarly, psychologists claim that sport has many of the same effects on spectators as religion does. Wann and colleagues (2001) explain: “Consider the vocabulary associated with [sport fandom and religion]: faith, devotion, worship, ritual, dedication, sacrifice, commitment, spirit, prayer, suffering, festival, and celebration” (p. 198).

Prior to mass communications, religious ceremonies were a source of entertainment for ordinary people who rarely attended a theater or traveled to a sporting event; therefore, the intersection of sport fandom and religion is evident (Barber, 2011b). Indeed, various scholars discuss sport in terms of natural religion, humanistic religion, and primitive polytheism, pointing out that “spectators worship other human beings, their achievements, and the groups to which they belong” (Wann et al., 2001, p. 200) in sports stadiums and arenas that resemble “cathedrals where followers gather to worship their heroes and pray for their successes” (Wann et al., 2001, p. 200).

Fans are highly committed to their favored stars and teams in a way that gives focus and meaning to their daily lives. In addition, sports spectatorship is a

transformative experience through which fans escape their typical everyday lives, just as religious experiences may help the faithful to transcend their everyday lives (Barber, 2011a). From that perspective, the face painting, hair tinting, and distinctive costumes that are common at modern sport events are thought to satisfy quasi-religious goals including identification with the team, escape from everyday limitations and disappointments, and establishing a community of fans.

Studies conducted in the 1970s (Anderson & Stone, 1981), 1980s (Thomas, 1986), and the 1990s (Lieberman, 1991) reveal that at least two-thirds of Americans consider themselves to be sport fans, a figure that remains true today (Jones, 2015). Therefore, one cannot discuss the power of sport without describing those who identify and engage with the industry.

Sport Fandom

Individuals who identify as sport fans, or whose lives are impacted by sport fans, differ in terms of their involvement and attachment to sports teams for various reasons, which influences the way sports organizations such as the NFL are perceived by the public, regardless of whether or not the sports industry is facing positive or negative publicity. According to Wann (1995, 1997), sport fans are individuals who are deeply interested in and follow a sport, team, and/or athlete while spectators are those who merely witness a sporting event in person or through some form of media, such as radio or television. This distinction is important because the situational context in which a person witnesses an event speaks to her or his level of team (sport) identification

(Brummett & Duncan, 1990; Duncan & Brummett, 1989; Gantz, 1981; Hemphill, 1995; Wenner & Gantz, 1989).

Team identification refers to the extent to which a fan feels psychologically connected to a team or sport (Guttmann, 1986; Hirt, Zillmann, Erickson, & Kennedy, 1992; Real & Mechikoff, 1992; Sloan, 1989; Wann, 1997; Wann & Branscombe, 1993). Identification with a team has been found to be a strong predictor of numerous spectator affective, cognitive, and behavioral reactions, including social well-being (Wann, 2006; Wann, Waddill, Polk, & Weaver, 2011), team-related purchasing history and future purchasing intentions (Bodet & Bernache-Assollant, 2011; Fink, Trail, & Anderson, 2002; Judson & Carpenter, 2005; Lock, Taylor, Funk, & Darcy, 2012; Robinson & Trail, 2005; Sutton, McDonald, Milne, & Cimperman, 1997; Trail, Anderson, & Fink, 2005), and sponsorship-related outcomes (Gwinner & Swanson, 2003).

For fans with low-level team identification, the role of team follower is a peripheral component of their self-concept, but, for fans with a high level of team identification, the role of team follower is a central component of their identity, meaning the team becomes an extension of the individual (E. R. Smith & Henry, 1996; Tajfel, 1981; Tajfel & Turner, 1979). An individual's team identification level is determined by her or his sport fan socialization process, which explains why certain individuals become fans as opposed to others who do not.

Wann and colleagues (2001) define socialization as "the process of learning to live in and understand a culture or subculture by internalizing its values, beliefs, attitudes, and norms" (p. 24). McPherson (1976) posits that four socialization agents (i.e., sources)

are mainly responsible for teaching the fundamentals of sport fandom: the individual's family, peers, school, and community. Results of McPherson's study in which Canadian adolescents were asked to complete a questionnaire assessing the impact of each agent, revealed that males were most often influenced by their peers, family, and school, while family had the greatest influence on females, followed closely by peer groups (McPherson, 1976). Community did not have a significant impact on socialization of males or females (McPherson, 1976). Wann and colleagues (2001) also found that males were most strongly influenced by peers and least influenced by community but learned that females reported school being the most powerful socialization agent, likely due to the enactment of Title IX, which prohibited sexual discrimination in institutions receiving federal funding and increased the number of women's sport teams at the high school and collegiate level, which, in turn, increased participation and interest in sports among women.

Although early socialization influences are an important component in the decision to become a sport fan, there are other factors as well (Wann, 1997). One such factor is motivation, as some individuals are aware of the values, beliefs, attitudes, and norms of the sport fan culture but are not encouraged to engage in the activity by any perceived benefits. Others who are only casually socialized into the sport fan role may become highly involved fans because they are strongly motivated by specific factors, such as: social interaction; spending time with family; aesthetic enjoyment; boosting self-esteem; economic benefits; eustress or a positive form of stress such as adrenaline; diverting attention away from the routine or difficulties of everyday life; or pure

entertainment (Wann, Melnick, Russell, & Pease, 2001). Entertainment is routinely the most prominent motive for individuals to engage in sport fandom followed by eustress and group affiliation while the economic motive has been found to be the least prominent motive (Wann, 1995; Wann, Schrader, & Wilson, 1999; Wann, Bilyeu, Brennan, Osborn, & Gambouras, 1999).

Brand Management

Although sports followers are least motivated by the potential economic gains of participating in sport fandom, the NFL is keen to reach its goal of generating \$25 billion in revenue by 2027 (Schrotenboer, 2014). The league surpassed \$13.3 billion in revenue in 2016 due in part to the escalating television rights fees from the league's broadcast partners, ESPN, NBC, Fox, and CBS—a figure up more than 50% since 2010 (Belzer, 2016). Demand for watching NFL games on television and online is high, with NFL games accounting for the top 12 and 27 of the 30 most-watched telecasts on TV since 2015 (M. Brown, 2015). This demand even extends outside the United States, with the NFL playing games in London (Langfitt, 2016) and Mexico City (Wulf, 2016), in addition to forming leagues in China (Seifert, 2016).

In light of the popularity and subsequent revenue generated by the NFL, how the league's brand is managed becomes imperative to understanding the NFL as the organization that it is today. Brands are cues that consumers use to evaluate product performance (Maheswaran, Mackie, & Chaiken, 1992; Richardson, Dick, & Jain, 1994). Strong brands reduce the possible damaging effects of negative product information (Brexendorf, Bayus, & Keller, 2015). The concept of brand loyalty explains the

relationship of customers' psychology with a company's brand, where a customer's positive behavior toward a brand has three aspects: emotional attachment, brand evaluation, and behavior aspect (Oakley, 2013). Emotional attachment explains how much a consumer likes or dislikes a product or service (Oakley, 2013). Naturally, if a consumer has a positive attachment with a brand, she or he will always be inclined to buy the brand's product or use their service and will likely never check other companies' offerings (Oakley, 2013).

Branding theory provides guidance on important components of brand management, including: (a) the assignment of a brand name that conveys the brand's standards; (b) making people aware of a brand; (c) providing consumers with what they desire; (d) establishing a relationship with a brand's first consumers and cultivating this relationship; and (e) becoming successful without compromising any function of brand development (Oakley, 2013). In terms of providing consumers with what they want, branding theory explains that brands are intended to build long-term customer relationships, which are dependent on the perceived worth of the goods or services that the brand delivers to consumers. A brand's key to success lies wholly with the customer (Oakley, 2013), which this study co-relates to how the public's response to the 2014 NFL domestic violence crisis, in turn, impacted the league's CSR-based reaction to the crisis.

Media Coverage of NFL

Despite the NFL's strong brand, the media has continued to cover the scandals that have plagued the league over the past decade. In the weeks leading up to the 2014 midterm elections, the three largest television networks, ABC, NBC, and CBS, were

focused on reporting the NFL domestic abuse scandals of players Ray Rice and Adrian Peterson, instead of political scandals such as Benghazi, with the former stories totaling 171 reports from September 4, 2014 to October 15, 2014 (Dickens, 2014). (See Appendices A through D for a complete timeline of Rice's and Peterson's domestic violence cases, as well as transcripts of Roger Goodell's memorandum to team owners and press conference regarding the cases.)

A similar pattern occurred when the NFL's concussion crisis made mainstream news. Since then, the media has portrayed the NFL's handling of player concussions as insufficient and dismissive, citing the league's slow action to address the connection between repeated head trauma and CTE as well as NFL executives', such as former commissioner, Paul Tagliabue's, and Dr. Elliot Pellman, the Mild Traumatic Brain Injury (MTBI) committee chairperson's, dismissive language when discussing the issue (Ezell, 2013). And while the NFL recently pledged \$100 million to engineering advancements and medical research to increase the safety of professional football by preventing, diagnosing and treating head injuries, the media still cites past wrongdoings by the league when new cases of football-related head trauma occur. This can be seen in such situations as the Carolina Panthers quarterback, Cam Newton, taking repeated helmet-to-helmet hits at the start of the 2016 regular season, without any NFL referees calling penalties, or officials taking him out of the game to undergo the league's concussion protocol (Scutti, 2016; Loverro, 2016; Pelissero, 2016; Belson, 2016).

Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR)

It is evident that organizations within the sport industry are facing increasing pressure to both maintain profitability and behave in socially acceptable ways. The early part of the 21st century, which witnessed the collapse of companies like Enron, ushered in a new era of corporate scrutiny and the heightened accountability that accompanies it (Walker & Kent, 2009). While not initially publicized, most organizations regardless of the industry in which they operate are now responding to mounting scrutiny and consumer demands by integrating elements of social responsibility into their business operations.

Although a universal definition of CSR is not agreed upon (van Marrewijk, 2003), CSR is generally defined as “. . . a company’s commitment to minimizing or eliminating any harmful effects and maximizing its long-run beneficial impact on society” (Mohr, Webb, & Harris, 2001, p. 47). It is a relationship between business and society (Snider, Hill, & Martin, 2003) that may benefit an organization’s image and boost public acceptance for companies (de Bakker & den Hond, 2008). A company’s socially responsible behavior may include various activities ranging from supporting nonprofits, employee well-being, to environmental and human rights issues (Mohr & Webb, 2005). This engagement is a result of CSR having the potential to offer strategic direction to managers who want to enhance their organization’s performance and competitiveness (Brietbarth & Harris, 2008). Organizations may also choose to be good corporate citizens without concern for how it connects to the organization’s bottom line (Matten & Crane, 2005).

In spite of the benefit CSR intends to create for both companies and the public, there have been recent criticisms of CSR as strategic image management and apologia. In fact, there are three alternative CSR models: (a) virtue-based (McMillan, 2007); (b) dialogic (Roberts, 2003); and (c) social good (McMillan, 2007; Hoi, Wu, & Zhang, 2016; Gaither, Austin, & Schulz, 2017). The virtue model is a rhetorical approach to CSR, while the dialogic approach is based in critical theory, and CSR as social good is rooted in public relations theory.

Rhetorical approach to CSR

As America was colonized by those who had “come loose” (McMillan, 2007, p. 15) from European structures, colonists also brought notions of social obligation and group formation that “served to ground communal life in the new land” (McMillan, 2007, p. 15). Additional research revealed that Americans had, by the beginning of the 20th century, slowly relinquished their responsibilities to each other (Putnam, 2000). Accordingly, because business had historically traded in financial and human capital, it “found itself as the chief repository of social capital” (Hanifan, 1916; Putnam, 2000), which is “the connection, reciprocity, and trust that bind society rather than separate it through power, hierarchy, and competition” (Kohn, 1986, p.). McMillan (2007) argued that (a) modern corporations have accepted a role of social responsibility they are ill-suited to enact; (b) “the shared traits of corporate discourse are inappropriate to promote CSR; and (c) a reconsideration of *ethos* (or ethics) as *participation* and *place* offers a more appropriate frame for corporate credibility and voice” (p. 15).

First, “the corporation is an idea, an imaginary entity, without substance or sensibility and therefore incapable of anything like responsibility. Instead, corporate responsibility will always depend upon people using their frail and vital sentence and following the path that this assigns” (Roberts, 2003, p. 263). Thus, society regards organizations by the collective actions humans take and the words they articulate (McMillan & Hyde, 2000). However, this is a characterization that today’s businesses are unable to fulfill because their purpose is primarily to generate a profit, and because society has seemingly forgotten about the institutions whose missions are more attuned to the wider social good, such as “religious, familial, educational, and community institutions” (Deetz, 2003, p. 17).

Second, society has accepted the “tension between a corporate rationality and social responsibility as an inescapable condition of living prosperously” (Greider, 2003, p. 38). When the aforementioned Enron scandal occurred, optimists claimed business was dealing with merely “a few bad apples,” but the incident proved to be a more accurate example of the “cockroach theory,” or the idea that seeing one means more are likely nearby (McMillan, 2007). This was a time in which organizations should have promoted public evidence of compassion and connection, yet “they experienced a serious institution-wide breakdown of character and ethics that struck a devastating blow to corporate credibility” (McMillan, 2007, p. 18).

Lastly, rhetorical scholars (Hyde, 1994; Jost & Hyde, 1997; Smith 2004) have focused on the concepts of *place* and *participation* as they offer more utility in the assessment of a corporate *ethos*. The scholars point out that “ethos means abode,

dwelling place,” and, in pursuit of *ethos*, it is the speaker’s obligation to make her or his audience “a place to be” as the audience deliberates the things they value most (Heidegger, 1977, p. 233). *Ethos* not only constructs a safe “dwelling place,” but also invites people into participation in that social space where people can deliberate and learn about an important matter (Hyde, 1994; McMillan, 2007).

Dialogic approach to CSR

Conversely, Roberts (2003) describes two poles of ambivalence regarding CSR. On one end, business ethics is perceived as merely “an exercise in proclamation: the publishing of admonitions, inducements, seductions toward ethical conduct most evident in those who want to make the ‘strong business case’ for responsible corporate behavior” (p. 250). At the other side of the spectrum is a belief that talking about business ethics is positive because it legitimizes a debate that has “too readily been subsumed in the pursuit of the obvious ‘goods’ of efficiency and profitability” (Roberts, 2003, p. 250).

A framework for differentiating between image and substance in corporate claims to social responsibility draws upon the work of Emmanuel Levinas, a French philosopher who insisted people’s ethical capabilities are grounded in their senses, which corporations are “devoid of” just as they are “incapable of responsibility” (Roberts, 2003, p. 251); therefore, business ethics “will always be a personal matter and the sensible corporation will always need to be built and grounded in individual conduct” (Roberts, 2003, p. 251).

Levinas points to two contrasting paths: the reflexive “encrustation” of the self and the “denuding” of the self in responsibility for one’s “neighbor” (Robert, 2003, p. 251). Encrusted and responsible selfhood is based on a concept that the individual is an

opportunistic and self-seeking entity (Roberts, 2003). From this assumption, social relations are competitive, making it difficult for ethics to be a natural and primary consideration. Levinas, though, is concerned with the conditions for ethics, which are found in “responsibility, where human sensibility is discovered as the frail but vital condition for ethics” (Roberts, 2003, p. 252). Levinas argues identity comes to people from the outside in the assignment of responsibility for one’s “neighbor.” Responsibility is “something that is akin to an attack upon the self that denudes [people] of identity” (Roberts, 2003, p. 253).

The value of Levinas’s ethical framework regarding the assignment of responsibility for one’s neighbor is that it is evident that CSR can never merely be “said,” or seen as an abdication of responsibility, because “the corporation is an idea, an imaginary entity, without substance or sensibility and therefore incapable of anything like responsibility” (Roberts, 2003, p. 263). Instead, corporate responsibility will depend upon people using their character.

Social capital approach to CSR

Social capital encapsulates “features of social life, such as networks, norms, and trust, that enable participants to act together more effectively to pursue shared interests” (Putnam, 1995, pp. 664–665). Coleman (1988) argues “an especially important form of social capital is the norm that one should forgo self-interest and act in the interests of the collectivity” (p. 104). Civic norms “promote trust and provide commonly shared frameworks that community members use when they communicate and judge observable behaviors of members in the community” (Hoi et al., 2016, p. 3).

The social component of social capital can either enable or constrain CSR activities in two ways. First, it provides a tool kit that policymakers, non-governmental organizations, and public policy think tanks can rely on when seeking to influence corporate activity in order to achieve desirable societal objectives (Hoi et al., 2016). Second, it furthers the business case for CSR since firms can engage in CSR by either increasing positive CSR activities or by decreasing negative CSR activities. Positive CSR activities are corporate social actions that “extend beyond immediate profit maximization goals and are intended to increase benefits or mitigate social problems for constituencies external to the firm (Marquis, Glynn, & Davis, 2007, p. 926). Negative CSR activities are “irresponsible and minimally responsible corporate behaviors” (Hoi et al., 2016, p. 2) that harm at least one non-shareholder stakeholder such as employees, customers, and government (Campbell, 2007). Consequently, social capital either amplifies or reduces the effects of these forms of CSR activities on corporate financial performance (Hoi et al., 2007).

While CSR may affect society and create social good, the goal of CSR is generally not to create a social movement (Gaither et al., 2017). Despite this, social change and CSR are often discussed together, with social change identified as a key outcome of effective CSR (Gaither et al., 2017). Most CSR strategies, however, are evaluated based on “win-win” (Gaither et al., 2017, p. 48) assumptions for society and the organization in regard to economic or reputational benefits (Banerjee, 2014). Companies are mainly motivated to engage in CSR because it has the potential to lead to greater profits or greater public support, which may in turn bolster profits (Burt, 1983;

Margolis & Walsh, 2001; Pava & Krausz, 1996; Roman, Hayibor, & Agle, 1999; Stanwick & Stanwick, 1998; Ullman, 1985).

Yet, although social change is often not the goal for many CSR initiatives, there are instances where social change is the desired result, and corporations act as social change agents (Bies, Bartunek, & Fort, 2007). In communicative terms, social change is defined as a type of “change in the traditional forms of organizing and conceptualizing organizational processes, commitments, and philosophies” (Dutta, 2011, p. 3). Genuine efforts toward social change means communication efforts must focus on the need for societal level change, rather than at the individual level (Thomas, 2014). Therefore, communication efforts must move beyond promoting a company’s “good works on important societal issues through public relations and advertising, into communication that highlights the need for social change, including identifying and articulating the issue of societal concern; what can or should be done to address the concern; and the company’s role in those efforts” (Gaither et al., 2017, p. 48).

In an effort to respond to increased public scrutiny of corporate and industry activities, companies frequently engage in CSR to mitigate current or potential stakeholder concerns regarding negative impacts associated with the organization’s products or practices. These organizations must consider their obligation to address, limit, or assuage such negative implications, in addition to their responsibility to promote social good (Gaither et al., 2017). These ethical considerations “highlight the ethical principle of beneficence, which requires businesses consider their obligation to remove harms as well as engage in beneficent actions” (Gaither et al., 2017, p. 50). In public relations

literature, these considerations are characterized as “an organization’s positive contributions to a community (monetary or otherwise), avoidance of harm to the community, or a combination of both” (Boynton, 2002, p. 242).

Stakeholder Theory offers a relevant framework for examining the relationship between CSR in relation to positive social change. This theory suggests businesses should consider the interests and concerns of groups (i.e., stakeholders) affected by the business’s “actions, decisions, policies, practices, or goals” (Carroll & Bucholtz, 2014, p. 66). Reiter (2016) suggests Stakeholder Theory is more aspirational than CSR because companies are “no longer capitalists acting in their own self-interest to accumulate wealth but rather acting in the interest of society for a social cause, to create value” (p. 358). This suggests businesses pursue such value creation by cultivating stakeholder relationships rather than solely through corporate wealth. This supports Fyke, Feldner, and May’s (2016) conceptualization of conscious capitalism, where stakeholders are at the core of the business-society relationship.

Corporations involved in CSR with the underlying motivation to enhance profits through improved sales or enhanced reputation, have a more limited capacity for generating social change, as corporate benefit “will always be at the forefront of decisions regarding the initiatives” (Gaither et al., 2017, p. 51). “These companies function in ways that secure long-term economic outcomes, while avoiding or limiting short-term behaviors with negative social or environmental impacts” (Gaither et al., 2017, p. 51). As these motivations are driven by organizations’ self-interests, they are unlikely to give full consideration to the interests of external recipients, therefore limiting the

potential for social change. Meanwhile, organizations that are motivated by stakeholders or social value have heightened capacity for social change for a common good, because the primary motivator for the initiative extends beyond the company's finances.

CSR in crisis response

Despite widespread discussion regarding the impact of CSR activities on consumer perceptions, little research has examined how consumers cope with CSR-based crisis response messages as a bolstering strategy (Ham & Kim, 2017). All corporations can “expect to face crises that can damage brand image and reputation, depending on how the organization responds” (Ham & Kim, 2017, p. 1). Therefore, it is imperative that an organization be able to determine, create, and develop message strategies that effectively respond to various types of crises in order to protect their reputation. Research has examined public responses to corporate crisis response strategies such as (a) consumer perceptions of organizational responsibility and (b) consumer behavioral intentions as reflected in word-of-mouth (WOM) comments and purchase intentions (Arpan & Roskos-Ewoldsen, 2005; Coombs, 1995; Coombs, 2007; Coombs & Holladay, 1996).

Previous research has proposed some crisis response strategies utilizing communication regarding the company's history of CSR, suggesting communication about CSR has the potential to offset the negative impact of a crisis (S. Kim, 2013; J. Kim, H. Kim, & Cameron, 2009; Vanhamme & Grobben, 2009). However, the role of CSR-based crisis response messages should be analyzed in terms of other situational variables present in a crisis (Janssen, Sen, & Bhattacharya, 2015). Consumers cannot be

expected to simply accept a corporation's CSR-based crisis responses; they will actively interpret such responses in light of often complex situational factors (Ham & Kim, 2017). Corporations must understand how consumers who are primarily affected by the crisis will likely respond to the crisis itself, and to the corporation's crisis response strategies (Ham & Kim, 2017).

Coombs and Holladay (2002) proposed Situational Crisis Communication Theory (SCCT) in recognition of the threat that crises present to brand and corporate reputation and the importance of strategic post-crisis response communication. SCCT states companies should strategically respond to a crisis based on how the public attributes responsibility for the crisis. It also suggests the public attributes more blame and responsibility to an organization if it perceives a crisis to be intentional as opposed to unintentional (Coombs, 2007; Coombs & Holladay, 1996; J. Kim et al., 2009). For example, strategies denying responsibility for a crisis work better when the organization is a victim (such as in a natural disaster); while strategies diminishing corporate responsibility for a crisis are appropriate when it is an accidental crisis (such as accidental technical errors); and strategies to rebuild reputation are best for a preventable crisis (such as those caused by human error or organizational misdeeds) (Ham & Kim, 2017).

Additionally, scholars have emphasized the need to connect the impact of a crisis to behavioral intentions (Coombs & Holladay, 2007). Two behavioral consequences associated with crises are WOM and purchase intention. Negative WOM has two qualities that make it unique from purchase intention: (1) Negative WOM has a viral effect that lasts longer than purchase intention (Coombs, 2007); and (2) Negative WOM

has the potential to become an increasing threat to an organization in crisis, particularly given that social media and traditional media are now a source of crisis information (Jin & Liu, 2010; Liu, Jin, & Austin, 2013).

Recently, Laufer (2015) argued that CSR is one of the most important emerging issues in crisis management research. It is a communicative event and symbolic resource that enables stakeholders to perceive the organization's responsibility for a crisis and formulate their responses to it (Ham & Kim, 2017). Research has shown a relationship between CSR and corporate marketing outcomes has a direct positive effect on corporate brand credibility and corporate reputation (Hur, Kim, & Woo, 2014). Consumers naturally exhibit more positive attitudes toward companies with good reputations than those with bad reputations (Coombs & Holladay, 1996; Dawar & Pillutla, 2000; Dean, 2004; Hong & Yang, 2009; Lyon & Cameron, 2004), and a company's reputation plays a role in the success of its CSR strategy (Du, Bhattacharya, & Sen, 2010; Lii & Lee, 2012; Skard & Thorbjørnsen, 2014; Yoon, Gurhan-Canli, & Schwarz, 2006). CSR helps establish a pre-crisis reputation (Varadarajan & Menon, 1988) and is useful in the creation of a post-crisis response strategy (Coombs, 1995; Vanhamme & Grobben, 2009).

Yet the role of CSR may not always be positive. Research implies that CSR activities may negatively influence a corporation's reputation and consumer response to a crisis (Ham & Kim, 2017). Y. Kim (2014) found CSR that was too vigorously promoted elicited consumer skepticism, which negatively affected behavioral intentions such as consumer intention to purchase its products or services. Consumers' behavioral responses to CSR vary according to company motives for engaging in CSR (Romani, Grappi, and

Bagozzi, 2016). Likewise, too much effort in CSR promotional communication could result in consumers assigning negative attributes about CSR activities and consequently harm an organization's relationship with its stakeholders (Bhattacharya & Sen, 2004). Additionally, CSR could have negative consequences when the company is involved in socially irresponsible activities (Ham & Kim, 2017). Therefore, the effectiveness of communication about CSR might vary depending on consumer inferences regarding the motives behind CSR initiatives. The persuasion knowledge model (PKM) proposes that persuasion targets (such as consumers) actively interpret the underlying motives and hidden meanings of persuasion agents' (like advertisers and PR practitioners) persuasion attempts (such as ad messages) (Ham & Kim, 2017).

CSR in sports

In the sport industry, where cultivation of an affective connection to the organization is critical, CSR may provide secondary value for the organization "over and above those which have been seen in other industries" (Walker & Kent, 2009, p. 744). Klein and Dawar (2004) demonstrated that CSR associations had a strong and direct impact on consumers' attributions, which in turn influenced brand evaluations and purchase intentions.

A variety of factors have led to the growing importance of CSR for sport organizations (Lau, Makhanya, & Trengrouse, 2004). First, the omnipresence of sport has led to the elevation of sport organizations as influential members of the global community, especially as these organizations become big businesses themselves (Walker & Kent, 2009). Second, sport organizations are facing a consuming public that is

increasingly aware of the social aspects of corporate policy, due to the notoriety given to recent corporate misdeeds (Walker & Kent, 2009). While CSR emphasis was initially concerned with issues like transparency, accountability, and employee well-being, attention has now shifted toward the sport organizations' role in society (Lau et al., 2004). The sport industry has been characterized as a lens through which to see the larger social perspectives of symbolism, identification, community, and sociability, due in part to the strong affective connections of sport fans (Hunt, Bristol, & Bashaw, 1999; Melnick, 1993; Sutton, McDonald, Milne, & Cimperman, 1997).

Furthermore, investment in the identification levels of fans has been shown to help teams strengthen and maintain their relationship with fans (e.g., history and tradition; Kolbe & James, 2000). Certainly, the attitudes fans have toward CSR assists in cultivating a deeper sense of pride in their communities, and, in turn, generate lasting and emotionally rewarding associations between the organization and the community (Funk & James, 2001). CSR may help cultivate positive externalities because these efforts necessitate significant team involvement, organization-wide coordination, and a forward-thinking managerial style (Shrivastava, 1995).

Consumers of team sports often evaluate the team and/or organization based on the core brand and/or product (i.e., the game; Kolbe & James, 2000). Today, it is now important to note that the respondents' knowledge of the organization extends beyond wins and losses and is an imperative factor in formulating an overall reputational assessment of the organization. These non-product dimensions become particularly

important for those fans possessing lower levels of team identification, and for those times when the team is having a losing or subpar season (Walker & Kent, 2009).

Although some researchers have found that valuing business ethics does not always translate to consumers' intentions (Uusitalo & Oksanen, 2004), the affective consumer associations within sport produce high organizational evaluations, confirming that a positive CSR campaign leads to overall positive consumer associations, particularly in sport teams (Walker & Kent, 2009). Likewise, the "relationship between beliefs and behaviors will be stronger first, the more knowledge consumers have about CSR issues, and second, the more important they judge these issues to be" (Mohr et al., 2001, p. 69).

Research Questions

The theoretical foundation and literature review work together to inform the following research questions:

Research Question 1 (RQ1): What is the public's perception, based on social media posts on Facebook, Twitter, and article comments, of the NFL, given its struggles to address domestic violence in the league?

An individual's identity in relation to (Social Identity Theory) and level of attachment to (Attachment Theory, Cognitive Dissonance Theory) the NFL may help explain a respondent's perception of the NFL's response to its 2014 domestic violence crisis. Similarly, the media's decision to report on certain aspects of the NFL's 2014 domestic violence crisis (Agenda Setting Theory, Framing Theory) may assist in understanding the way people use social media to express their opinion of the league and its handling of the crisis (Uses and Gratifications Theory). Therefore, RQ1 considers the

ways in which the aforementioned communication theories help with the analysis of respondents' Facebook posts, tweets, and article comments regarding their evaluation of the NFL's reputation in light of its 2014 domestic violence.

Research Question 2 (RQ2): Based on responses to RQ1, what would the public most like to see the NFL do to address domestic violence in the league?

As explained in relation to RQ1, identity theories such as Social Identity Theory, Attachment Theory, and Cognitive Dissonance Theory may also help explain the steps a respondent would prefer the league take when addressing domestic violence in its organization. Media theories such as Agenda Setting Theory and Framing Theory may also assist in understanding why respondents express certain opinions regarding the NFL's response to the 2014 domestic violence crisis as opposed to other opinions. RQ2 considers the ways in which these communication theories provide a framework for analyzing respondents' social media posts and news report comments regarding their preferred corrective actions which the league should endorse in order to effectively address domestic violence.

Research Question 3 (RQ3): How did public response to the NFL's 2014 domestic violence crisis impact the league's CSR practices?

The NFL's knowledge of the power of sports and how its fans orient themselves toward the league informs how the NFL manages its brands. Likewise, the NFL's response to public criticism and negative media coverage regarding the organization impacts its CSR efforts. RQ3 aims to provide a response that addresses how these topics

work together to influence the NFL's current CSR efforts, following their very public domestic violence crisis.

It is important to remember that the overall goal of this project is the development of a social marketing campaign. Therefore, the results and analysis from these research questions are intended to spread the campaign.

CHAPTER 3

Methodology

Thorough market research for this campaign's target audience was conducted to develop a full market analysis and comprehensive consumer profile, which are described in later sections of this document. The secondary research was gathered through online market research tools, such as the United States Census Bureau, as well as studies which have been done on the NFL (Cascio, 2016; Beck & Bosshart, 2003). The primary research for this campaign was conducted using qualitative research methods, namely a thematic-content analysis, which is described in detail in the following sections. A thematic analysis combined with content analysis was conducted for this project, which is an interpretive approach to data analysis. Thematic analysis is one of the most common forms of analysis in qualitative research (Guest, MacQueen, & Nancy, 2012). The advantages to conducting a thematic analysis include but are not limited to its: systematic and unobtrusive nature (Walker & Kent, 2009); replicability in examining communication (Walker & Kent, 2009); suitability for large data sets (Guest, et al., 2012); and allowance for categories to emerge from data (Saldana, 2009). Allowing themes to emerge from data is helpful, because it provides language associations the campaign creator can use as a springboard for ideas upon which to build a successful campaign.

Content analysis is "the systematic, objective, quantitative analysis of message characteristics" (Neuendorf, 2002, p. 10) and is "used to make replicable and valid inferences by interpreting and coding textual material" ("Research and methodology,"

2012). It is a tool that allows researchers “to look at the way messages change over time and vary across mediums and outlets” (“Content analysis,” n.d.). By systematically evaluating texts, including documents, oral communication, and social media, qualitative data (such as that which is characteristic of thematic analyses) can be converted into quantitative data (“Research and methodology,” 2012). Content analyses, then, are “an important bridge between purely quantitative and purely qualitative research methods” (“Research and methodology,” 2012). The thematic-content analysis conducted for the current project allowed for a collection of general insights (qualitative) and specific reactions (quantitative) to the NFL’s handling of its domestic violence crisis which helped formulate the campaign strategy, ideas, and messaging targeting individuals in this particular project.

Sampling

The current project analyzed a total of 300 social media posts and online news report comments discussing the NFL’s handling of their 2014 domestic violence crisis. While current guidelines for thematic analysis sample sizes are varied, a sample of 300 social media posts/comments falls within the suggested range of 6 to 400 samples (Fugard & Potts, 2015), and allows the researcher the ability to maintain focus on the key moments in the NFL’s handling of both the Ray Rice and Adrian Peterson domestic violence cases. The researcher elected to analyze social media posts for this project because social media has a unique ability to share stories and the opinions of millions of individuals on a wide scale and at a rapid rate (Perrin, 2015). This project’s research

questions are dependent on the firsthand account of individuals who felt compelled to publicly express their opinion on the NFL's relationship with domestic violence.

The Facebook posts from public pages including "Boycott NFL Sponsors" and "NFL Fans Against Domestic Violence," tweets, and news report comments from websites such as ABC News, NBC Sports, and SB Nation were retrieved via a Google search for "NFL Ray Rice domestic violence," and a separate Google search for "NFL Adrian Peterson domestic violence." The researcher then analyzed the search results for articles regarding the 2014 Rice case as well as the NFL's response to each development in the Rice case but did not read articles with a publication date outside of 2014 in order to remain within the scope of the current project. Once the researcher found appropriate articles, the researcher read the articles for links to Facebook posts and tweets, as well as examining them to see if the articles contained comment sections. If an article contained a comment section, the researcher analyzed the comments to determine whether or not the comments were relevant to the current study. If an article included a link or links to a public Facebook post or tweet, the researcher clicked on the post or tweet and studied the Facebook posts and their comments, as well as the threads of responses to tweets, in order to determine which posts and tweets were relevant to the current study. Data must have referenced one of the NFL player's 2014 domestic violence cases in order to limit the scope of this research; thus, a comment could have been made at any time during or after 2014 but was only included in this research if it directly referenced the 2014 domestic violence crisis. Posts/comments that were simply remarks regarding a player's actions in their respective cases, such as, "I don't think AP [Adrian Peterson] wanted to

abuse his son for nothing [*sic*] instead [*sic*] he wanted to discipline him like any sensible parent will do [*sic*],” (Gooner 10, 2015), were excluded from this study, as that data would have been outside the scope of the current project. The posts/comments (a) had to include either the user’s identification (or lack thereof) with the league, such as, “I’m a HUGE football fan” (Devon Corcoran Boyd, 2014); (b) their perception of the NFL, including comments like, “@COVERGIRL no. You are just like the @nfl [*sic*] You just want your \$\$. You don’t stand with us or our children” (Donna_West, 2014); (c) the action the user would like the NFL to take in order to correct its mishandling of domestic violence, such as, “Ousting him [Commissioner Goodell] won’t fix the culture of dismissiveness. Why don’t they make all coaches and him to an HR training on how to handle these in the future?” (Lacie Wallace, 2014); or (d) some combination of these criteria, including statements like, “That man should be thrown out of the nfl [*sic*] and thrown into jail. Shame on those deciding his punishment. Smh [shaking my head]” (MrKnighton2u, 2014a).

Lastly, if the post/comment was not made on a social media platform such as Facebook or Twitter, but rather on an online news report, it must have been made on a reputable website, such as ESPN or ABC News, rather than a personal blog. It was important to include comments from both sports-centric and mainstream news outlets because, as previously discussed, there are various levels of fandom in sports, and people who either are not fans or are merely spectators of the NFL may not visit sports-centric news outlets.

Data Analysis and Procedure

Each social media post or comment analyzed for this project served as a unit of analysis. Every post and comment were initially read to gain a sense of respondents' fandom for the NFL, perception of the league during their 2014 domestic violence crisis, and the commenter's preferred corrective action for the NFL to take in combatting domestic violence in its organization. During this process, data that did not contain messages meaningful to the study (e.g., spam) were excluded from analysis.

The posts/comments were then classified into emergent categories based on how participants described their fandom, perception of the NFL, and preferred corrective action to address domestic violence in the league. After the initial categorization, the author returned to the data to gain insight into the usefulness of developed categories (Suter, Bergen, Daas, & Durham, 2006). Themes were summarized and compared to ascertain similarity, and the author compared and reduced themes as much as possible while still preserving meaning (Sanderson, 2013). This process of development, clarification, and enhancement of categories continued until new observations failed to add significantly to existing categories (Sanderson, 2013). (See Appendix E for memo of categorization process.)

The author then analyzed each post/comment to determine the primary and secondary themes in order to illuminate whether posts about the NFL's 2014 domestic violence crisis were largely in regard to respondents' perceptions of the league, or in regard to preferred corrective action, and further, what the most-cited perceptions and

preferred actions were. This categorization allowed the author to get a sense of the overall attitude of respondents, which served as the direction of the eventual campaign.

Due to the interpretive nature of data analysis, overlap between categories existed, and the author allowed for the chance that several themes could be evident in a single post (Sanderson, 2013). Some posts had clear messages; others included several topics that were relevant to the study. Rather than reducing secondary themes to one secondary theme per post/comment, postings were treated in a complementary, rather than competitive, fashion to holistically capture the multiple messages embedded in these postings (Sanderson, 2013).

Data was analyzed using basic qualitative coding methods, namely open coding. Open coding refers to the unrestricted coding of data (Lindlof & Taylor, 2011). As the sole coder for this project, the researcher went through each posting line-by-line and categorized the data based on themes from each post. Each emerging theme constituted a category, which defined and described the findings in clear terms. These findings were applied to the campaign creation and planning process, which will be discussed in later sections of this document.

CHAPTER 4

Results and Discussion

This chapter details the findings of the thematic-content analysis of this project. The first section addresses the results of the thematic-content analysis by examining the most frequently cited themes, as well as how the results relate to the previously discussed theoretical foundations. Lastly, the second section reviews the implications of this research and how the findings were applied to the campaign.

The primary themes of the analysis were (1) perception (i.e., opinion) of the NFL as an organization regarding its response to its 2014 domestic violence crisis (abbreviated to “perception”) and (2) preferred corrective action the league should take in order to address domestic violence in its organization (abbreviated to “action”). Perception was coded 57.3% ($n = 172$) of the posts whereas action was coded in 42.7% ($n = 128$) of respondent.

Table 1

Percent and Frequency Count of Primary Themes

Primary Themes		
	Percent	Frequency
Perception	57.3	172
Action	42.7	128

The subthemes for perception included perceptions the NFL is: deceitful; powerful; merely a business; focused solely on their image or public reputation; violent; either responsible or irresponsible for disciplining players’ off-field misconduct;

incompetent; or apathetic toward issues that do not further the business aspect of the NFL. Apathetic was the most commonly cited subtheme in relation to the primary theme of perception of the NFL.

The subthemes for action included: relieve NFL leadership of their duties given their inaction or slow response to the domestic violence crisis; suspend players who commit domestic violence; partner with anti-domestic violence organizations to bring awareness to the issue; institute anti-domestic violence education programs that NFL personnel are required to attend; update the NFL player code of conduct to reflect a stricter punishment for domestic violence; ban players who commit domestic violence from playing in the NFL; require players who commit domestic violence to complete rehabilitation before returning to the NFL; screen players for violent tendencies prior to drafting them to join the NFL; no action regarding off-field misconduct; run anti-domestic violence ads; and unsure. Suggestions that players be suspended or banned tied for the most commonly cited subthemes in relation to the primary theme of preferred corrective action.

Thematic-Content Analysis

The thematic-content analysis aimed to answer the research questions that inspired the creation of this project:

RQ1: What is the public's perception, based on social media posts on Facebook, Twitter, and article comments, of the NFL, given its struggles to address domestic violence in the league?

RQ2: Based on responses to RQ1, what would the public most like to see the NFL do to address domestic violence in the league?

RQ3: How did public response to the NFL's 2014 domestic violence crisis impact the league's CSR practices?

This section will outline and detail the primary and secondary themes that emerged from the thematic-content analysis. Appendix F contains the articles that the data for the current study (i.e., Facebook posts, tweets, and news report comments) were retrieved from. Appendix G presents the table that contains each Facebook post, tweet, and news report comment included in the study as well as the primary and secondary themes of each piece of data.

To indicate where a post fell in the data set, a number is attached to each exemplar. For example, a posting with the number (200) indicates the 200th posting in the data set (Sanderson, 2013). Postings are reported verbatim from the data set with ellipses (. . .) to indicate an omission of irrelevant information to the current study. Spelling and grammatical errors were left intact but noted with [*sic*] after each misspelled word. Abbreviated words were defined in brackets next to the abbreviated word for clarification.

Perception of the NFL

The results discussed in this section provide responses to RQ1: What is the public's perception, based on social media posts on Facebook, Twitter, and article comments, of the NFL, given its struggles to address domestic violence in the league? As previously stated, 57.3% ($n = 172$) of the 300 posts analyzed had "perception of the

NFL” (or an opinion regarding the NFL organization’s relationship with domestic violence) as their primary theme as opposed to “action.” Analysis revealed participants perceived the NFL’s reputation, in light of its 2014 domestic violence crisis, in the following ways: (a) deceitful, (b) powerful, (c), business first, (d), image driven, (e) violent, (f) irresponsible/responsible (categorized as “Responsibility” in SPSS), (g) incompetent; and (h) apathetic. At 15.3% ($n = 46$), the most commonly cited perception was the league is “apathetic” toward addressing and resolving the occurrence of domestic violence in their organization.

Table 2

Percent and Frequency Count of Perception Subthemes

Perception: Subthemes		
	Percent	Frequency
Apathetic	15.3	46
Incompetent	12	36
Business	8.3	25
Deceitful	7.3	22
Violent	4.7	14
Responsibility	3	9
Image	2.7	8
Powerful	2.3	7

The respondents whose posts indicated a belief that the NFL is apathetic viewed the organization as apathetic toward either domestic violence, women, its own players, or its fans. Conversely, some respondents indicated the league was not apathetic given how

they ultimately changed their policy regarding personnel who commit domestic violence. Posts that deemed the league to be apathetic toward domestic violence did so given the league's initial two-game suspension of Rice following video footage that showed him dragging his unconscious fiancée out of an elevator. These respondents believed a two-game suspension for something as serious as domestic violence was too lenient and indicative of how little the NFL values women. "The cowardly NFL . . . gives four game suspension [*sic*] for Adderall use and two games for knocking out your fiance [*sic*]" (asa, 2014). "the [*sic*] NFL consider [*sic*] beating your girlfriend to be more acceptable than substance abuse violations" (BriteDiamond, 2014). Additionally, some commenters claimed that, because the league has done very little to address and prevent chronic traumatic encephalopathy (CTE), a degenerative brain disease often found in NFL players who have experienced concussions, the NFL would also be apathetic toward combating domestic violence within its organization. Lastly, posts that determined the NFL was apathetic toward its own fans did so because they believed the league favored profit over acknowledging fans' concerns regarding the league's moral codes.

The next most commonly cited perception was the NFL is *incompetent*, with 12% ($n = 36$) of perception-driven posts. The subcategories for incompetence were as follows: The league (a) mishandled the Rice domestic violence case; (b) was hypocritical in how it punishes players who commit crimes like domestic violence; and (c) has weak leadership. Respondents whose posts indicated the NFL was incompetent because of how it handled Ray Rice's domestic violence case did so because they believed the league was too lenient and too slow to enforce stricter policies against players who commit domestic

violence, particularly with the clear video evidence in Rice's case. "If the NFL suspends [New England Patriots quarterback] Tom Brady 4 [sic] games and the Team [sic] gets fined a million dollars and loses [its] First [sic] Round [sic] Draft [sic] Pick [sic] for letting a little bit of air out of a ball, the NFL can certainly punish real crimes such as Domestic [sic] Violence [sic] much more seriously" (BubbaB, 2016). "Now that the #Ravens know what we all knew [sic] happened months ago [sic] what should be the next step ? [sic] Roger & the #NFL dropped the ball SMH [shaking my head]" (MarkMcMillian29, 2014b). *Hypocritical* was a term often used in reference to the NFL's incompetence in handling their domestic violence crisis, citing cases where the league enforced stricter punishments on players who smoked marijuana or wore the wrong colored socks during a game. Lastly, weak leadership was yet another reason why some respondents indicated the NFL was incompetent, claiming the Commissioner was out-of-touch and did not seem to "get" (talkhoops, 2014) why the league's response to Rice's domestic violence case was incorrect.

Following *incompetent*, 8.3% ($n = 25$) of posts indicated the commenter viewed the NFL as being focused solely on business and had one of the following relevant subcategories: profit-driven or talent-driven. Respondents overwhelmingly believed the league covered up, lied about, or gave Rice a light punishment because they wanted to ensure the league kept its most talented players on the field in order to win more games, which would encourage people to watch games or purchase tickets, and businesses to sponsor or partner with the league, resulting in more profits for the NFL.

Posts that indicated the commenter viewed the NFL as deceitful (7.3%, $n = 22$) had one of the following relevant subcategories: lied, covered-up, or misled. Of posts that indicated a belief the NFL was deceitful because they lied about the severity of Rice's domestic violence case, respondents cited TMZ's ability to request and release the full video of Rice punching his then-fiancée in the face, in comparison to the NFL's supposed inability to do the same despite its financial resources and relationship with law enforcement. "NFL claims they never saw the video. What a crock. You mean to tell me that little ole TMZ can get hold of it, yet the 9 billion dollar a year NFL couldn't? Please, how stupid does Goodell think people truly are?" (darkone, 2014). Similarly, other posts that indicated a perception that the league is deceitful because it covered up the most violent elements of Ray Rice's case, with one commenter posting, "The NFL is going to cover it's [sic] behind and say they never saw the video....[sic] you're [sic] talking about the big bad NFL. They saw it" (HamzaAbdullah21, 2014). Lastly, yet another set of posts that indicated the NFL is deceitful, because they viewed the organization as being misleading with how they were handling domestic violence in their organization. "You absolutely cannot convince me that Roger Goodell is not lying about 'not seeing' it [the video] and [is] labeling it as 'new video evidence'" (Alex, 2014).

Posts that indicated the commenter viewed the NFL as a "violent" organization (4.7%, $n = 14$) had one of the following relevant subcategories indicating why they perceived the league to be violent: (a) the NFL perpetuates a culture of violence; (b) the league hires violent players; and (c) the level of violence reported in the NFL is overstated. Some respondents who reported the league perpetuates a violent culture

referred to the NFL as the “National Felon League” (Isayshowmee, 2014; Anonymous, 2014; matt drudge, 2015; Lester, 2014) while others cited the organization as “dangerous” (scruffy, 2014), particularly to children who admire NFL players and may believe violence in the home is acceptable given how some of their idols are not punished by their employers for committing such crimes (Tulips ontheorgan, 2015). Additionally, many respondents referred to NFL players as “thugs” (eroteme1, 2014; jamicamain900, 2014; John Schwendler, 2014; Anonymous, 2014; Alice Sullivan Farrell, 2014) and individuals who “abuse their kids and women” (darknesscrown, 2014). Some respondents indicated it was solely the black players who were violent (RetreadedBear, 2014; The Professor of Race, 2015). Other respondents indicated the level of violence in the NFL is overstated, citing the league’s lower crime rate than society on average (Eric Joseph Williams, 2014).

Posts that indicated that some commenters viewed the NFL as not responsible (3%, $n = 9$) for punishing players who commit domestic violence did so because respondents believed it is law enforcement’s responsibility to punish individuals who commit crimes rather than a person’s employer, which would make the employer act as more of a parent (Iris Phelps, 2014) or either “judge, jury and executioner” (Alter, 2014). Furthermore, some respondents stated it was not the league’s place to punish Rice twice for the same offense, especially because the charges against him were dropped (TheKiid810, 2015; Iris Phelps, 2014). There were some respondents whose perception of the league was regarding whether the NFL was, or should be, responsible for

punishing players who have misconduct indicated the league was responsible in their handling of Rice and Peterson's domestic violence cases (chachaslide, 2014).

The next subtheme that emerged from the data regarding perception of the NFL involved the league's emphasis on preserving their image (2.7%, $n = 8$). Posts that indicated their perception of the NFL as image driven, indicated NFL leadership only addressed domestic violence as much as they did, because they needed to protect their reputation after TMZ released the full video of Rice punching his then-fiancée. These posts indicated respondents believed the NFL's apparent reactive strategy regarding media coverage of the Ray Rice domestic violence case revealed the league's apathy toward domestic violence (Alice Sullivan Farrell, 2014; darkone, 2014). Similarly, other posts described the league's response to the negative press it received following Rice's domestic violence case as a "public relations move" (Isayshowmee, 2014), "reactive" (Bro Namath, 2014), and "amusing" (NFL Fans Against Domestic Violence, 2014a). Other respondents indicated the league's efforts to preserve their image only made the NFL appear weaker, because they were succumbing to "the liberal mafia that is destroying this nation" (BigTalk, 2014).

Lastly, 2.3% ($n = 7$) of posts indicated that respondents perceived the NFL to be a powerful organization within the sports and American business landscape. The following subcategories emerged within this secondary theme regarding perception, stating the NFL is either: (a) so powerful that it operates with impunity; (b) is powerful because of the financial resources it has; (c) is powerful because of how popular it is; or (d) is powerful because it is that influential. According to some respondents who perceived the league to

be powerful, the NFL's power stems from its loyal fans (stayjammin, 2015), which enables the organization to "get away with almost anything" (Enfant de Chienne, 2014). The NFL's perceived popularity also led some respondents to note that rationale as a contributing factor to the NFL's decision to withhold information regarding the case from the media and public (NFL Fans Against Domestic Violence, 2014b). Conversely, other respondents indicated the league would fail if it continued "with its cavalier attitude that it is above everything" (Angela Sanders, 2014). Some respondents indicated the league's multi-billion-dollar net worth as reason enough for them to be more responsible in addressing misconduct such as domestic violence (Katherine Johnson, 2014), but conversely, as a reason why "morals will likely take a backseat in factoring in decision-making when dealing with such matters" (Daniel Eden, 2015). Additionally, other respondents indicated the league's influence on policy (Chad W, 2015) and children (Kyle McCormick, 2015), were further proof that the organization must be responsible in how they handle cases such as Rice's.

Preferred Corrective Action

The results discussed in this section provide responses to RQ2: Based on responses to RQ1, what would the public most like to see the NFL do to address domestic violence in the league? As noted earlier, 42.7% ($n = 128$) of the 300 posts analyzed had "preferred corrective action" as their primary theme. Analysis revealed the following categories as preferred corrective action, or as actions respondents preferred the league avoid when handling domestic violence cases within its organization: (a) relieve NFL leadership of their duties given their inaction or slow response to the domestic violence

crisis; (b) suspend players who commit domestic violence; (c) partner with anti-domestic violence organizations to bring awareness to the issue; (d) institute anti-domestic violence education programs that NFL personnel are required to attend; (e) update the NFL player code of conduct to reflect a stricter punishment for domestic violence; (f) ban players who commit domestic violence from playing in the NFL; (g) require players who commit domestic violence to complete rehabilitation before returning to the NFL; (h) screen players for violent tendencies prior to drafting them to join the NFL; (i) no action regarding off-field misconduct; (j) run anti-domestic violence ads; and (k) unsure.

Table 3

Percent and Frequency Count of Action Subthemes

Action: Subthemes		
	Percent	Frequency
Suspension	8.7	26
Ban	8.7	26
Relieve leadership	7.7	23
None	7.3	22
Conduct	5	15
Education	2.7	8
Ads	2.3	7
Rehab	0.7	2
Unsure	0.7	2
Partnership	0.3	1
Screening	0.3	1

At 8.7% ($n = 26$), the highest preferred corrective action was a tie between suspending NFL personnel for more than two games as soon as the league becomes aware of any domestic violence violations, and banning league personnel from the organization for life, if found to have committed domestic violence a second time. The comments on length of suspension varied: (a) two games either preceding, or during, the football season in which an act of domestic violence was committed; (b) more than two games either preceding, or during, the football season in which domestic violence was committed; or (c) six games for the first offense, which was the ultimate policy the NFL determined to be sufficient. Posts that indicated two games were sufficient as a punishment believed this was the best course of action if no charges were filed in the domestic violence case, because that was the initial punishment the NFL gave Rice. Respondents who expressed a preference for this corrective action believed that a two-game suspension must have been consistent with similar past cases. While “six games for the first offense” is similar to stating a preference for suspending offending personnel for “more than two games,” these responses were separated given that respondents who indicated the latter preference did not always specify for how many games to suspend a player, while those who voiced an approval of the NFL’s ultimate decision to impose a six game-suspension for first-time offenders, naturally indicated a more detailed suspension. Posts that indicated a two-game suspension was insufficient stated as much because domestic violence is (in their opinion) a more serious crime than some of the other crimes the NFL has punished players for.

Tying with the aforementioned preferred corrective action of suspension, 8.7% ($n = 26$) of corrective action posts indicated the league should ban players who commit domestic violence. This secondary theme had a few subcategories such as (a) an immediate ban upon learning of a player's criminal activity; (b) an approval of a lifetime ban for a second domestic violence offense; (c) a disapproval of banning players from the NFL because such a punishment is too harsh; and (d) a call for banning only black players because they are the most violent players. "The real problem is that Ray Rice should have been held accountable from the very moment it happened. Anyone else would be in jail" (Nancy Beatty, 2014). In response to Goodell's announcement that two-time domestic violence offenders would be banned from the NFL for life, one commenter wrote "A good and fair reaction to a monstrous act" (Patti Casey-Beardsley, 2014). However, there were some commenters who felt a lifetime ban was too harsh, as it eliminated a player's livelihood and was therefore "unconstitutional" (The Amalekite, 2015). To a lesser extent, some respondents engaged in racism when discussing banning domestic violence offenders from professional football, with one respondent posting "We would NOT [*sic*] even be having this discussion about violence if we eliminated all of these blacks from the sport! If the gorillas keep this shit up they'll just eliminate themselves one by one till [*sic*] there's [*sic*] none existing!" (The Professor of Race, 2015).

Posts that indicated the commenter had a preference for relieving NFL leadership who made the decisions regarding Rice's punishment for hitting his then-fiancée (7.7%, $n = 23$) indicated (a) Commissioner Roger Goodell should be fired; (b) Commissioner

Goodell should not be fired; (c) a combination of top and middle management including NFL executives and team managers who were aware of player misconduct but did not discipline the players should be let go; or (d) the league needs to include women in the decision-making process going forward. Many posts that called for a change in leadership did so with Commissioner Goodell in mind; other respondents believed it would be unfair to fire Goodell, claiming it is a parent's rather than an employer's responsibility to teach their child that domestic violence is wrong (Iris Phelps, 2014; Sir Martin, 2015).

Furthermore, some respondents believed removing Goodell would merely be symbolic, equating his firing with "cutting the tail off a 32 headed [*sic*] dragon" (NFL Fans Against Domestic Violence, 2014d). Additionally, Diane Barkelew Wallace (2014), posted "It isn't just him!" in reference to the fact that Rice's team, the Baltimore Ravens, was aware of the video showing Rice hitting his then-fiancée, but chose not to punish or cut Rice from the team. Lastly, some comments stated, "The NFL should have included women in the decision-making process from the beginning, not after the scandal erupted" (Leigh Ann Tuohy, 2014).

The respondents whose posts indicated the league does not have a responsibility to punish personnel who commit domestic violence, did so with the belief that either (a) it is law enforcement's responsibility to punish criminal activity such as domestic violence; or (b) determining a standard and immediate punishment for committing domestic violence blends policymaking and sports in a way that is undesirable and unnecessary. Regarding the former belief, some respondents noted the NFL is a business and therefore operates in a manner consistent with business rather than law enforcement, saying "This

is why we have laws and law enforcement who are supposed to be separate from big business in doing the job of protecting the people” (Alter, 2014). In response to the latter category, one respondent simply asked, “Can we please keep politics out of football?” (MLLRTYM, 2014).

Of posts with a primary theme of preferred corrective action, 5% ($n = 15$) stated the NFL needs to enforce a stricter code of conduct against domestic violence. Within the call for a more stringent code of conduct, respondents indicated a variety of ways the league could accomplish this, including: (a) having equitable punishment depending on players’ misconduct; (b) simply enforcing a stricter code of conduct; (c) instituting a zero-tolerance policy against domestic violence; and (d) updating the code of conduct to reflect constituents’ concerns regarding how the NFL punishes personnel who commit domestic violence. Some respondents outlined previous league conduct violation cases in which a player was fined heavily for smoking a small amount of marijuana or wearing the incorrect-colored socks while at work, yet Rice only received an initial two-game suspension for hitting his then-fiancée despite the video evidence of the incident. To illustrate this perspective, Prometheus (2014) wrote, “Get the evidence, levy the punishment . . . be consistent. You don’t suspend someone for 4 [*sic*] games for taking a recreational drug while on vacation and only suspend another player for admittedly [*sic*] hitting his fiance [*sic*] and knocking her out ” Respondents who called on the NFL to enforce a stricter code of conduct did so out of concern that children who idolize professional football players would view Rice’s two-game suspension as merely “a slap on the wrist” (Julie David, 2015), stating “[t]here must be concrete consequences for

these criminal actions” (MarneyJones, 2014). More explicit than a stricter code of conduct, were posts that demanded the NFL institute a zero-tolerance policy because, “There is never a reason for any man to be violent towards any woman” (ChrisHarrisJr, 2014). The general consensus for posts which indicated a change in the code of conduct would be the best course of action following Rice’s domestic violence scandal was that a change was necessary because “[t]he current status quo obviously isn’t working” (John Schwendler, 2014).

Posts that indicated the NFL should require personnel to participate in domestic violence education programs indicated education programs were either insufficient or should include all league personnel as opposed to restricting the programs to players who commit domestic violence, with a minority approving of the league’s education program. Of respondents that stated education programs were insufficient, some indicated a wider cultural problem with domestic violence would render education programs ineffective. “Is taking a 2 hour [*sic*] seminar going to suddenly open these steroid abusing job bullies that hitting a woman is wrong—they just never thought of it before they were ‘educated’ [*sic*]” (Ethan Velling, 2014). Similarly, Chris Farnsworth (2014) wrote “Educate? how [*sic*] about teach them that there are actually consequences to their actions rather than letting them off light?” Posts that called for all NFL leadership to be included in anti-domestic violence education programs, did so because it was evident to the respondent that the league did not know how to handle domestic violence cases such as Rice’s.

Of posts collected for this project, 2.3% ($n = 7$) indicated an approval of the NFL’s anti-domestic violence ad run during Super Bowl 49 in 2015. The 30-second

commercial featured a woman calling 911 but speaking to the operator as if the operator is taking her order for a pizza delivery. Eventually, the operator realizes the woman is prevented from describing why she is calling 911, because she is not safe in her own home. The commercial ends with the following message: “When it’s hard to talk it’s up to us to listen. Help end domestic violence and sexual assault. Pledge to say NoMore.org” (Topol, 2015). One respondent commented “This is what’s needed!” (Lis Clark, 2014) while another wrote “Thank you for the ad. We should all work together to stop domestic violence and sexual assault” (Michael Chwe, 2015).

A small percent (0.7%, $n = 2$) of data indicated that requiring players who have committed domestic violence to complete rehabilitation before being reinstated into the league would be preferable (Mark Wills, 2015). Conversely, others (0.7%; $n = 2$) indicated uncertainty regarding what the NFL should do to correct their handling of domestic violence. These “uncertain” respondents believed the league’s ultimate penalty against Rice was too harsh, given that a lesser-known individual’s employer likely would not have been required to punish the employee for a crime the employee ultimately was not charged for (Meredith Brannon, 2014).

Lastly, while only 0.3% ($n = 1$) of posts regarding preferred corrective action indicated the league should partner with domestic violence prevention organizations, this action suggested that NFL personnel who commit domestic violence should be required to complete mandatory volunteer hours at “domestic abuse charities” (olivianewtonjohn, 2014a). Likewise, 0.3% ($n = 1$) of posts regarding preferred corrective action stated the NFL should screen players for violent tendencies during the NFL Draft process.

PoopStinkPie (2014) wrote, “Favre sends dick pics.. [sic] Rice beats his wife.. [sic] Roethlisberger rapes... [sic] Vick fights dogs.... [sic] I think we need to do a little more psychiatric evaluations [sic] before letting someone join the league... [sic]”

Fandom

The results discussed in this section provide responses to RQ1 and RQ2 regarding what Facebook posts, tweets, and article comments indicated what people’s perceptions (RQ1) and preferred corrective actions (RQ2) are in response to the NFL’s 2014 domestic violence crisis. Fandom was determined based on respondents’ mention of whether or not they still enjoyed the NFL as a fan or spectator despite the league’s domestic violence crisis; liked the NFL less given its handling of domestic violence; or always disliked the NFL. The majority of the posts analyzed for this project did not indicate fandom, as 87.3% ($n = 262$) of the 300 posts analyzed did *not* mention fandom. However, 8.7% ($n = 26$) of posts indicated respondents were fans of the NFL while 4.0% ($n = 12$) indicated the respondent was not a fan of the league. Within fandom level, 6.0% ($n = 18$) indicated high fandom, such as “I couldn’t image not watching [NFL football] on Sundays” (Julia Garrity, 2014); 1.0% ($n = 3$) indicated moderate fandom, such as “I love football [sic] but it does not guide my life” (vikingofny, 2014); 1.7% ($n = 5$) indicated diminished fandom, such as “one [sic] OJ isn’t enough? I’m getting done w/ [with] NFL. Can’t abide w/ [with] that message” (harrison2911, 2014); and 2.7% ($n = 7$) indicated low or non-existent fandom, such as “I do not care about football” (MaryAnnRoseMD, 2014).

Table 4

Percent and Frequency Count of Fandom

Fandom		
	Percent	Frequency
Not indicated	87.3	262
Fan	8.7	26
Not a fan	4	12

Table 5

Percent and Frequency Count of Fandom Level

Fandom Level		
	Percent	Frequency
Not indicated/unclear	88.7	266
Low/non-existent	8.7	8
Diminished	1.7	5
Moderate	1	3

Respondents who were categorized as having a high fandom level either (a) clearly stated they were a NFL fan (Boycott NFL Sponsors, 2014d; Kim Tangler, 2014; BlueJeans, 2014; Devon Corcoran Boyd, 2014; tripsaplenty, 2016; Julia Garrity, 2014; Katherine Johnson, 2014; Diesel, 2014; Meredith Brannon, 2014); (b) wanted public outcry to diminish following Rice's release from the Ravens (SaintClarence27, 2014a; SaintClarence27, 2014c) so everyone could "go back to watching football" (olivianewtonjohn, 2014b); (c) or indicated the league's indiscretions regarding domestic violence would not deter them from continuing to support their favorite teams and players either because their favorite teams and/or players had not committed domestic

violence (Nicole Larvick, 2014); NFL football provided a connection with family and friends (MichaelaFB, 2014; tuxedocatherine, 2014); or was part of respondents' identity (DonnaDraper, 2014a; LtCmndHipster, 2014).

Moderate fans were categorized based on statements such as "I love football but it does not guide my life" (vikingofny, 2014); "I don't own anything NFL related [*sic*] and have never been to an NFL game, and don't watch the NFL by myself" (LuckyMc44, 2014b); and "[My family and I] discussed the whole Hardy thing and the Adrian Peterson thing, but it doesn't really steer anybody away from watching. If a player on my team put his hands on a woman or child and he came back, I don't know if I'd want to support that team or player any longer" (Amanda McDonald, 2014). Diminished fans were categorized based on statements that indicated they were less of a NFL fan following the domestic violence crisis, including "The NFL represents everything that is wrong with this country. I was a big fan, but I'm done. Done" (Leron Ray, 2016) and "one OJ [Simpson] isn't enough? I'm getting done w/ [with] NFL. Can't abide w/ [with] that message [that a two game-suspension is a sufficient punishment for domestic violence]. Peace" (harrison2911, 2014).

Lastly, respondents who were categorized as having a low/non-existent fandom level most often indicated their lack of fandom by clearly stating they were not a NFL fan (Jane, you ignorant slut, 2014; dalila, 2014; dirtlumpio, 2014; DisturbedToad, 2014). Interestingly, some non-fan respondents stated they could understand why a fan would be reluctant to remove the NFL from their life given fans' attachment to the sport (Jane, you ignorant slut, 2014), while others were opposed to the NFL promoting anti-domestic

violence policy because it is a sport meant to entertain people rather than “preach” (Disturbed Toad, 2014) to people.

Implications for Theoretical Approaches

Social Identity Theory, Attachment Theory, and Cognitive Dissonance

As previously stated, the majority of posts did not explicitly state the commenter’s fandom level. The data that did indicate fandom level exhibited Social Identity Theory as well as Attachment Theory. Respondents who indicated they would continue to support the NFL despite its poor handling of domestic violence stated they would do so because NFL football is, for example, how they bond with their family. This not only constitutes a motivation to join a social membership according to Social Identity Theory, but also explains the attachment an individual has to an organization like the NFL. Furthermore, respondents who stated they were NFL fans prior to the Rice domestic violence incident but could no longer in good conscious support the league following that incident indicates the respondents had stronger motivations for not supporting the organization and, naturally, a weaker attachment to the NFL. Conversely, respondents who indicated a lack of fandom were unmotivated to be a fan of the NFL even prior to the 2014 domestic violence crisis and therefore did not have an attachment to the organization.

Cognitive Dissonance Theory was also demonstrated by in this research when respondents who identified themselves as NFL fans acknowledged the league mishandled the Rice case but admitted the NFL’s wrongdoings in that incident would not deter them from continuing to support the NFL. Respondents who reported this attitude mentioned

the NFL being a part of their life since childhood as a reason they could not stop watching NFL games (tuxedocatherine, 2014; LtCmndHipster, 2014).

Agenda Setting Theory, Framing Theory, and Uses and Gratifications Theory

The results of the thematic-content analysis did not indicate strong presence of the media theories discussed in the Theoretical Foundation of the current project.

Respondents whose posts included reactions regarding the media coverage of the league believed the media was “just pandering because people are starting to realize that maybe they shouldn’t be watching a sport that thought stuff like this was ok [sic]” (ryancsmith, 2014). Others believed the media was historically not supportive enough of those affected by domestic violence, and only decided to devote more attention to the topic once an organization the size of the NFL was clearly guilty of also disregarding the severity of domestic violence (Alice Bowron, 2014; NFL Fans Against Domestic Violence, 2014b). The policy agenda aspect of Agenda Setting Theory would suggest the NFL’s ultimate decision to reevaluate their domestic violence policies following the nearly year-long media coverage of the league’s missteps throughout the Rice case was made in response to said media coverage. Commissioner Goodell even acknowledged (although generally) that his “disciplinary decision led the public to question [the NFL’s] sincerity, . . . commitment, and whether [the NFL] understood the toll that domestic violence inflicts on so many families” (Burke, 2014).

Indeed, some respondents believed the media had “an agenda underway” (Eric Joseph Williams, 2014) to portray the NFL as having a higher crime rate than society even though the opposite is true. As such, the media encouraged widespread public

outrage by repeatedly showing the video of Rice rendering his then-fiancée unconscious; and the media further magnified the incident by using it in the headlines of all major news reports across TV, radio, and social media. News headlines such as ones analyzed for the current project, including “The National Football League [is] in *full damage control mode*” (Burkey, 2014) and “Now to those *scandals rocking* the NFL, *embattled* Commissioner Roger Goodell meeting with all the owners for the first time on Wednesday to address those off-field *problems*” (Corn, 2014), further the idea suggested by Framing Theory that the media can, and do, take certain aspects of a story that gatekeepers (i.e., groups or individuals who determine whether or not information seems pertinent enough to enter the news cycle) deem likely to generate the most attention, and use emotionally-laden language to further increase attention to the issue. The public’s comments and social media posts regarding the NFL’s 2014 domestic violence crisis may have reflected the emotional nature of the reports about Ray Rice. This is reflected in former NFL linebacker Scott Fujita’s tweet in response to the *TIME* magazine’s article, “The NFL needs to take domestic violence seriously,” when he tweeted, “The message to my wife & [sic] 3 [sic] daughters today? The business that’s been such a big part of our life, [sic] really doesn’t give a f**k [fuck] about you” (sfujita55, 2014). Tweets and comments, such as Fujita’s, potentially support the idea that the way news stories are framed influences the public’s response to people, objects, and events.

The Ray Rice case presented a need for an organization as powerful as the NFL to recognize and condemn the actions of one of its star players. The burden to seek resolution in the Rice incident became clearer to the league as media output began

reflecting fans' and spectators' opinions regarding the NFL's handling of the Rice case. Fans' and spectators' use of social media to express their opinions about the NFL's response to the Rice case demonstrated Uses and Gratifications Theory. Those who followed the news regarding Rice's case and voiced discontent for how the NFL initially punished Rice, received satisfaction once NFL Commissioner Roger Goodell announced stricter guidelines regarding domestic violence in the NFL. The league's policy change was therefore likely a result of the media's focus on Rice's case, which generated enough publicity that the NFL could not ignore this case long term (Ruggiero, 2009).

While aspects of Agenda Setting, Framing, and U&G theories can be identified in the data, analysis revealed a different direction regarding fan perceptions. Further, little was gained in terms of direct relevance to the social marketing campaign. Yet, future research into media effects from Agenda Setting, Framing, and U&G theories is a fruitful area researchers ought to consider.

Image Repair Theory

As previously reported, the NFL engaged in a number of changes to repair their image, including mortification, bolstering, defeasibility, differentiation, and shifting blame. Image Repair Theory's strategy of corrective action was the approach Commissioner Goodell attempted to emphasize most during his September 19, 2014 press conference. He listed three key changes the NFL implemented to address domestic violence, including: (a) updating its Personal Conduct Policy to include a rule under which first-time domestic violence offenders would be suspended for six games without pay, and second-time offenders would be banned from the NFL; (b) creating Critical

Response Teams comprised of “more than 200 specially-trained league and club leaders [who can] provide immediate and confidential crisis assistance . . . to anyone in the NFL family, including spouses, significant others, or other family members who experience abuse” (“The NFL’s response,” 2014); and (c) partnering with the National Domestic Violence Hotline to call attention to the seriousness of domestic violence and ways to combat it.

However, the respondents who posted regarding their perception of the NFL’s handling of domestic violence largely viewed the league’s efforts as “just a marketing move” (ace81hotshot, 2014), or a public relations tactic to minimize negative press and potential harm to the league’s income. Some believed the NFL only apologized for their handling of the Rice case and made changes to their domestic violence policy because there was a graphic video of Rice hitting his then-fiancée (Alice Sullivan Farrell, 2014). Other respondents even viewed the league’s decision to ban Rice from the league for life as “over the top” (Alex Fernandez, 2014), believing what a player does off the field should not impact his career. Therefore, the data analyzed for this project suggests image repair strategies are likely to be more effective when utilized in a timely manner, as opposed to several months after an organizational crisis becomes public.

Corporate Social Responsibility and Social Marketing Theory

The results of the current study’s thematic-content analysis support communication McMillan and Hyde’s (2000) claim that society regards organizations by the collective action people take. Respondents who expressed that a corrective action of firing Commissioner Goodell (along with other top- and middle-management personnel)

should be taken, placed the blame for the NFL's domestic violence crisis solely on him rather than generalizing fault with the NFL. Undoubtedly, Roger Goodell was the face of the "institution-wide breakdown of character and ethics" (McMillan, 2007, p. 18) that led to the NFL's corporate credibility crisis. The respondents who expressed a dissatisfaction with how Commissioner Goodell responded to the domestic violence crisis supported Levinas's claim that corporate sensibility is dependent upon people with character.

The social capital approach to CSR was evident in the results of this study specifically with regard to self-interest and acting in the interest of the collective. Respondents who recorded a perception that the NFL was solely motivated by profit consequently viewed the league as being only focused on the self and as operating at the expense of the collective. This perspective also ties into the perception that the NFL is merely a business, or an "entity without substance or sensibility and therefore incapable of anything like responsibility (Roberts, 2003, p. 263), and consequently apathetic to social issues like domestic violence, because the majority of people it affects most are women, and the NFL has historically profited most off of men.

Based on respondents' preference for the NFL to suspend and ban personnel who commit domestic violence, it is clear another aspect of the social approach to CSR was supported in the current project. While the NFL's intentions in eventually addressing its struggles with domestic violence were likely not to enact societal-level changes, the league began a national conversation that ultimately promoted their work on such an important social issue through PR and advertising, which highlighted the need for social change by articulating the issue of societal concern (domestic violence); what should be

done to address the concern (e.g., NFL's "No More" campaign in conjunction with the anti-domestic violence organization of the same name); and the NFL's role in such efforts (e.g., developing Critical Response Teams, updating their Personal Conduct Policy, partnering with the National Domestic Violence Hotline, etc.). The NFL's ultimate response also supports the Social Marketing Theory component of this project, as the league's promoted plan of action turned the media's and public's social action efforts (such as the calls to boycott the NFL and its sponsors until the league properly addressed its domestic violence problem) into more effective programs that elicited the desired response of a stricter policy against domestic violence in an organization as influential as the NFL.

Implications for Campaign

It is important to consider the implications of these findings for strategic communication professionals when developing campaigns to address a corporate crisis, especially when the campaign is created for an organization as large and powerful as the NFL. Certainly, the NFL's stature in American sports and entertainment makes it susceptible to quick and harsh assessments from the public via social media such as Facebook and Twitter as well as online forums, such as were analyzed for the current project. This section will highlight the main implications of this research for advertising and public relations professionals who are asked to develop a crisis communication strategy. The primary implications are that consumers now expect companies they patronize to have CSR incorporated in their business practices, and that they will use social media to express these desires or concerns when CSR is clearly not incorporated

into an organization's business practices. However, this study also found that CSR efforts should not extend so far into the marketplace that they cross into the policymaking that public officials (such as lawmakers and law enforcement) should already be responsible for. Even the most loyal consumers can acknowledge and take action against companies they strongly identify with if that company is engaging in behavior that is inconsistent with, or insufficiently addresses, the consumer's beliefs about a topic. The findings of this project indicated that the public viewed the league as influential enough to take social issues like domestic violence seriously. These individuals consequently expressed this belief online via social media and the comment sections of news articles. There were, however, respondents who disagreed with individuals who believed the NFL should have been more responsible during the Rice and Peterson cases; so, it is also implied that a campaign addressing a social issue such as domestic violence is well received, even if it is presented as an additional campaign rather than a primary campaign for the NFL.

A higher number of respondents indicated that they perceived the NFL to be apathetic toward the seriousness of domestic violence. Additionally, many respondents stated they preferred the league (a) to suspend NFL personnel for more than two games if a player or other employee committed one offense of domestic violence, and (b) ban league personnel if she or he committed a second act of domestic violence. Perception of the NFL and preferred corrective action did not appear to be influenced much by the respondent's fandom level. Therefore, even when engaging in criticism of the NFL for its responses (or non-responses) to domestic violence, there was rarely a direct connection between this criticism and its impact on fandom.

There were several posts that stated a belief the NFL had no obligation to create policies regarding domestic violence, because it is a private matter meant to be handled by those directly affected by such violence. Similarly, some posts expressed irritation regarding the public outcry for the league to do more to combat domestic violence, as these respondents either believed law enforcement should punish criminal activity like domestic violence or believed the NFL's main responsibility is to entertain the public, rather than succumb to media and public pressure for change.

Given respondents' opposing perspectives regarding the NFL and its actions to address domestic violence, the research findings indicate the most effective campaign would be one that recognizes the league's missteps from an image standpoint. It should also present a plan of action that satisfies members of the public who were outraged by the NFL's response to domestic violence in their organization, and at the same time, not further irritate or alienate those who expressed a desire for the NFL focus to go back to (and remain on) football itself, rather than what the league should or should not have done in response to the Rice and Peterson domestic violence cases.

Therefore, the ad campaign for this project seeks first to acknowledge the league's past mishandling of domestic violence by addressing the public's concerns regarding the subject and how it impacts the league. Secondly, the campaign presents the steps the league has taken, and continues to take, in an effort to hold its personnel accountable for violent off-field actions. Following up an acknowledgment of both organizational mistakes and scrutiny from the media and public with a plan of action provides support for the NFL's CSR efforts regarding domestic violence, because without

a sincere apology and concrete actions, the campaign would read as a hollow apology designed to save the organization from further embarrassment and potential financial loss. Additionally, listing a call-to-action (CTA) on every ad piece as this campaign does provides further support for the NFL's CSR efforts, because it shows consumers the league takes domestic violence seriously, as demonstrated by the organization's decision to dedicate part of its website to the topic. The campaign itself is an example of Social Marketing Theory and Image Repair Theory in action, but also alleviates the Cognitive Dissonance, which people who identify with (Social Identity Theory) and are attached to (Attachment Theory) the NFL, may have experienced during the many months in which the league did not sufficiently acknowledge nor correct domestic violence in the league.

CHAPTER 5

Market Analysis

Target Audience

Prior studies regarding sport fandom and spectatorship, combined with the results of the thematic-content analysis, indicate that the individual who would be most responsive to the proposed campaign for this project would be someone who has a family. This individual also engages in NFL fandom/spectatorship due to its ability to bring families together to spend quality time with one another. As previously reported, spending time with family is a key motivator for sport fandom (Wann et al., 2001), and respondents who indicated a high or moderate fandom level in the thematic-content analysis cited that they love football because it provides a connection with family and friends (MichaelaFB, 2014; tuxedocatherine, 2014). Conversely, some respondents who expressed diminished fandom did so because their status as parents, particularly to daughters, superseded their love of NFL football for as long as the league's inaction regarding domestic violence signaled a league-wide disregard for the seriousness of domestic violence (Julia Garrity, 2014; Kris Calpin, 2014; Amanda McDonald, 2014). Therefore, this campaign will target Generation X (Gen X, Gen Xers) and Baby Boomers (Boomers) between the ages of 45 and 65, as the majority of Gen X members have an average of 2.5 children per household ("Generation X Marketing," 2016), and Boomers are increasingly experiencing multigenerational living, which are situations where grandparents, parents, and children live in the same home (Sisson, 2017). Gen Xers' largest age group for children is age 12 or older ("Generation X Marketing," 2016), and

10% of Gen X parents are also grandparents, with some grandchildren sharing their home (“Generation X Marketing,” 2016). Some Boomers are still financially supporting their college- and graduate school-aged children as their kids finish their degrees and have student loans to pay back (“Baby Boomers Supporting Kids,” 2017). Capitalizing on Gen Xers’ and Boomers’ status as parents and grandparents, and their apparent motivation to engage in sport fandom due to its ability to bring families together, should encourage positive responses to the campaign.

The profile for the individual who actively acquires information regarding the league (i.e., fan) will be based on the NFL’s fan demographics (Mander, 2015; Gaille, 2015), whereas the individual who inadvertently receives news regarding the league via social media or traditional news media will be based on the demographic information for the general United States population. American men (74%) are more likely than women (56%) to be NFL fans (Mander, 2015), although female viewership of the league grew by 26% from 2009 to 2013 (Hampton, 2017), with 45% of its fan base being female (Hampton, 2017). The general U.S. population skews female at 50.8% as opposed to 49.2% male (“QuickFacts: United States,” 2016).

Although the overwhelming majority of NFL viewers are white (78%), black (16%) and Latino (14%) Americans also watch the sport in large numbers (Gaille, 2015). This racial breakdown is reflective of the general American public, as 76.9% of Americans are white, 13.3% are black, and 17.8% are Latino (“QuickFacts: United States,” 2016).

The league's largest age demographic is over 55 (Lombardo & Broughton, 2017; Gaille, 2015). In fact, the NFL fan's median age is up four years, going from 46 to 50 between 2006 and 2016 (Lombardo & Broughton, 2017). Conversely, the median age in the United States was 37.9 in 2016 ("Media Age of Resident Population," 2016). While slightly outside of the NFL's core fan base, members of Generation X (Gen X, Gen Xers) members, or individuals born between 1965 and 1980, should not be ignored, as they represent 60 million of the 325 million people in the United States (Altstiel & Grow, 2017). In fact, Gen Xers visit more opinion sites than any other demographic, which is key to this research given some data was collected from opinion pieces. Therefore, this campaign will target Gen Xers born by 1973 and Baby Boomers (Boomers), or individuals born between 1946 and 1964, born by 1953.

This individual earns over \$50,000 per year, which is an income bracket the NFL is majorly dependent on (Gaille, 2015; Mander, 2015; "2013 Sports Fan Demographics," 2013). This figure is not unlike the general population, which had a median household income (HHI) of \$55,322 in 2016 ("QuickFacts: United States," 2016). At 87% ("QuickFacts: United States," 2016), the general United States population has at least a high school diploma, compared to 36% ("Annual Survey," 2015) of NFL fans.

NFL fans, spectators, and non-fans in the target market are tech-savvy, as nearly three quarters of NFL followers own a smartphone, and over half have a tablet (Mander, 2015). They are social media users, particularly Facebook, which remains the top social network given that 83% of NFL fans in America have an account, and nearly half (49%) are active users (Mander, 2015). This is reflected in Gen Xers' and Baby Boomers'

relationship with technology, as both groups use technology for work and increasingly to stay in touch through social media (James, 2016), and Gen Xers have assimilated technology seamlessly into their day-to-day lives (James, 2016), given their status as early adapters to the changing technological landscape (Altsitel & Grow, 2017).

Gen Xers' comfort level with technology (Taylor & Gao, 2014) supports the aforementioned research as well as informs the media and message strategy of the current project's campaign. Intelligence and respecting authority figures are key traits of both the Gen X and Baby Boomer demographics (Taylor & Gao, 2014), which helps to inform the ad campaign for this project, as well as illuminating the results of the primary research conducted for this project. The Boomers' emphasis on morals (Taylor & Gao, 2014), also informs both the primary research data and ad campaign messaging strategy.

Therefore, the target audience for this campaign is as follows: American women and men of various racial backgrounds, who are between the ages of 45 and 65, and receive news, intentionally or inadvertently, regarding the NFL; are either employed full-time or recently retired with an annual household income of \$50,000 or more; have at least a high school diploma; have children living at home or otherwise ("Annual Survey," 2015; "The effects of domestic violence," 2004); and are frequent technology users. Marital status will not be limited because people of various relationship statuses seek out and receive news regarding the NFL, and domestic violence can affect anyone regardless of whether they are single, married, divorced, or widowed.

Consumer Profiles

To provide a clear image of the individual this ad campaign will target, three hypothetical consumer profiles have been created based on the aforementioned demographic information: Angela, Michael, and John.

Angela is a 45-year-old, married, executive assistant at a corporate public relations firm in the Los Angeles area, where she earns almost \$60,000 per year. She holds a bachelor's degree in public relations and has always been career-driven rather than concerned with raising a family, but, she loves being an aunt to her sister's two daughters and frequently posts photos of her outings with the kids on Facebook. Working in corporate public relations requires Angela to keep up with current events, which she does by enabling notifications from various news apps on her iPhone, so she is aware of the NFL's domestic violence cases even though she is not a football fan. When the league announced first-time domestic violence offenders would be suspended for six games, Angela felt that was an insufficient punishment, favoring an automatic lifetime ban instead regardless of whether or not it was a player's first offense or otherwise. The league's response to domestic violence, in her opinion, made it clear their priority is increasing profits, rather than ensuring their female fans' concerns are acknowledged in a meaningful way. She also worried about how the NFL's response would impact her nieces' views on how men are allowed to treat women.

Michael is a 55-year-old, divorced father of three girls, ages 22, 20, and 17. He works as a construction manager in Memphis and earns around \$65,000 per year. Michael has a high school diploma and attended some college before dropping out to join

his father's construction company. Very little means more to Michael than his daughters, but football is a close second, as he is a lifelong football fan. Michael can be found sitting in front of his television on Thursday, Sunday, and Monday nights, watching whatever NFL game is on, clicking back and forth between channels if multiple games are on at the same time. He receives notifications of game scores and breaking NFL news from Facebook, where he follows pages such as the NFL and ESPN. However, Michael's passion for football became a source of internal conflict during the Ray Rice scandal. When the Rice incident initially made mainstream news, Michael was satisfied with the NFL's response of suspending Rice for two games because Rice did not have any prior run-ins with the law and was a good athlete. But after TMZ released the full video of Rice assaulting his then-fiancée, Michael was appalled because, as a father, he could never tolerate a man hitting one of his daughters the way Rice hit his then-fiancée; therefore, Michael decided a six-game suspension for first-time offenders, and a lifetime ban for second-time offenders, was the more appropriate punishment. He also believed the NFL intentionally withheld the full video in order to retain Rice and his profit-making talents in the league, which further angered Michael. Equally appalled by the league's handling of the case were Michael's daughters, who asked him to stop watching NFL games until the league instituted a stricter code of conduct regarding domestic violence. Despite his love for his daughters and his anger toward the NFL, Michael was unwilling to give up professional football entirely, because it was such an important part of his life.

John is 65 years old, married, and a recently-retired elementary school principal living in Pittsburgh. He has a bachelor's degree in teacher education and is very close to

his two sons, ages 35 and 32, and his two grandsons, ages five and two. John and his family are all football fans: during football season, he reads the sports section in the newspaper every day, and plays football with his family before watching professional games every Sunday. In fact, he loves football so much that he now spends part of his retirement coaching a local Pop Warner league, and he always encourages his athletes to play harder so they can one day play football in the NFL. From John's perspective, the league essentially owns a day of the week, making them one of the most powerful organizations in the world; which is why John felt the people who called for boycotting the NFL following the Ray Rice domestic violence scandal were overreacting. In John's opinion, how can someone expect players to be violent on the field, and yet automatically shut off those violent tendencies once they are no longer on the field? He believes the NFL has no obligation to punish a player who commits domestic violence because that is law enforcement's job. If law enforcement does not bring charges against a player, the case should be closed, and the athlete should be allowed to continue playing football. John feels justified in his view, because even his wife believes a woman should be able to take a hit, if she hits her boyfriend or husband first.

CHAPTER 6

The Advertising Campaign

This project's campaign, titled "On The Clock," is an ad campaign designed to reframe public opinion of the NFL regarding its history with domestic violence by promoting the efforts the NFL has taken to continually address and combat domestic violence in their organization. The phrase "on the clock" is a football term referencing when one of the 32 NFL teams is about to make its draft selection during the televised NFL draft every April (Bonsor, 2003). It is a time during which one of the biggest decisions a team will make is on display for the United States and beyond to see. It also alludes to the fact that like every decision the NFL made during its 2014 domestic violence crisis, was seen and heard around the country and even world. The researcher believed the meaning behind this term, combined with the football reference, would be an interesting and effective way to convey the campaign messaging. This short phrase also works well as a hashtag on social media.

These ads are built directly from the secondary and primary research conducted for this project via the messages displayed on each ad. Three ads were created for this campaign: one for print and two for digital. The mediums selected for the ads are newspaper, social media, and email based on the target audience's time spent on these mediums (Meyer, 2016), as well as their preferences in viewing ads on these mediums (James, 2016). The newspaper ad will run in *USA Today*, while the social media ad will run on Facebook.

The overall goal of the campaign is to improve the NFL's reputation with the public, specifically in regarding to its handling of domestic violence. From an academic perspective, the goal of this project is to create an effective ad campaign that advertisers, public relations specialists, and other communication practitioners can reference when they are tasked with helping an organization repair its reputation following an organizational crisis. The next sections will detail the campaign objectives and strategies; design choices; and ways in which the effectiveness of the campaign would be measured if it were to be implemented.

Campaign Strategies and Objectives

The campaign strategies, objectives, and tactics were based on primary and secondary research as described in previous sections. The specific tactics for each week of the campaign are outlined in the six-month campaign calendar, which is in Chapter 7 of this document. The overall strategies and objectives for the campaign are outlined below. They are based on the results of the thematic-content analysis, which, as reported in Chapter 4, revealed the general perception that the NFL as an organization was apathetic in regard to domestic violence, and that the preferred corrective action to address domestic violence in the NFL was to suspend and/or ban players who commit domestic violence a first and second time, respectively.

The strategy for the campaign is to convince the public and media that the NFL has taken responsibility for their missteps regarding sufficiently punishing domestic violence in their organization, by instituting first and second offense consequences, and updating their Personal Conduct Policy to include stricter guidelines regarding domestic

violence. The objectives for the campaign include (1) gain public interest via paid and earned media; (2) build a strong presence via social media; (3) receive between 10,000 to 15,000 website visit to the NFL's domestic violence webpage per month ("What is a good number," 2018); (4) gain 25,000 shares of the webpage on Facebook; and (5) ensure that the campaign hashtag, #OnTheClock was trending on social media. Lastly, the tactic for the campaign includes creating high impact ads that (1) acknowledge the NFL's missteps in regard to punishing domestic violence in the league; (2) address the concerns and the preferred corrective actions which individuals reported on social media and online news reports; (3) outline the steps the NFL has taken to address domestic violence in their organization; and (4) provide a platform for individuals to see what the NFL continues to do regarding domestic violence.

Design, Colors, Fonts, and Layout

The design for the current campaign stems from the target audience's comfort level, and even their preference for text in ads (James, 2016), as well as the color scheme and branding guidelines of the NFL. Due to time constraints and the guidelines for this project, photographs of individuals and photographs from the NFL were not used in the ads, although they could be incorporated at a later time, or in a future campaign. Likewise, the campaign avoids showing graphic examples of domestic violence to avoid offending viewers, and to maintain focus on the overall message of the campaign, rather than the ad itself. Each ad's layout was created with its respective medium and platform in mind to optimize readability and comprehension across desktop and mobile devices,

where applicable. Additionally, each ad was created to address the campaign's goals, as well as maintain the overall campaign theme of accountability and action.

The NFL's logo is a shield with the letters "NFL" capitalized inside the shield. The colors of the logo are red, white, and blue, which mimics the colors of the American flag. This is because the league is, as its name states, national. It is intended to appeal to Americans and individuals who live outside of the United States, but enjoy American football (Breer, 2017), as well as distinguish it from international football (referred to in the USA as "soccer"). While the NFL also lists green and brown as secondary colors due to their representation of "the field of play and the game's most basic instrument" ("Communicating the NFL brand," 2010, p. 20), these are colors that the league states should be used only moderately. Therefore, the color scheme of this ad campaign will remain within the league's primary use of red, white, and blue. The NFL also occasionally uses black and gray, with the former being used for web copy. Likewise, the current ad campaign will use black and gray where aesthetically appealing and appropriate. The hex numbers, or the six-digit HTML code for duplicating a specific color when designing websites, for the NFL colors are as follows: #FF0000 for red; #FFFFFF for white; #013369 for blue; #000000 for black; and #999999 for gray ("Communicating the NFL brand," 2010).

The NFL utilizes two types of fonts for all branding and advertising: Endzone and Orbit ("Communicating the NFL brand," 2010). Endzone Slab is the proprietary font unique to the NFL and was drawn specifically for NFL communications ("Communicating the NFL brand," 2010). It "is intended for use in headlines, titles,

primary messaging, and other principle text applications” (“Communicating the NFL brand,” 2010, p. 22). This typeface is available in light, light italic, medium, medium italic, bold, bold italic, condensed light, and condensed (“Communicating the NFL brand,” 2010). Another variation of Endzone Slab that is utilized by the league is Endzone Sans, which is available in light, light italic, medium, medium italic, bold, and bold italic (“Communicating the NFL brand,” 2010). The secondary NFL typeface, Orbit, is used “for supporting text applications such as body copy and secondary messaging” (“Communicating the NFL brand,” 2010, p. 22). The league selected this secondary typeface for its legibility in a variety of weights and sizes (“Communicating the NFL brand,” 2010). The modern design also “complements the Endzone typeface while subtly promoting the NFL’s distinct visual style” (“Communicating the NFL brand,” 2010, p. 22). Because the NFL only provides its typefaces on a case-by-case basis to its partners, this project used “Freshman” typeface for headlines and titles, and “Helvetica” for supporting text. The “Freshman” typeface effectively mimics the league’s primary headline font and was downloaded from dafont.com at no cost to the researcher. Helvetica is used in this campaign for-position-only (FPO). If the NFL decides to implement this campaign, league officials can update all typefaces to reflect their branding guidelines.

This campaign will place color ads in *USA Today*’s sports section, on Facebook, and in an email postcard. The decision to place an ad on each of these platforms was made based on demographic research outlined in Chapter 5, which is expanded upon in Chapter 7. To ensure the ads for the current campaign were impactful and readable, large,

sans serif font was used in each ad, although the text in each ad was kept to a minimum in order to maintain readers' attention, and to not cause stress on readers' eyes. A call-to-action (CTA) was also included on each ad, so viewers can learn more about the league's efforts to address domestic violence.

Measurement

Although the campaign will likely not be implemented due to budget and time restraints, as well as the guidelines of this non-thesis project, this section projects how campaign success would be measured if it were to run.

Measuring the success of the entire campaign would require utilizing the metrics available for each media channel through which the campaign was received: shared media such as Facebook; earned media like newspapers, magazines, and broadcast; paid media via ads; and owned media such as the NFL's official domestic violence webpage. It is likely that the league already utilizes a professional campaign analytics service like Oracle, but if it does not, it would be beneficial to enlist the services of one so the NFL can obtain a comprehensive measure of campaign success. If the project budget and timeline allowed for copy testing, it would be conducted to measure whether or not the campaign messages are effective.

Google Analytics would be used to measure total website visits (referred to as traffic); unique (new) visits; traffic sources by segment, such as direct traffic, organic traffic, and referral traffic; conversions by source; and top pages for new traffic and conversions on the website. (Lechat, 2013). Total website visits measures the number of daily website visitors, whereas unique visits compares the number of first-time visitors to

repeat visitors (Lechat, 2013). Segmented traffic measurement records how users are finding a website (Lechat, 2013). Direct traffic accesses websites via typing the URL directly into an Internet browser or by clicking on a bookmarked link of the website (Lechat, 2013). Organic traffic is driven to websites via unpaid search engine listings (Lechat, 2013). Referral traffic refers to traffic that is linked to from other sites (Lechat, 2013). Conversions-by-source reveals (as the name implies) the conversion rate from the website and all referring traffic sources (Lechat, 2013). Measuring top pages for traffic and conversions reveals which webpages get the most traffic as well as the conversion rate per page (Lechat, 2013).

CHAPTER 7

Produced Campaign Materials and Narrative of Materials

Media Plan with Rationale and Budget

The media plan outlines the media objectives and strategies for a six-month campaign. The budget for this campaign is \$1,000,000 based on the cost of the ad types and their placement in order to reach the target audience (B. Hemsworth, personal communication, April 11, 2018). Market research provided in the Target Audience section of this document informed the ad placements. Media rationales with budget allocations are included in this section.

Once media planning and selection has been determined, attention must be given to deciding the advertising schedule of the selected media (Sancheti, 2015). The researcher decided this campaign will benefit most from using the pulse strategy, which is a media schedule that uses a low advertising level all year round and heavy advertising during peak selling periods, and more specifically a seasonal pulse strategy (Sancheti, 2015), where the seasonal nature of a product, such as ceiling fans in the summer, dictates the pulse strategy (Sancheti, 2015). This pulse media scheduling strategy combines continuous and flighting scheduling. Continuous scheduling is primarily used for non-seasonal products and runs a collection of advertisements steadily over the campaign period (Sancheti, 2015). Conversely, flighting (or “bursting”) scheduling is typically used for seasonal products and services, as it involves intermittent and irregular periods of advertising, and alternates with shorter periods of time that do not include any advertising (Sancheti, 2015).

As previously stated, the pulsing strategy has a low advertising level year-round but also engages in heavy advertising during peak selling periods (Sancheti, 2015).

Regardless of whether someone in the campaign's target audience is a fan, spectator, or non-fan of the NFL, an individual could view advertising from the league at any point in the calendar year. People are most likely, though, to see more frequent advertising and media regarding the NFL during the organization's season from late August to early February. A seasonal pulse, then, suits the goals of the NFL and this campaign, as this strategy also accounts for the seasonal nature of products and organizations, such as sunscreen, which is most often purchased during summer months (Sancheti, 2015).

Media Objectives

Placement

The current campaign is intended to be a complementary ad campaign in harmony with the NFL's ongoing partnership with the anti-domestic and sexual assault organization, No More, to produce anti-domestic and sexual assault public service announcements (PSAs) in the form of TV ads ("NFL Players Say No More," 2014). Therefore, the current campaign does not feature TV ads. This campaign also does not feature images or photographs of individuals due to (a) the researcher's limited budget and graphic design skills, as well as time constraints to complete the current project; (b) Institutional Review Board (IRB) guidelines regarding the use of images of real people; and, (c) the sensitive nature of domestic violence, because the goal of the current campaign is not to gain consumers' attention via disturbing images, but rather via thought-provoking copy that acknowledges the NFL's missteps in handling domestic

violence. It is also meant to highlight league's efforts to rectify those missteps, which resulted in the league listening to its constituents' concerns regarding the issue.

Therefore, print advertising comprises most of the budget given the target audience's appreciation for print, as well as the cost of running full-page color ads in the Friday Weekend Edition of *USA Today*, the newspaper selected for this campaign based on the demographics of the present campaign's target audience. This will be detailed further in the Newspaper section of this chapter (*USA Today Marketing*, 2017). Facebook ads and email marketing will also be utilized to reach the intended audience of this campaign, who, in addition to being regularly newspaper readers are also avid Facebook (James, 2016; Smith & Anderson, 2018) and email users (Hangen, 2010; Lister, 2017).

Geographic scope of placement

The increasingly international nature of the NFL's business mandates this campaign be executed on a large scale. However, given that the league's primary base is in the United States, this campaign will focus its anti-domestic violence advertising efforts in the United States. Additionally, focusing a more limited campaign in the Southern and Midwestern United States where football is most popular (Irwin & Quealy, 2014), will not be as effective at reaching the large national audience the league has.

Media Strategies

In terms of reach, the ad campaign for the NFL must cover the United States given the league's widespread national presence. However, it is possible to narrow such a large target audience via Facebook Ad Manager, which allows a business to better define its target audience based on several criteria, ranging from the standard location, age, and

marital status, to interests such as preferred television programs, to the type of phones and Internet browsers that people use. Using Ad Manager, the researcher narrowed the national campaign target audience by the following criteria, which are based on the target audience's interest in sports, education level, household income (HHI), and parental status. This should achieve a more concrete number for reach (See Figure 1).

Thesis Audience	
Location:	United States
Age:	45 - 64
Language:	English (US)
People Who Match:	Interests: Volleyball, Fishing, Surfing, Motherhood, Baseball, Mountain biking, Fatherhood, Hunting, Soul music, Association football (Soccer), Boating, TV game shows, Auto racing, Comedy movies, College football, Swimming, Dating, Science fiction movies, Parenting, Action movies, Blues music, TV reality shows, TV comedies, Skiing, Pop music, Camping, Triathlons, Basketball, American football, Tennis, Weddings, Marathons, Marriage, Family, Country music, Hiking, Golf, Snowboarding, Rock music, Horror movies, Horseback riding, Newspapers or Friendship, Behaviors: Health, Political, Animal welfare, Internet/Satellite, Law shows, Action shows, Baseball shows, Reality shows, Religious shows, Sports Talk shows, Entertainment shows, Sports Event shows, News shows, Facebook access (OS): Mac OS X, Facebook access (OS): Windows 8, Veterans, Cancer Causes, Children's Causes, Facebook access (browser): Firefox, Facebook access (browser): Chrome, Facebook access (browser): Safari, Facebook access (browser): Internet Explorer, Apple email users, Hotmail users, Yahoo email users, AOL email users or Moderate US TV Viewers, Education Level: High school grad, Income: 2. \$50,000 - \$74,999, Home Ownership: Homeowners, Parents: Parents (All), Politics: Likely to engage with political content (conservative) or Likely to engage with political content (moderate)

Figure 1. Facebook Ad Manager Audience Definition

This audience definition provides the NFL with the potential to reach 56,000,000 people on Facebook. If the ads can reach just 12% of that population (or about 6,720,000

people), the campaign will not only be successful, but also remain within budget, which will be outlined in more detail in the Budget section later in this chapter.

Regarding frequency and continuity, the target audience of this campaign still regularly reads physical newspapers (James, 2016), with 76% of adults age 55 or older spending 2.87 hours per week reading newspapers (Meyer, 2016). This audience is also active on social media daily, with 15.5% of Boomers spending more than 11 hours per week on Facebook (James, 2016). Advertising on such prominent and frequently-visited platforms will help this campaign reach its target audience via the media to which they devote a sizable amount of their free time. As noted earlier, this campaign will utilize a pulsing scheduling. The chart below indicates the schedule and frequency with which each ad will run during the six-month campaign. Heavy frequency means an ad for a particular medium will run three times that month. Moderate frequency indicates an ad will run twice on certain mediums in a particular month. Light frequency denotes a single ad will run on a specific platform that month. December is the only month in which no ads will run on any medium, given the attention the holidays receive during that time.

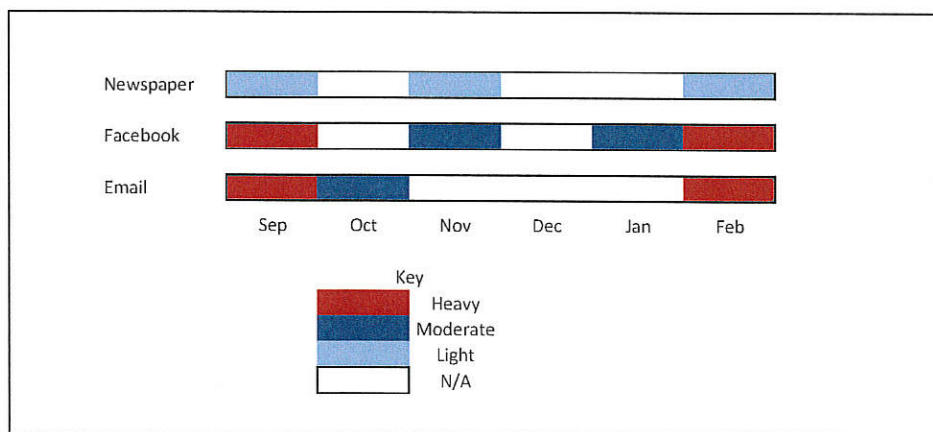


Figure 2. Campaign Media Schedule

Although domestic violence is not a pleasant topic, and media attention at the beginning and end of the football season is focused primarily on the sport itself, the researcher determined heavy frequency at the beginning and end of the season, with light to moderate frequency in between, will still be effective given the results of the primary research, as it is important for the NFL to show the public they do not become lax regarding domestic violence during the off-season simply because less media attention is devoted to the NFL. The current campaign would expand the nature of existing NFL campaigns due to its focus on a serious social topic (i.e., domestic violence) that (due to the NFL's mishandling of prominent domestic violence cases in the league) negatively impacted public perception of the NFL. This is in contrast to the typical NFL campaigns that either promote upcoming events in the league or highlight the NFL's positive community outreach efforts such as NFL Play 60 or Salute to Service ("NFL and the Community," 2017). The current campaign will continue the NFL's efforts to address domestic violence, although by acknowledging the league's past mistakes in combating the issue, rather than solely focusing on the league's positive efforts regarding addressing domestic violence. This campaign will also provide ways in which the public can track the NFL's progress in combating domestic violence.

Newspaper

Newspapers provide an uncluttered way for ads to be seen and offer more of the information consumers need in order to make purchase decisions (Meyer, 2016). Additionally, ad campaigns that include a print component have been found to have a more positive impact on purchasing behavior than campaigns that do not include it

(Meyer, 2016). This fact is especially important when considering the target audience of Gen X and Baby Boomers, as 86% of Gen X members still bring in mail and newspapers everyday while 76% of adults age 55 or older (i.e., Baby Boomers) regularly read the newspaper (Hungarter, 2013). Boomers in particular trust newspaper ads more than all other ad types (Meyer, 2016).

Given this information, and the organization for which the current campaign was designed, the researcher selected the Sports section of *USA Today* as the campaign's print ad placement. *USA Today* is an internationally-distributed American daily newspaper (Garcia, 2012) and is the top daily newspaper in the United States in terms of circulation, with seven million readers between its print and online publications ("Top 15 U.S. Newspapers," 2017). *USA Today* also reaches 52 million sports fans through its print, digital, and broadcast media each month (*USA Today Sports Media Group, 2017*). Additionally, the newspaper's use of concise reports, colorized images, informational graphics, and inclusion of popular culture (Garcia, 2012) fits within the design strategy of the current campaign. Given the NFL's strong national, and now increasing international presence, along with the NFL's high level of unduplicated cross-platform (i.e., unique audience measurement across TV and digital media) participation of 66% ("Reach and exclusive audience," 2017), it is logical to place an ad for the league in a publication with the reach of *USA Today*. Lastly, the demographic profile of the average *USA Today* reader also aligns with the researcher's target audience. The paper's readership is comprised largely of men (57%), as opposed to women (43%) ("Print Profile," 2014), with the median age being 50 years old ("*USA Today* Demographic," 2011).

Additionally, 44% of readers have at least a bachelor's degree while 73% have an annual HHI of at least \$50,000, and 68% are employed full-time ("*USA Today* Demographic," 2011). Lastly, 42% of *USA Today* readers have children in their household, and 71% of readers own a home ("*USA Today* Demographic," 2011).

Social media

Despite the emergence of several new social media platforms over the last 10 years, Facebook remains the primary social networking platform for most Americans, with about two-thirds of American adults reporting they use the site, and three-quarters of those users claiming they access Facebook on a daily basis (Smith & Anderson, 2018). In fact, between Facebook, Snapchat, Instagram, Twitter, and YouTube, Facebook users visit the site with the highest level of frequency, as 51% of users claim they visit the platform several times per day (Smith & Anderson, 2018). Internet ("US Internet User," 2016; James, 2016) and social media ("US Social Network," 2017) use among 45- to 65-year-olds has steadily increased since 2014 and 2012, respectively, and Facebook is still the preferred social network for this demographic (Smith & Anderson, 2018).

The demographic statistics of Facebook's most active users, as well as the NFL's official Facebook page having over 17 million followers as of April 10, 2018 (<https://www.facebook.com/NFL/>), makes it an optimal platform to reach the target audience of this campaign. One in 10 American Facebook users, who are increasingly individuals within the target audience of the current campaign, have declared their support for an NFL team on the social media platform (Taylor, 2013). As previously stated, the goals of the current campaign's Facebook ad are to generate at least 25,000

shares and get the campaign tagline trending on the platform. These goals are feasible given that content from Facebook pages with over 10 million page likes receive engagement consisting of likes (90%), comments (2%), and shares (8%) per post/ad (Ayres, 2014). While the numbers for comments and shares are low compared to the percent of likes, this knowledge provides an opportunity for organizations to produce highly-relevant content for its target audience to encourage more active participation from its followers and its followers' followers.

Digital

Many marketers and advertisers today emphasize social media so much that they downplay the importance and effectiveness of email communication. The top online activities for Baby Boomers in order of most to least used are search engines, email, and shopping for products or services (James, 2016). Likewise, one of the most influential forms of marketing communication for Gen Xers is email ("Generation X Marketing," 2016), as Gen Xers are often working parents who are plugged in to their work emails at a higher rate than any other demographic and are therefore naturally more inclined to react positively to emails from brands (Lister, 2017). Both Boomers and Gen Xers find email "important to their shopping journeys" (Tamturk, 2017). Consequently, email is one of the most effective channels to reach the current campaign's target market of mature Gen Xers and younger Baby Boomers (James, 2016; Lister, 2017).

Budget

As mentioned earlier in this chapter, the current campaign will run for six months on a \$1,000,000 budget. This budget was determined based on one allocated like a PR

budget rather than spending given the nature of the campaign and the NFL's available capital (B. Hemsworth, personal communication, April 11, 2018). The majority of the budget will be dedicated to the print ads in newspapers. The next largest budget allocation is to Facebook in order to target a large audience with mainstream interests. Then, the remainder of the budget is dedicated to email marketing communication.

The budget breakdown is as follows:

- 72% on newspaper ads in *USA Today*
- 17% on Facebook domain ads
- 10% on email marketing communication

Table 6

Campaign Budget Allocation

Medium	Amount	% of Total Budget
<i>USA Today</i>	\$727,800	72%
Facebook	\$172,050	17%
Email	\$100,150	10%
Total budget	\$1,000,000	

As shown in Table 6 above, the newspaper ad will have three insertions: once in September before the regular season begins; once in November before the annual Thanksgiving NFL games (and after the two Thanksgiving Day games); and once in February before the Super Bowl. *USA Today's* Friday Weekend Edition has an average daily circulation of 1,003,529 compared to its Monday through Thursday publication, which has an average daily circulation of 866,791 (*USA Today Marketing*, 2017). While

expensive to advertise in the weekend edition, it is important for this campaign to capitalize on the reach of *USA Today*'s Friday Weekend Edition given the difference between the Monday through Thursday, and the Friday through Sunday circulations, plus the fact that most football games are on weekends (with the exception of Mondays and now Thursdays), and increased media coverage naturally coincides with the game schedule. Additionally, the target market's familiarity, comfort, and even preference for print advertising means the campaign must advertise on mediums where the target audience is most likely to be receptive to the league's ads.

At a cost per mille (cost per thousand, CPM) of \$12, the Facebook ad will receive about 8.3 million impressions (B. Hemsworth, personal communication, May 12, 2018). For the Facebook ads, the following keywords (or interests and behaviors as categorized by Facebook) will be used: sports, American Football, Sports Talk shows, Sports Event shows, Entertainment shows, News shows, Family, Marriage, Health, and Children's Causes. These keywords allow for people who are interested in these topics to see the NFL's ads. According to Facebook, the \$170,000 budget when paired with these interests and the demographics of the target audience will reach 46,000 to 290,000 people in the United States every day.

Marketing automation platform, MailChimp, prices an email marketing campaign for an organization the size of the NFL at \$32,700 per month ("Pricing: Pro Marketer," 2018). This cost includes their top-tier subscription, called Pro Marketer, at \$199 per month and is calculated based on an organizations' email subscription list. This subscription is based on its ability to provide businesses highly-targeted sending and

includes the following services: advanced customer segmentation; more data storage; scheduling automation, which allows for campaigns to go out at the same time regardless of consumers' varying time zones; transactional emails, or personalized one-to-one messages; and predicted demographics, which predicts the sex and age range of consumers so companies can analyze campaign engagement based on those demographic insights ("Pro: Giving," 2018).

The researcher was unable to get information regarding the NFL's email list at no charge; therefore, to stay within the current project's budget, the researcher based the estimated number of NFL email subscribers on the number of Facebook followers, not page likes, the league has, which is just over 16,000,000. To stay within the campaign's budget, the researcher estimated the league actually has about half that many email subscribers at 8,000,000 people. Running three emails (or one email each month for three months of the six-month campaign) would bring the total ad money spent on email marketing to the number listed in the table above, as well as provide two million impressions per month of the regular season (B. Hemsworth, personal communication, May 12, 2018).

Sample Ads

The following ads were created as examples of potential newspaper, social, and email ads listed in the aforementioned media plan and campaign calendar. As discussed in Chapter 6, the ads all follow the NFL branding guidelines in terms of color scheme but use different fonts from the league's fonts, due to the NFL's case-by-case approval of outside organizations using their branded typefaces. However, the font selected for all

sample ad headlines still evokes the NFL's brand, while the font selected for supporting text is for-position-only (FPO).

The ads were created with the insights gleaned from the thematic-content analysis conducted for this project. The designs were crafted to not only be eye-catching and immediately signal toward consumers whom the ads are directed. They are also designed to address the public's perception that (a) the NFL is apathetic toward domestic violence, and (b) address the public's preference that the league suspend personnel who commit domestic violence one time for more than two games, and completely ban from the NFL those personnel who commit domestic violence a second time from the NFL. Therefore, the ads first show the league acknowledging their mishandling of domestic violence and acknowledging the public's concerns regarding domestic violence in the NFL. Then, they outline the steps the organization has taken to correct its behavior in an effort to show the league is committed to taking action as opposed to merely talking about doing better. This ad structure achieves the campaign goal of reframing the NFL's reputation in relation to domestic violence.

Lastly, each ad also features the campaign tagline, "Because for us, doing what's right will always be #OnTheClock" as well as a call-to-action (CTA) that encourages consumers to visit the webpage the NFL has dedicated to its anti-domestic violence efforts. This CTA is important because the ads do not go into much detail regarding the league's corrective actions, in order to maintain consumers' attention by not overwhelming them with too much information, although this campaign's target market

does not seem to mind text on ads, given their preference for more information when making purchasing decisions (Meyer, 2016).

Print Ad: USA Today

The print ad is designed in color to grab readers' attention as well as reflect *USA Today's* notable use of color. The researcher determined the NFL's prominence in the sports industry, and their available funds, combined with the seriousness of the ad campaign's subject matter warranted a full-page ad, especially at the beginning of the regular season, when the media and public alike devote much of their attention to the upcoming season.

The ad utilizes the NFL's color scheme of red, white, and blue. The headline reads in large, red, uppercase letters, "THANK YOU FOR BOYCOTTING US." The design choice for the headline is meant to first garner readers' attention given the size, color, and way in which uppercase letters naturally command attention. It is then intended to make readers question why someone would express gratitude to anyone for boycotting them. By quickly and boldly capturing the audience's attention, the ad piques the audience's attention enough to encourage them to read the rest of the ad, which goes on to acknowledge the public's concerns regarding the NFL's handling of domestic violence in its organization, as well as stating two of the prominent steps the NFL has taken to address and combat the perpetuation of domestic violence within their institution.

The primary corrective actions listed in the ad are the NFL's creation of Critical Response Teams, which are comprised of specially-trained NFL leaders as well as

counselors, clergy, medical professionals, and youth specialists who are available to provide safety, medical, social services, and legal assistance to victims of domestic violence by NFL personnel and their families (“The NFL’s response,” 2014); and the updated Personal Conduct Policy, which states league personnel who are found to have committed domestic violence will be suspended for a minimum of six games for the first offense, and will be banned from the NFL for life if there is a second offense (“The NFL’s Response,” 2014). While the league’s updated policies regarding domestic violence are more extensive than those listed in the ad, only the two major changes are briefly mentioned, so as not to overwhelm readers with too much text. (See Appendix H for the complete updated policy.)

The campaign tagline, “Because for us, doing what’s right will always be #OnTheClock,” appears below the body copy to summarize the purpose of the ad, which is to first acknowledge the league’s handling of domestic violence as wrong, and then to address the public’s demand for a harsher punishment for domestic violence offenders. The tagline also promotes the use of the campaign hashtag so the topic will trend across shared media. The ad concludes with a CTA that advises readers to visit the league’s webpage dedicated to its anti-domestic violence efforts, to learn more about how these changes will work now that they have been implemented. All body text is written in large, sans serif font due to it being a legible combination and the target audience’s better response to larger font (James, 2016).

THANK YOU FOR BOYCOTTING US

We heard your concerns. Now we're
doing something about them.

The NFL created Critical
Response Teams and
updated our Personal
Conduct Policy to address
domestic violence.

Because for us, doing what's
right will always be **#ONTHECLOCK**

**VISIT
NFL.COM/ONTHECLOCK
TO LEARN MORE**



Figure 3. Out of Context Print Ad

4C SPORTS

THANK YOU FOR BOYCOTTING US

We heard your concerns. Now we're
doing something about them.

The NFL created Critical
Response Teams and
updated our Personal
Conduct Policy to address
domestic violence.

Because for us, doing what's
right will always be **#ONTHECLOCK**

VISIT
NFL.COM/ONTHECLOCK
TO LEARN MORE

NFL

FANTASY FOOTBALL

Brees-ing!

Saints QB Drew Brees had a historic night throwing for 397 yards and 4 TDs, breaking the 27-year-old single-season passing yardage record.

SIT OR START

THIS WEEK'S MATCHUPS

INJURY REPORT

MAKING MOVES

TIP OF THE WEEK

BEYOND STATS

FOR MORE FANTASY STATS, ANALYSIS ETC
USA TODAY.COM/FF

Figure 4. In Context Print Ad (Lahens, 2012)

Social Media Ad: Facebook

The social media ad for this campaign is a domain (clicks to website/link click) Facebook ad. This is the most common Facebook ad type, as they help promote a company's external website and send individuals to an organization's landing page or blog posts, which are common goals of corporations seeking to advertise an aspect of their business ("Beginner's Guide," 2018). Given the amount of placement options domain ads offer, including right column, desktop News Feed, mobile News Feed,

audience network, and Instagram, companies are able to deliver the same ad across multiple Facebook News Feeds to reach a large audience (“Beginner’s Guide,” 2018).

For the current campaign, the primary goal of the Facebook link click ad is to drive traffic to the NFL’s webpage, which the league has dedicated to outlining its efforts to combat domestic violence. The researcher also intends for the ad to receive at least 25,000 shares and promote the campaign hashtag, #OnTheClock, as a trending topic on Facebook as more viewers click on and share the ad. Although the target audience of Gen Xers and Baby Boomers still prefer accessing social media sites such as Facebook on desktops and laptops as opposed to their mobile devices (Morrison, 2015), the researcher included sample ads for a Facebook Mobile News Feed, should someone in the target audience of this campaign access Facebook via their mobile phone.

The page name, of course, is NFL and features the NFL shield as the logo image. Due to the guidelines of this project, the researcher could not use photos of individuals in the ads. Therefore, the Facebook ad is designed to capture consumers’ attention with the aforementioned bold statement, “THANK YOU FOR BOYCOTTING US.” If the NFL were to implement this campaign, the league could change the Facebook ad so that it featured an appropriate image of their choice, in order to better optimize their ads on Facebook. This reflects the social media platform’s policy to not run ads that contain over 20% text, given the better performance of ads that do not contain any text (Vrountas, 2018)

The ad message appears below the page name and logo but above the ad image. It reads, “We heard your concerns. Now we’re doing something about them.” Placing that

message above the ad image helps explain the shocking copy in the image. Similarly, the link headline, which sits below the ad image, states, “NFL announces new domestic violence policy” to explain what the ad itself is about. The link description or URL is www.nfl.com/ontheclock, which utilizes the campaign tagline to maintain a cohesive, recognizable campaign. As a note, the www.nfl.com/ontheclock URL is currently in use by the NFL in relation to the 2014 NFL Draft. Therefore, if the proposed campaign were to be implemented, this campaign’s URL would change the existing webpage to feature the NFL’s ongoing efforts to address and combat domestic violence, and the preexisting webpage regarding the 2014 NFL draft would be renamed to www.nfl.com/draft, which is a webpage already dedicated to current NFL draft information (NFL.com/draft, 2018). To reduce the text around the ad, this domain ad does not have a link caption, which sits below the URL.

The CTA selected for the Facebook ad is “Learn More.” This CTA works best for the current campaign because the limited amount of text Facebook allows in, or around, ads reduces the amount of information a viewer can see without clicking on the CTA button. Therefore, if a Facebook user sees the ad and wants to see how the NFL is addressing domestic violence, she or he has an easily-accessible place to read a more comprehensive report. Additionally, this ad is not selling anything, nor is it for booking tickets, or intended to get people to sign up for a mailing list; its purpose is to drive visits to the NFL’s domestic violence webpage, as well as generating enough shares to become a trending topic on Facebook.

**NFL**
Sponsored

Like Page

We heard your concerns. Now we're doing something about them.


**THANK YOU FOR
BOYCOTTING US**

NFL announces new domestic violence policy
www.nfl.com/ontheclock

Learn More

 100

349 Comments 25K Shares

 Like  Comment  Share

Figure 5. Out of Context Social Media Ad–Desktop

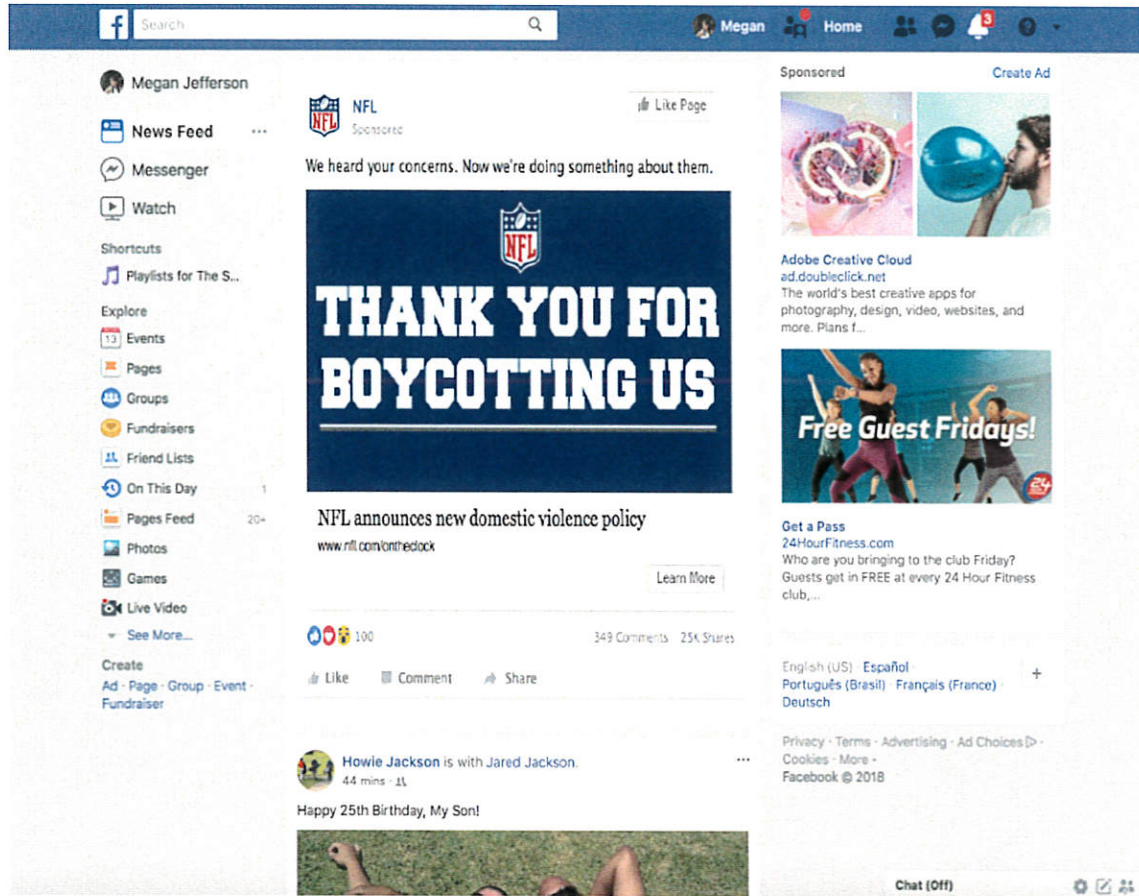




Figure 6. In Context Social Media Ad–Desktop



NFL
Sponsored



We heard your concerns. Now we're doing something about them.




THANK YOU FOR BOYCOTTING US

**NFL announces new
domestic violence policy**

[Learn More](#)

   100

349 Comments 25K Shares

 Like

 Comment


 Share

Figure 7. Out of Context Social Media Ad–Mobile

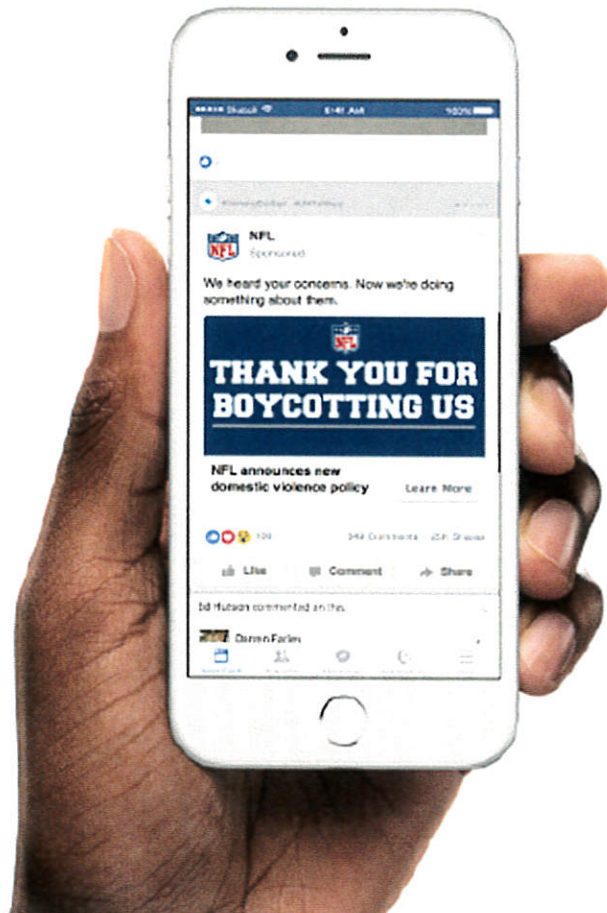


Figure 8. In Context Social Media Ad–Mobile (Ghulati, 2016)

Email Ad: Postcard

The email ad is designed as a postcard to provide the target audience with more information regarding the NFL's steps to address domestic violence than the print and social media ads provide; but the email postcard still encourages readers to visit the official NFL webpage for a more extensive look at what the league is doing regarding domestic violence. Selecting an email postcard to provide slightly more information than the other ad types in this campaign gives the target audience the information they desire

on a medium they are familiar and comfortable with as well as fond of, especially the individuals who are closer to the Gen X demographic (James, 2016).

The postcard leads with, “We heard your concerns. Now see what we’re doing about them.” This sentence (while a different variation of the structure and wording of the *USA Today* and Facebook ads) plays off the attention-grabbing email subject title, “Thank You for Boycotting Us.” The next section explains the headline by defining the concerns as those regarding domestic violence in the NFL. Supporting text then expands on this statement by explaining why this issue is important to the NFL, as well as listing three of the major changes the league has made to address domestic violence.

Like the newspaper and social ads, the email postcard does not explain what a Critical Response Team is, nor does it list what the exact updates are to the Personal Conduct Policy in order to retain reader attention. The email postcard instead lists an additional action the NFL took to address domestic violence: partnering with the National Domestic Violence hotline. As noted earlier, some respondents in this study indicated such partnerships would be a preferred corrective action, as opposed to the outright banning from the NFL of personnel who commit domestic violence, given the long-term connotation associated with partnerships. The supporting text concludes with the campaign tagline, “Because for us, doing what’s right will always be #OnTheClock,” which is a succinct, positive way to summarize the ad message.

The CTA is also modified from the previous ads. While the print ad repeats the font of the headline for its CTA, and the Facebook ad uses the site’s built-in CTA button options, the email postcard has its own button that reads in all caps, “Click Here to Learn

More.” The bold, red button and large font draws readers’ attention and invites them to explore the topic further. Finally, the NFL’s emails include links to their Facebook and Twitter accounts, so this ad continues that tradition and also serves as another way for readers to follow the NFL’s developments in regard to domestic violence.



**WE HEARD YOUR CONCERNS.
NOW SEE WHAT WE'RE DOING
ABOUT THEM.**

The NFL's response to domestic violence and sexual assault

Addressing social issues like domestic violence requires ongoing education. That's why we:

- Developed Critical Response Teams
- Updated our Personal Conduct Policy
- Partner with the National Domestic Violence Hotline

Because for us, doing what's right will always be **#ONTHECLOCK.**

[CLICK HERE TO LEARN MORE](#)

Connect with the NFL:  

Figure 9. Out of Context Email Ad

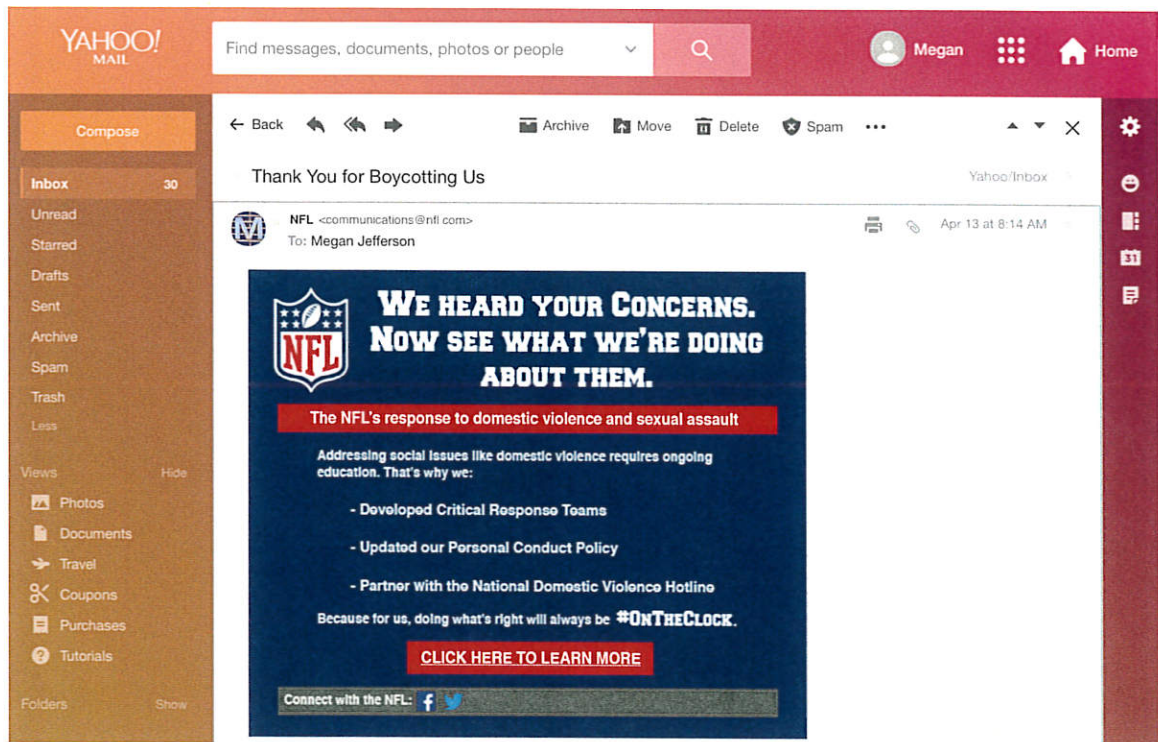


Figure 10. In Context Email Ad

CHAPTER 8

Limitations and Suggestions for Future Research

Limitations

This project has merit for strategic communication professionals, scholars, and students studying advertising, public relations, and integrated marketing communication. However, the project does have some limitations, which will be discussed in this section.

An important limitation of this project is the lack of a budget. Having a budget to conduct the research for the current study would have allowed the researcher to pay undergraduate students to assist with coding the data and potentially increase the accuracy of the thematic-content analysis. Content analyses are “subject to increased error, particularly when relational analysis is used to attain a higher level of interpretation” (The Writing Studio, 2017). For example, a post from the current study such as, “Calling the lawyer you just hired to do a billion-dollar TV deal with DirecTV an independent investigator is an insult to everyone’s intelligence” (DrunkWino, 2015) could be interpreted as a perception the NFL is incompetent regarding domestic violence as opposed to a perception the NFL is deceitful when handling domestic violence, the latter of which was the categorization for the current study. Certainly, content analyses can unintentionally disregard the context of a text (The Writing Studio, 2017), particularly when omitting some information in data that the researcher deems to be outside the scope of the study.

Additionally, this project utilized an interpretive paradigm, meaning it was concerned with understanding domestic violence in the NFL from the subjective

experiences of individuals who reported their opinion of the league and their preferred corrective action regarding domestic violence online via social media such as Facebook and Twitter, and in response to online news reports. A positivist (i.e., focus on validity of knowledge that is derived from empirical evidence to uncover patterns or develop generalized explanations), or critical approach (i.e., focus on unmasking the role of power, in this case, the inequity of the NFL and/or media), would have yielded different results. As such, the results of the current study are not generalizable to the public.

The creative choices in the current campaign had to comply with IRB guidelines as well as making an impact despite the researcher's limited graphic design skills, and the lack of a budget. The IRB must approve the use of images of real people, and the researcher elected not go through the IRB process in order to remain on schedule for the project completion timeline. Likewise, the researcher did not possess the graphic design skills to create sample ads using publicly-available images, so the ad designs, layouts, and messages do not contain images or photographs of real people or NFL athletes. However, additional time and a budget would have allowed the researcher to create ads of a design quality typically associated with NFL ads; these factors explain why the researcher did not use, for example, the official NFL fonts for this project's sample ads. The researcher did not have access to the NFL nor insider NFL information regarding NFL branding information (such as fonts), or information about the league's process for determining their ultimate domestic violence policy. Access to the latter information would have enhanced the results of the current study by revealing whether or not, and, if

so, how the NFL's CSR efforts regarding domestic violence were impacted by traditional and or social media commentary.

The researcher's decision to limit social media analysis of the NFL's 2014 domestic violence crisis to Facebook and Twitter was based on the lack of current domestic violence cases at the conception of this project, and consequently, prohibited the researcher from completing a more comprehensive analysis of individual commentary regarding the NFL's domestic violence crisis, as reported on social media. Social media is a more passive way to obtain information for study, as opposed to a research method like in-depth interviews, wherein the researcher (via a moderator) can ask follow-up questions, probe for additional information, and circle back to key questions later in an interview, in order to generate a richer understanding of attitudes, perceptions, and motivations (Steber, 2017). Interviews would have allowed the researcher the opportunity to ask individuals additional questions regarding their identity as a sport fan or spectator, as well as their perspectives regarding the media coverage of the NFL's domestic violence crisis. This would have allowed the interviewer to better determine whether or not those factors impacted the way individuals reported their opinion of the NFL, as well as their preferences for corrective action regarding domestic violence.

In sum, this project engaged in highly targeted research in order to develop a social marketing campaign but did not intend to provide a comprehensive and generalizable profile of fan perceptions of the NFL, nor a comprehensive list of preferred actions to be taken by the NFL. Further, existing theoretical material served to structure research design, analyses, and campaign, rather than testing or "proving" a theory.

Future Research and Practice

As the popularity of social media and its impact on organizations' CSR efforts continue to rise, issues of how to effectively communicate to the public and media via strategic communication campaigns, such as advertising or public relations, will remain important to the success of companies across a variety of industries. Strategic communication professionals can stay abreast of these tactics by consistently monitoring social media for trending topics in addition to whether or not the trending topics have largely positive or negative feedback. This would provide advertising and public relations professionals with a timely, comprehensive understanding of the public and the media's tone toward organizations, particularly when a company is experiencing a crisis, that could be applied to integrated marketing strategies and messages, particularly when a company is experiencing a crisis.

To extend the current study, additional research could include: (a) conducting survey research regarding how individuals who posted, tweeted, or commented about the NFL's 2014 domestic violence crisis perceived the NFL's actions during the crisis, and what those individuals would advise the NFL do to effectively address domestic violence; (b) conducting focus groups following a thematic and/or content analysis to provide communication practitioners with more in-depth responses that further illuminate the reactions documented on social media, especially given that Facebook posts and tweets only allow for so much information; (c) an empirical study of whether or not predictive variables such as fan motivations and CSR, or geographic correlation of NFL fans and spectators, have any impact on public perception of, or preferred corrective actions

regarding, the NFL's domestic violence crisis; and (d) copy and message testing on the ads to confirm whether or not the messages are clear and effective for the intended target audience.

Following the planned campaign, it would be interesting to re-run the study to determine whether or not the campaign was able to elicit any attitudinal or perspective changes in regard to the NFL, or to at least measure the number of positive attitudes toward the campaign against the number of negative attitudes. If no attitudinal changes were demonstrated, further research could examine how campaign strategies and messages can more effectively stimulate an attitude change regarding the NFL's handling of domestic violence. This study could also be applied to the NFL's more recent domestic violence cases, ongoing concussion controversy, and recent National Anthem protests to determine the general consensus regarding those topics, in order to develop either a campaign or targeted messaging that addresses the overall concerns of the public and the media regarding each topic, while also unifying the public so the focus can return to the game of football.

It would also be valuable to study equivalent crisis communication campaigns to conduct studies on their message strategies in order to determine what content received the most positive response as well as which aspects need improvement. As the roles of social media and CSR evolve, it will be important for strategic communication professionals in advertising, public relations, and marketing to remain informed about changing attitudes and perceptions regarding what social standards organizations are

expected to meet and uphold in order to ensure their efforts are successful in bringing about positive changes.

Conclusion

This study analyzed the influence that identity, media, and public relations theories have on corporate decisions during an organizational crisis via a thematic-content analysis of social media posts and comments on online news reports regarding the NFL's 2014 domestic violence crisis. This project was created to answer the following research questions in order to develop a social marketing campaign:

RQ1: What is the public's perception, based on social media posts on Facebook, Twitter, and article comments, of the NFL, given its struggles to address domestic violence in the league?

RQ2: Based on responses to RQ1, what would the public most like to see the NFL do to address domestic violence in the league?

RQ3: How did public response to the NFL's 2014 domestic violence crisis impact the league's CSR practices?

The results of the thematic-content analysis revealed the primary themes of perception (or opinion) of the NFL in regard to its 2014 domestic violence crisis and the preferred corrective actions that should be taken to address domestic violence in the league. Of the 300 social media posts and comments analyzed for this project, 57.3% of the posts/comments were regarding perception of the NFL, while 42.7% were in regard to preferred corrective actions. The most commonly-held perception of the NFL in regard to its 2014 domestic violence crisis at 15.3% of posts/comments, was that the NFL was

apathetic to the seriousness of domestic violence. Other perception subthemes reported included an opinion that the NFL as an organization is: deceitful; powerful; merely a business; focused solely on maintaining their image or public reputation; violent; either responsible or irresponsible for disciplining players' off-field misconduct; or incompetent. The most commonly-cited preferred corrective actions at 8.7% each were suspending players for more than two games for a first domestic violence offense and banning players from the NFL for a second offense. Other preferred corrective action subthemes included: relieve NFL leadership of their duties given their inaction or slow response to the domestic violence crisis; partner with anti-domestic violence organizations to bring awareness to the issue; institute anti-domestic violence education programs that NFL personnel are required to attend; update the NFL player code of conduct to reflect a stricter punishment for domestic violence; require players who commit domestic violence to complete rehabilitation before returning to the NFL; screen players for violent tendencies prior to drafting them to join the NFL; no action regarding off-field misconduct; run anti-domestic violence ads; and unsure.

NFL Commissioner Roger Goodell announced the NFL's updated domestic violence policy at a press conference in September 2014. During his remarks, he acknowledged the impact the public outcry (as expressed on social media and on traditional media) regarding domestic violence in the NFL, had on the league's decisions regarding the topic:

The public response reinforced my belief that the NFL is held to a higher standard, and properly so. Much of the criticism stemmed from a fundamental

recognition that the NFL is a leader, that we do stand for important values, and that we can project those values in ways that have a positive impact beyond professional football. We embrace this role and the responsibility that comes with it. We will listen openly, engage our critics constructively, and seek continuous improvement in everything we do. We will use this opportunity to create a positive outcome by promoting policies of respect for women both within and outside of the workplace. We will work with nationally recognized experts to ensure that the NFL has a model policy on domestic violence and sexual assault. We will invest time and resources in training, programs and services that will become part of our culture. And we will increase the sanctions imposed on NFL personnel who violate our policies. (Burke, 2014).

The campaign goal of reframing the negative perception of the NFL in regard to its handling of the 2014 domestic violence crisis was met based on the results of the thematic-content analysis, as well as additional research regarding the NFL's target audience of Gen Xers and Baby Boomers between the ages of 45 to 65, since those demographics expressed a preference for viewing ads on certain mediums, specifically print, social media, and digital. The ads for the campaign were therefore placed on the following platforms: *USA Today*, Facebook, and email. Every ad utilized the NFL's branding guidelines, as well as bold messaging to orient viewers to what the subject of the ad was, while still holding their attention given the serious subject matter. The ads address RQ1 and RQ2 by first acknowledging the NFL's missteps in effectively addressing domestic violence in the league, and then, outlining the actions the NFL has

taken to correct these missteps and prevent future ones. Each ad ends with a call-to-action (CTA), encouraging viewers to visit the NFL's webpage dedicated to its ongoing anti-domestic violence efforts, as well as emphasizing the campaign tagline, "Because for us, doing what's right will always be #OnTheClock." The hashtag was designed to be a play on football terminology to signal the NFL's newfound understanding of the significance their actions hold in the media as well as public.

Social Identity Theory, Attachment Theory, and Cognitive Dissonance provided a foundation from which to study the influence of identity (i.e., fandom) on CSR in crisis communication. Social Identity Theory and Attachment Theory propose that what motivates individuals to become sport fans is linked to how organizations like the NFL manage their brands based on the strength of consumers' connections with the company. The connection between Social Identity Theory's and Attachment Theory's proposition was reflected when the NFL eventually addressed the domestic violence concerns of its fan base, who reported being lifelong NFL fans due to the league's ability to bring family and friends together. These theories were also demonstrated by acknowledging that, as a "leader . . . beyond professional football" (Burke, 2014), the league must take domestic violence seriously, which resulted in the NFL instituting a stricter first and second offense policy for league personnel who commit domestic violence. The NFL's updated domestic violence policy also alleviated the dissonance some of its fans felt and attempted to mitigate during the crisis by focusing their social media commentary on the good the NFL has done rather than the league's missteps regarding domestic violence.

The media theories of Agenda Setting Theory, Framing Theory, and Uses and Gratifications Theory, however, were ultimately not influential in this study, as the data led the researcher away from media responses, toward perceptions of the NFL based on news media stories. Likewise, the current project's thematic-analysis results mainly revealed the importance of organizations promptly addressing crises rather than extending one of the strategies outlined in Image Repair Theory. The NFL took several months to determine their obligation to address, limit, and alleviate the stakeholder concern regarding domestic violence in the NFL, suggesting the league struggled to navigate the media's and the public's call for the NFL to assume a more CSR-driven approach to its business practices, specifically in relation to domestic violence. Even so, the NFL's decision to update its domestic violence policy is evident that the league engaged in the CSR practice of beneficence by recognizing its responsibility to positively contribute to society and avoid further harming the community it depends on for support.

In order to truly change public perception for the better, organizations must act swiftly following a crisis by implementing and presenting policies that satisfy not only fans, but also potential fans, who are wary of the organization given its current perceived problematic practices. Social Marketing Theory emphasizes this fact by stressing the importance of knowing the target audience's desires, and addressing them via commercial and social marketing through primary and secondary research, as the current study does.

This project was a valuable opportunity to integrate research, knowledge, skills, and experience gained during the researcher's graduate studies and apply those

components to communication, culture, and media studies within sports entertainment, which are all areas of interest to the researcher. The current project also helps fulfill the researcher's goals of (a) learning how to apply communication theories to current social issues in sports entertainment; (b) extending the researcher's advertising research, media planning, and graphic design skills; and (c) meaningfully contributing to the positive, effective use of strategic communication practices. The researcher hopes this project will contribute to existing research on brand management, social media, public relations, and CSR in crisis communication as well as serve as an exemplar of the work the researcher is capable of conducting and executing in advertising and marketing communication within sports entertainment.

Appendix A

A complete timeline of the Ray Rice assault case (SB Nation, November 28, 2014)

February 15: Rice and Palmer arrested

News broke that Rice had been arrested, charged and released from jail on simple assault charges, along with Palmer. It was known at the time that two had gotten into a fight at the Revel Casino in Atlantic City, though details of the altercation were not clear. Rice's attorney described the incident as a "minor physical altercation."

February 19: Video surfaces of Rice dragging Palmer from an elevator

The "minor physical altercation" that Rice's attorney described appeared much more serious than that after footage emerged—via TMZ, naturally—of what was allegedly Rice dragging Palmer's limp body from an elevator by her shoulders. Again, Rice's representation came to his defense, saying, "neither Ray nor myself will try this case in the media," but acknowledged that the footage released by TMZ did, indeed, depict the couple. Police later said that they obtained video that showed that Rice had knocked Palmer unconscious. That footage was not leaked to the public.

February 21: John Harbaugh: "Ray's character, you guys know his character, so you start with that."

The heads of the Ravens organization came to Rice's defense in the days following his arrest. Both Harbaugh and general manager Ozzie Newsome iterated that Rice would continue to be in the team's plans at running back.

Neither absolved Rice of wrongdoing, however. Harbaugh:

These two people obviously have a couple issues that they have to work through, and they're both committed to doing that. That was the main takeaway for me from the conversation. They understand their own issues. They're getting a lot of counseling and those kinds of things, so I think that's really positive. That was the main takeaway.

February 22: Ravens GM Ozzie Newsome discusses the incident

Newsome said at the Combine he had seen the first video of Rice dragging his fiancée out of the elevator.

"We will allow the league to take its position before we have to take any. I'm going to reserve all my comments until I've had a chance to talk to Ray. The whole video needs to be reviewed."

March 24: Ravens owner Steve Bisciotti promises that Rice "will definitely be back"

Bisciotti addressed the Ray Rice situation at the annual league meetings in Orlando. He talked up Rice's character, stressing his "goodwill" with the team and in the community. He also noted that Rice had no previous record of being in trouble for off-field behavior.

“He’s just been lauded as the nicest, hardest working, greatest guy on the team and in the community. So we have to support him. I think we’ll be rewarded by him maturing and never putting himself in a situation like that again. I’ve been on record of saying my definition of character is repeating offenses. If we’re all one strike and you’re out, then we’re all in trouble. It’s how you respond to adversity.”

March 26: Roger Goodell addresses Rice

When asked if the league is aware of incident and whether there will be discipline: “The answer to that is yes. And I don’t know on the second part. We will let the facts dictate that.”

March 27: Rice indicted on aggravated assault charges

Rice had his charges upped to aggravated assault from simple assault after the case was presented by prosecutors to a grand jury. Aggravated assault carries a maximum sentence of five years in prison. Meanwhile, the simple assault charges against Palmer were dropped.

Although Palmer indicated later that she did not want to go forward with prosecution, that didn’t stop the state from following up.

The Ravens issued a brief statement on Rice’s indictment:

“This is part of the due process for Ray. We know there is more to Ray Rice than this one incident.”

March 28: Rice and Palmer married

The day after Rice’s indictment, Rice and Palmer were married. According to the Baltimore Sun, the two had initially planned to have a summer wedding before moving the date up without a public explanation. Wide receiver Torrey Smith attended the wedding and expressed his support.

“Everyone knows that we’re tight. I’m tight with Ray, I’m tight with Janay. He is like a brother to me and she’s like a sister to me and my wife as well,” Smith said. “I went by yesterday after everything happened and checked up on them and They’re happy ... they’re growing. They’re trying to better themselves from it. I’m there to support them no matter what happens, and that’s both of them. I wish them the best and they are making themselves better.”

May 1: Rice rejects plea deal, applies for pretrial intervention program

Rice rejected a plea offer that would have spared the running back jail time in exchange for completing probation and undergoing anger management. Instead, he pleaded not guilty and applied for a program for first-time offenders that could clear him of charges in as few as six months. The program would require Rice to stay out of trouble and attend regular counseling.

May 21: Rice accepted into pretrial intervention program

Prosecutors allowed Rice to go into the program rather than take the case to trial. Under the terms of the deal, if Rice completes a 12-month program and stays out of trouble, the

case will not show up on his record. The program is typically used for crimes that don't involve violence and "victimless crimes." A report from *Outside the Lines* in September revealed that the pretrial intervention program was granted in less than one percent of all domestic violence cases in New Jersey between 2010-2013.

May 23: The press conference

Assisted by the Ravens, Ray and Janay Rice hold a press conference. Ray Rice apologized for "the situation he and his wife were in." Janay Rice apologizes for her role in the situation, and the Ravens share highlights from the event on social media. Critics hammer Rice and the Ravens for the event.

June 16: Rice has his discipline hearing with Goodell

Rice and the commissioner are joined by Newsome, Ravens team president Dick Cass, NFL lead counsel Jeff Pash and NFL VP for labor relations Adolpho Birch. Also in the room, in one of the more questionable decisions in the process, was Janay Rice.

What did Rice tell the NFL about the incident?

Peter King, on July 25, gave a detailed summary of who was in the room that day and what was said. From King's report:

Rice's wife, a source said, made a moving and apparently convincing case to Goodell ... that the incident in the hotel elevator was a one-time event, and nothing physical had happened in their relationship before or since. She urged Goodell, the source said, to not ruin Rice's image and career with his sanctions.

The NFL says they did not see the full video of the incident, and there are conflicting reports about what Rice told them. In an interview with CBS after the second tape was released, Goodell said that Rice was "ambiguous" in recounting the event.

In a letter to the NFLPA on September 12, Goodell said that Rice gave a "starkly different" version of events than what was revealed on the second tape released by TMZ. Ozzie Newsome said on September 10 that Rice "didn't lie" to him about what was on the video. A report from Ed Werder at ESPN said that Rice gave the Ravens a version of the event consistent with what was on the tape.

Later reports contradicted Goodell's claim. ESPN's *Outside the Lines* talked to four sources who said that Rice was honest with Goodell about what happened.

July 24: Ray Rice suspended 2 games by NFL

Although Rice will almost assuredly avoid jail time, he may not be able to avoid punishment from NFL commissioner Roger Goodell, who has suspended players in the past even when charges were dropped. ESPN's Chris Mortensen reported Friday that the Ravens are anticipating that Rice will miss some time, but how long is unclear. Former Ravens cornerbacks Cary Williams and Fabian Washington earned two- and one-game suspensions, respectively, for similar first-time offenses of domestic violence, though neither was caught on tape.

While we wait to hear what the NFL will do, it's unclear if the Ravens will take any punitive measures of their own. At the NFL Combine in February, Newsome said that the organization is waiting to take its cue from the league:

“As a league, we have a conduct policy,” Newsome said. “Being a member of the league, we will follow that A to Z. Up until we get to that point, he falls under the personal policy of the league. We will allow the league to take its position before we have to take any.”

Newsome said he’s seen the Rice video online “just like everyone and it doesn’t look good.”

July 29: Peter King reports that the NFL did see the full video of the incident King retracted that report after the second video was released.

August 28: NFL admits missteps, announces new domestic violence policy
Goodell admitted that he “didn’t get it right” when he handed Rice a two-game suspension and beefed up the league’s domestic violence policy in reaction. He sent a lengthy letter to team owners outlining a six-game suspension without pay for the first offenses, and a lifetime ban for second offenses. The new policy will apply to all NFL personnel, including executives and owners.

“I take responsibility both for the decision and for ensuring that our actions in the future properly reflect our values,” Goodell said. “I didn’t get it right. Simply put, we have to do better. And we will.”

September 8: Video surfaces of Rice punching wife in the face

Rice and the NFL took heavy criticism in the weeks following the announcement of his two-game suspension. Just after Week 1, those criticisms were stoked. TMZ received video of Rice punching Palmer inside the elevator, and published it.

The video could bring additional punishment on Rice under the league’s revamped domestic violence policy. According to ESPN’s Chris Mortensen, the NFL requested the tape from law enforcement during its investigation but was denied. The Ravens also reportedly hadn’t seen the video until TMZ released it. According to Mortensen, the Ravens are preparing for the running back to miss more time.

September 8: Ravens release Rice

The same day that TMZ released video of Rice knocking his wife unconscious, the Ravens terminated the running back’s contract. According to Dan Wetzel of Yahoo! Sports, the decision was made because Rice had allegedly been dishonest with the team about what transpired.

September 8: Rice suspended indefinitely by NFL

Soon after the Ravens announced they would be releasing Rice, the NFL announced that Rice will be suspended indefinitely. There is no word yet when he may return, putting the free agent’s football career on hold.

September 8: John Harbaugh said the Ravens did not see the tape until the TMZ release
In the first public comments by the Ravens following Rice’s release, head coach John Harbaugh said the team had not seen the elevator video of the incident until it was

released by TMZ. He said once the team saw the video, the organization leaders met and quickly came to the decision to release Rice.

September 9: Janay Rice releases a statement

Janay Rice posted a statement on her Instagram account the day following the video release. She said “reality is a nightmare in itself” and criticized the media for causing pain to her family. “To make us relive a moment in our lives that we regret every day is a horrible thing,” she wrote.

September 9: The NFL said it did not see the video until after the TMZ release

The NFL said it did not see the video from the elevator until it was released by TMZ. The league said it requested all information from the incident from police, but the elevator video was “not made available to us.” The NFL claimed no one in its office saw the video until TMZ released it.

September 9: Ray Rice makes first public comments

Rice’s first comments following his release came in a text message to Rachel Nichols of CNN. In it, he said “I’m just holding strong for my wife and kid, that’s all I can do right now.”

September 9: Roger Goodell denied seeing the Rice video before the release

Roger Goodell conducted his first interview and reiterated he and the NFL had not received the video prior to its release:

“We had not seen any videotape of what occurred in the elevator,” Goodell said. “We assumed that there was a video, we asked for video, we asked for anything that was pertinent, but we were never granted that opportunity.”

While discussing the situation, Goodell said he could not rule out Rice ever playing in the NFL again.

September 9: Ravens owner apologizes for team’s response

Ravens owner Steve Bisciotti issued a letter of apology to season ticket holders, fans and sponsors. He detailed the process the team went through following the incident and admitted the team should have done more.

“Yesterday morning Sept 8, all of us saw the video from inside the elevator. It is violent and horrifying. I immediately came to the office and called a meeting with Dick Cass, Ozzie Newsome, John Harbaugh and Kevin Byrne. The meeting was relatively short. The decision to let Ray Rice go was unanimous. Seeing that video changed everything. We should have seen it earlier. We should have pursued our own investigation more vigorously. We didn’t and we were wrong.”

September 10: The Associated Press reports the NFL received the elevator video in April
Citing an unnamed law enforcement official, the Associated Press reported the NFL was sent the elevator video in April. The source said he had a 12-second voicemail from an

NFL office number confirming the video arrived. The NFL quickly refuted the report and said it had “no knowledge” of ever receiving the video.

September 10: Newsome says Ray Rice “didn’t lie” to him
 Ozzie Newsome said on Sep. 10 that Rice “didn’t lie” to him about what was on the video. A report from Ed Werder at ESPN said that Rice gave the Ravens a version of the event consistent with what was on the tape.

September 10: ESPN’s *Outside the Lines* reports that Rice spat at Janay Palmer before hitting her.

It also recounted part of the verbal exchange between the two in the casino that night.

September 10: Rodger Goodell has no intentions to resign
 The NFL commissioner received significant criticism for his handling of the situation and there have been calls for him to resign. According to a source, Goodell has no such plans and the source went as far to say Goodell will “never” resign.

September 10: NFL announces independent investigation
 Former FBI director Robert Mueller will lead the probe, overseen by Giants co-owner John Mara and Steelers co-owner Art Rooney III. Mueller is a lawyer with the Wilmer Hale law firm, which negotiated the NFL’s new deal with DirecTV.

September 11: Report says Goodell was concerned about Janay Rice and public backlash
 An anonymous owner told the Wall Street Journal that Goodell didn’t pursue the Rice investigation because he was concerned that it would be insensitive to question Janay Rice’s story and he worried how that would be perceived. The owner in the WSJ story also said that Goodell believed she was knocked unconscious because she fell down in the elevator.

September 12: NFL notifies NFLPA of Rice’s indefinite suspension
 Because the NFL had already suspended Rice for the incident (the original two-game suspension), they had to have justification to suspend him indefinitely. Goodell told the Players Association that the indefinite suspension was the result of Rice giving them a different version of events than what was revealed on the video of him punching his then-fiancée.

ESPN’s *Outside the Lines* talked to four sources who said that Rice was honest with Goodell about what happened.

September 16: Rice appeals indefinite suspension
 At the heart of Rice’s appeal is the insinuation by Goodell that Rice misled him when the two met in June. Rice will contend that he was honest with Goodell and has a statement by Ravens general manager Ozzie Newsome and a report by ESPN’s *Outside the Lines* to corroborate him. Goodell said that Rice gave the NFL a different story about the incident in the elevator than what the video portrayed.

Whether Goodell heard Rice's appeal is unknown. The commissioner normally hears appeals, but his role in the investigation may have led Rice and the NFLPA to suggest that he be removed from proceedings in favor of a neutral arbitrator.

November 5-6: Rice suspension appeal hearing will be held

The hearing for Rice's appeal of his suspension by the NFL will take place on Nov. 5-6. It is unknown whether NFL commissioner Roger Goodell will be at the hearing. Judge Barbara Jones will preside over the appeal, after the NFLPA requested that Goodell not be involved due to his role in handing out Rice's initial suspension by the league. Rice is likely to argue that the video released by TMZ was heavily edited and did not fully show the role of his fiancée in the incident. He also has affirmed that he has been honest with the league in his meetings with officials.

November 5: Goodell testifies at hearing

Goodell ended up testifying for more than two hours in front of Judge Jones at Rice's appeal hearing. The commissioner was the first person called to do so, answering questions first from the NFL legal team and then from Jeffrey Kesler, a lawyer representing the players' union.

Due to a gag order, no other information about Goodell's statements have been brought to light. A decision on Rice's appeal for reinstatement to the NFL is expected within days.

November 6: Newsome testifies that Rice came clean to Goodell

The Ravens GM provided what could potentially be the key piece of testimony on the hearing's final day when he claimed under oath that Rice told Goodell during the June 16 sitdown that he hit Palmer in the elevator. Newsome's assertion seems to contradict Goodell's own claims that Rice was ambiguous during the meeting, and that he did not realize Palmer had been punched until the release of the second video.

November 28: Rice wins appeal, reinstated by NFL

A neutral arbitrator overturned Rice's suspension, forcing the NFL to reinstate Rice and making him immediately eligible to sign with a team and resume playing. The arbitrator said that Rice did not lie to the commissioner during the June 16 meeting, making the upgraded suspension excessive and without cause.

Appendix B

A timeline of the Adrian Peterson child abuse case (SB Nation, September 17, 2014)

The slew of bad news in the NFL continues, as Minnesota Vikings running back Adrian Peterson was placed on the exempt/commissioner's permission list early Wednesday morning, preventing him from playing or participating in any team activities.

Placement on the list stems from Peterson being indicted for reckless or negligent injury to a child after he disciplined his 4-year-old son with a "switch" in May and left a number of bruises and lacerations on his body.

The Vikings deactivated Peterson for Week 2 but reinstated him on Monday in order for him to play Week 3 against the Saints. But in the early morning hours Wednesday, the team decided to put him on the exempt list until he sorts out his legal troubles.

Sunday, May 18: According to a police report, Peterson disciplined his son after the boy pushed another one of Peterson's sons off of a motorbike video game. The Vikings running back used a switch (a thin branch or rod used for whipping) to discipline his child, resulting in bruises and lacerations on the boy's back, legs, arms and buttocks.

After the boy returns home to his mother in Minnesota, the bruises are discovered during a routine doctor's visit. The doctor says the injuries are consistent with child abuse.

Thursday, Aug. 21: Peterson testifies in front of a grand jury in Montgomery County, Texas.

Thursday, Sept. 4: The grand jury decides not to indict Peterson.

Thursday, Sept. 11: Peterson misses Vikings practice for what coach Mike Zimmer calls a "veteran day" off.

Friday, Sept. 12, 4:36 p.m. EST: Peterson is indicted for reckless or negligent injury to a child in Montgomery County.

Friday, Sept. 12, 5:04 p.m.: Vikings deactivate Peterson for their Week 2 game against the New England Patriots.

Saturday, Sept. 13, 2:15 a.m.: Peterson turns himself in to Montgomery, County authorities and is released on \$15,000 bond.

Sunday, Sept. 14, 12:06 p.m.: Vikings fan shows up to tailgate dressed like Adrian Peterson carrying a "switch."

Monday, Sept. 15, 1:54 p.m.: Peterson releases statement on child abuse charges.

Monday, Sept. 15, 2:46 p.m.: Vikings reinstate Peterson, state their belief that he was just “disciplining a child.” He is expected to play Week 3 against the New Orleans Saints.

Monday, Sept. 15, 7:30 p.m.: A previous allegation of child abuse by Peterson is reported. He was not charged in the incident after it was determined the 4-year-old was not hit in the forehead by the running back, but instead his forehead on a car seat while being disciplined.

Monday, Sept. 15, 8:12 p.m.: Radisson issues statement that it is suspending its limited sponsorship of the Vikings.

Tuesday, Sept. 16: Minnesota governor says Peterson is innocent until proven guilty, but his actions are “a public embarrassment” and suggests that the running back be suspended.

Tuesday, Sept. 16: Anheuser-Busch is among a growing number of corporate sponsors that express concern or take action in light of Peterson’s legal trouble.

Wednesday, Sept. 17, 2:00 a.m.: Vikings place Peterson on exempt/commissioner’s permission list.

Wednesday, Sept. 17, noon: Vikings owners Zygi and Mark Wilf, along with GM Rick Spielman and coach Mike Zimmer, address the media.

Wednesday, Sept. 17, 12:15 p.m.: Nike and Castrol suspend their sponsorships with Adrian Peterson.

Friday, Sept. 19, 4:15 p.m.: Authorities in Minnesota are seeking a protective order that would bar Peterson from having any unsupervised or unauthorized contact with his four-year-old son.

Sunday, Sept. 21: Pro Football Talk publishes report that Adrian Peterson is expected to push for an accelerated trial date in the hopes of playing during the 2014 season.

Appendix C

Roger Goodell letter to team owners (SB Nation, August 28, 2016)

Since becoming Commissioner, my focus has been on ensuring that the NFL is held in the highest regard by our fans, players, business partners, and public authorities. My commitment has always been to do what is right and to protect the integrity of the game, both now and long into the future.

Recently, we have addressed issues of respect—respect for co-workers, opponents, fans, game officials, and others. Whether in the context of workplace conduct, advancing policies of diversity and inclusion, or promoting professionalism in all we do, our mission has been to create and sustain model workplaces filled with people of character. Although the NFL is celebrated for what happens on the field, we must be equally vigilant in what we do off the field.

At times, however, and despite our best efforts, we fall short of our goals. We clearly did so in response to a recent incident of domestic violence. We allowed our standards to fall below where they should be and lost an important opportunity to emphasize our strong stance on a critical issue and the effective programs we have in place. My disciplinary decision led the public to question our sincerity, our commitment, and whether we understood the toll that domestic violence inflicts on so many families. I take responsibility both for the decision and for ensuring that our actions in the future properly reflect our values. I didn't get it right. Simply put, we have to do better. And we will.

The public response reinforced my belief that the NFL is held to a higher standard, and properly so. Much of the criticism stemmed from a fundamental recognition that the NFL is a leader, that we do stand for important values, and that we can project those values in ways that have a positive impact beyond professional football. We embrace this role and the responsibility that comes with it. We will listen openly, engage our critics constructively, and seek continuous improvement in everything we do. We will use this opportunity to create a positive outcome by promoting policies of respect for women both within and outside of the workplace. We will work with nationally recognized experts to ensure that the NFL has a model policy on domestic violence and sexual assault. We will invest time and resources in training, programs and services that will become part of our culture. And we will increase the sanctions imposed on NFL personnel who violate our policies.

In the past few weeks, I have reviewed all aspects of our Personal Conduct Policy and met with a wide range of experts (several of whom we have been working with for some time), as well as with the NFLPA and many of you. Those discussions will continue. They have helped us to identify a number of steps that will better communicate our position and strengthen our policies on domestic violence and sexual assault.

These steps are based on a clear, simple principle: domestic violence and sexual assault are wrong. They are illegal. They have no place in the NFL and are unacceptable in any way, under any circumstances. That has been and remains our policy.

Many of you have done excellent work in this field, both personally and through the efforts of concerned players and your community relations and player engagement departments. Our goals are to prevent violence, impose appropriate discipline, provide professional support resources when appropriate, and publicly embrace a leadership role on this issue.

Consistent with that view, I have directed the following actions to reinforce and enhance our policies:

First, we will continue our work with leading experts to expand the scope of our education on domestic violence and sexual assault for all NFL personnel - players and non-players. This will include enhanced training for entering players through the Rookie Symposium and Rookie Success Program, as well as new programs designed for veteran players and other NFL personnel. All NFL personnel - players and non-players - will receive information about available league resources and local support and advocacy groups in their community.

Second, our club Player Engagement Directors, Human Resource Executives, and other appropriate team personnel will undergo comprehensive training to help them understand and identify risk factors associated with domestic violence and sexual assault. Any person identified as being at risk will be afforded private, confidential assistance. Persons who decline this assistance will be held accountable for that decision in determining discipline for any subsequent act of domestic violence or sexual assault. This is a complicated matter and must be approached with care. We will work with experts to identify strategies based on the most reliable research, recognizing that violence can and does take different forms but generally involves a pattern of coercive behavior.

Third, we will ensure that the NFL LifeLine and NFL Total Wellness Program are staffed with personnel trained to provide prompt and confidential assistance to anyone at risk of domestic violence or sexual assault - whether as a victim or potential aggressor. Information regarding these resources will be furnished to all NFL personnel and their families. Our Player Engagement Directors and Human Resource Executives will meet with team spouses and significant others to ensure that they are aware of the resources available to them as NFL family members, including the ability to seek confidential assistance through independent local resources, as well as through the club or the NFL Total Wellness Program. In this respect, we will utilize our existing, established telephone and on-line programs, and will communicate the full range of available services to all NFL personnel and their families.

Fourth, the outside groups we met with have emphasized that the NFL can play an important role in communities throughout the nation. Consistent with that advice, we will expand the educational components in our college, high school and youth football programs that address domestic violence and sexual assault. We will seek to create and promote programs that develop the character of the young men who play, coach or manage our game, emphasizing respect for women and appropriate ways to resolve conflicts. Outreach efforts embodied in these programs will help young people recognize, establish and maintain healthy relationships. In our earliest contact with young men, we can communicate our expectations, establish NFL standards of conduct, and stress the responsibility that all men have to adhere to those standards.

Fifth, we recognize that domestic violence and sexual assault are broad social issues, affecting millions of people. We want our public role to be both constructive and effective. In the coming months, we will explore meaningful ways to incorporate domestic violence and sexual assault awareness and prevention into our public service work. We will do this with the assistance of responsible outside organizations and the potential participation of current and former players, coaches and families who have been affected and are willing to speak out. Actions we take in this respect will be sensitive, thoughtful and will recognize the positive role models and high character presented by so many men in the NFL.

Finally, and consistent with our Personal Conduct Policy, our own response to domestic violence or sexual assault incidents by NFL personnel will include new elements of evaluation, treatment and family support, as well as enhanced discipline. We will address these issues fairly and thoughtfully, respecting the rights of all involved and giving proper deference to law enforcement and the courts. If someone is charged with domestic violence or sexual assault, there will be a mandatory evaluation and, where professionally indicated, counseling or other specialized services. Effective immediately, violations of the Personal Conduct Policy regarding assault, battery, domestic violence or sexual assault that involve physical force will be subject to a suspension without pay of six games for a first offense, with consideration given to mitigating factors, as well as a longer suspension when circumstances warrant. Among the circumstances that would merit a more severe penalty would be a prior incident before joining the NFL, or violence involving a weapon, choking, repeated striking, or when the act is committed against a pregnant woman or in the presence of a child. A second offense will result in banishment from the NFL; while an individual may petition for reinstatement after one year, there will be no presumption or assurance that the petition will be granted. These disciplinary standards will apply to all NFL personnel.

With very few exceptions, NFL personnel conduct themselves in an exemplary way. But even one case of domestic violence or sexual assault is unacceptable. The reality is that domestic violence and sexual assault are often hidden crimes, ones that are under-reported and under-acknowledged. The steps we are taking will reinforce our commitment to address this issue constructively.

In addition to focusing on domestic violence and sexual assault, we will continue to maintain strong policies regarding weapons offenses. We are similarly working to strengthen our response to impaired driving. We have sought - unsuccessfully - for several years to obtain the NFLPA's agreement to more stringent discipline for DUI, including mandatory deactivation for the game immediately following an arrest and a minimum two-game suspension for a first violation of law. We will continue to press our position on this issue in the hope of securing the union's agreement.

There are three steps that each club should take promptly: first, post and distribute the attached "Memorandum to All NFL Personnel" to every player under contract to your club; second, ensure that your head coach reviews the information in that notice with his staff and with all your players; and third, share this letter and the attached Memorandum with all members of your organization, including your team president, General Manager, Human Resources Executive, Security Director, and Player Engagement Director.

In the coming weeks, we will contact all clubs on further steps to be taken in support of these initiatives. I am grateful for the thoughtful advice received from so many of you and for the support that I know you will give to this important work.

MEMORANDUM TO ALL NFL PERSONNEL

Domestic violence and sexual assault are wrong. They are illegal. They are never acceptable and have no place in the NFL under any circumstances.

Our Personal Conduct Policy has long made clear that domestic violence and sexual assault are unacceptable. We clearly must do a better job of addressing these incidents in the NFL. And we will.

Earlier today, I sent NFL owners a letter that identified specific actions we will take to improve our response to domestic violence and sexual assault. Those actions include the following:

All NFL Personnel will participate in new and enhanced educational programs on domestic violence and sexual assault. We will also increase our outreach to college and youth football programs.

Families will receive detailed information about available services and resources, both through the club and independent of the club. These resources and services will be available to employees and their families on a confidential basis.

Violations of the Personal Conduct Policy regarding assault, battery, domestic violence and sexual assault that involve physical force will be subject to enhanced discipline. A first offense will be subject to a suspension of six weeks without pay. Mitigating circumstances will be considered, and more severe discipline will be imposed if there are aggravating circumstances such as the presence or use of a weapon, choking, repeated

striking, or when the act is committed against a pregnant woman or in the presence of a child. A second offense will result in banishment from the league; an offender may petition for reinstatement after one year but there is no assurance that the petition will be granted. These disciplinary consequences apply to all NFL personnel.

* * * * *

If you believe that you or someone you know may be at risk of domestic violence or other misconduct, we strongly encourage you to seek assistance through your club's director of player engagement, human resources department, the NFL LifeLine or an independent local domestic violence resource. Help is available and can prevent potentially tragic incidents.

ROGER GOODELL

Appendix D

Transcript of Roger Goodell press conference (FOX 5 Atlanta, September 19, 2014)

Good afternoon. Thank you for coming today. I'd like to make a few points and then I'll be happy to take your questions.

At our best, the NFL sets an example that makes a positive difference.

Unfortunately, over the past several weeks, we have seen all too much of the NFL doing wrong. That starts with me.

I said this before, back on August 28th, and I say it again now—I got it wrong in the handling of the Ray Rice matter. I am sorry for that.

I got it wrong on a number of levels—from the process that I led to the decision that I reached. But now I will get it right and do whatever is necessary to accomplish that. First, I don't expect anyone just to take my word. Last week, I asked former FBI Director Robert Muller to conduct an independent investigation to answer the questions raised about our process in reviewing Ray Rice's conduct.

I pledged that Director Muller will have full cooperation and access. We all look forward to his report and findings. I promise you that any shortcomings he finds in how we dealt with the situation will lead to swift action. The same mistakes can never be repeated. We will do whatever is necessary to ensure that we are thorough in our review process and that our conclusions are reliable. We will get our house in order first.

Second, and most importantly, these incidents demonstrate that we can use the NFL to help create change not only in our league but in society with respect to domestic violence and sexual assault.

We are taking a number of steps. I said on August 28th that the entire NFL would receive comprehensive information on resources and support systems for victims of domestic violence and sexual assault. We will reexamine, enhance and improve all of our current programs—and then we'll do more.

Earlier today, each NFL club and all of our league office locations received information about advocacy and support organizations in their communities.

In addition, our teams and league staff—everyone—will participate in education sessions starting in the next month—followed by training programs.

These programs are being developed by a top group of experts. Some of them were announced earlier in the week. We will continue to identify and add expertise to our

team. And we will ask the NFL Players Association to help us develop and deliver these programs in the most effective way.

Third, we recognize that domestic violence and sexual assault exists everywhere, in every community, economic class, racial and ethnic group. It affects all of us.

These are problems we are committed to addressing. But we cannot solve them by ourselves. Law enforcement, the criminal justice system, social service organizations and families are the cornerstones to addressing this problem.

For our part, we can and will do more. To begin, we have entered into a long-term partnership with two leading national organizations—the National Domestic Violence Hotline and the National Sexual Violence Resource Center. The hotline received an 84 percent increase in their call volume last week. They did not have the resources to answer nearly half of the calls. They need help. We are providing it.

Fourth, we strongly—strongly—condemn and will punish behavior that is totally unacceptable.

Domestic violence, including child abuse, sexual assault, irresponsible ownership or handling of firearms, the illegal use of alcohol or drugs—these activities must be condemned and stopped, through education and discipline. Our standards, and the consequences of falling short, must be clear, consistent, and current. They must be implemented through procedures that are fair and transparent.

This is the central issue today. I'm here now because our rules, policies and procedures on personal conduct failed to ensure that this high standard is met.

But I want to make it clear. These are complex issues. Our country has a legal system that everyone needs to respect.

When there is evidence of misconduct by anyone in the NFL, we need to carefully consider when to act and on what evidence. Everyone deserves a fair process.

You know I feel passionately that working in the NFL in any capacity is a privilege—something we must earn every day and do not take for granted. The vast majority of players, coaches, owners and employees of the NFL stand tall, not only for their role in the game, but for what they do in their communities.

To get all of this right, we will bring together our players and their union representatives, coaches, owners, and outside experts who can help us set the right standards and identify the right procedures.

I have discussed these challenges with the Players Association Executive Director DeMaurice Smith. He shares my view that domestic violence and sexual assault have no place in the NFL. He and I will meet next week to bring together experts to help us establish and live up to the standards that our fans deserve, and that we set for ourselves.

I will be asking these experts to examine all current NFL policies related to employee and player conduct and discipline.

They will address how to balance due process rights for those accused with the need to hold our personnel to the highest standards.

They should also consider the current system for determining violations, including my role in the process.

There will be changes to our personal conduct policy. I know this will happen because we will make it happen. Nothing is off the table.

Let me say it again—we will implement new conduct policies. They will have a set of clear and transparent rules for league and club personnel, owners and players.

My goal is to complete this work by the Super Bowl.

Football and the NFL have always changed and improved.

We drive changes in the game through our Competition Committee. It reviews and updates the rules that govern the game on the field.

Through this process of evaluation and reform, we keep the game competitive, entertaining, fair and—most important—as safe as possible for our players.

We go to enormous lengths to make sure that players, coaches, officials, fans, our broadcast announcers—everyone in the NFL—fully understand our playing rules and how they are enforced.

That must now be our model when it comes to personal conduct. So, like the Competition Committee and other league committees, I am establishing a Conduct Committee to review these new rules in the months and years to come and ensure that we are always in line with best practices.

There is no reason we cannot be as transparent and as effective on these issues as we are with the game on the field.

I believe in accountability. I understand the challenge before me and I will be held accountable for meeting it.

Every day, so many of our players, coaches and staff are doing tremendous things in their communities. I couldn't be more proud of how they are using their opportunity to help make a positive difference.

Today, I ask everyone that is part of the NFL to join me in making positive and significant changes going forward.

Appendix E

*Memo of Thematic-Content Analysis Categorization Process**Perception of NFL**Deceitful***Lied****Covered up****Misled**

Insincere

*Powerful***Arrogant/cavalier****Catalyst for social change, for better or worse**

Diminished popularity

Not held accountable for mishandling domestic violence case

*Business first***Profit-driven**

Business

Talent-driven → talent/winning supersedes off-field misconduct

Has duty to abide by responsibilities expected of corporations

Misplaced priorities

Immoral

Image driven

Succumbed too easily to public pressure

Overreacted to domestic violence (dv) case

Only cares about its reputation**Reactive**

Placates to women enough already/too much

Placates to progressive ideals too much

Violent

Has a dv problem

Employs criminals

Violent culture

Does not have a dv problem

Black players are most likely to commit domestic violence

Players are not at root of dv problem

*Responsibility (responsible, irresponsible)***Not responsible for players' misconduct****Responsible in handling dv cases**

Not responsible for handing down harsh punishments when law enforcement doesn't punish players

Not league's responsibility to educate anyone regarding domestic violence

Not their responsibility to rehabilitate players who commit dv

*Incompetent***Mishandled dv case**

Mishandles misconduct

Believes in guilty until proven innocent

Properly handled dv case

Ineffective

at addressing dv

at managing negative press

Weak leadership

Illegitimate as a sports organization

Incompetent

Hypocritical

Inconsistent

Cowardly

Unintelligent

Misunderstands severity of dv

Misunderstood case

Unprepared to handle dv cases

Disparity in punishment for white and black players who commit dv

Owners are at root of dv problem

*Apathetic***Apathetic toward dv**

Undervalues female fans

Undervalues importance of players having morals

Too lenient in punishment of players who commit dv

Culture of dismissiveness

Apathetic toward well-being of own players

Undervalues constituents

Cares about women

Intentionally vague re plans to combat dv in league

Not active enough in discouraging dv

Actively punishes players with misconduct

Preferred corrective action

Relieve leadership

Relieve Commissioner Goodell of duties

Relieve NFL leadership of duties

Punish players who commit dv—not NFL leadership

Punish players who commit crimes and league personnel seeking to keep crimes from public knowledge—not NFL Commissioner

Discipline leadership for mishandling case

Investigate NFL for involvement in misconduct

Change culture of league

Suspension

Two-game suspension, if no formal charges filed

Six-game suspension for first offense

Longer than two-game suspension for players who commit dv

Indefinite suspension is insufficient punishment

Indefinitely suspend players who commit dv

Suspend players who commit dv in manner consistent with facts of each case

Suspend players who commit dv at least half a season

Immediately suspend players who have committed a violent act

Suspend players who commit domestic violence

Indefinite suspension until offending player demonstrates detrimental behavior has been corrected

Reinstate players following successful completion of suspension

Suspend first-time dv offenders for eight games

Suspend first-time dv offenders at least six games

Ban

Lifetime ban for players who commit dv

Automatic lifetime ban for players who commit dv

Release players who commit dv

Team immediately dismisses player who commits dv

Do not ban players from league for life

Lifetime ban for second offense

Partnership with anti-dv organizations

Domestic Violence Awareness month in league

Partnerships with anti-domestic violence education programs

Mandatory volunteer hours at dv charities

Players with misconduct should play for free and have income normally earned from playing sent to relevant charity to bring awareness for relevant issue

Education programs

Something more impactful than anti-dv education programs

Require all personnel to participate in anti-dv workshops/classes

Anti-domestic violence education programs

Code of conduct

Insisting players abide by a code of conduct

Hold all players who commit dv accountable

Equitable punishment depending on misconduct

Equate dv with drug use when penalizing players

Hold all players to same standard when misconduct involved

Prioritize punishing serious crimes like dv above less serious crimes like smoking marijuana

Enforce stricter policies against teams who are aware of players committing dv but don't punish them

Fine team for supporting player despite video evidence of crime

Be consistent when punishing players' misconduct

Punishment from league should not exceed punishment from law enforcement

Institute a new code of conduct

Enforce stricter policies against players who commit dv

Change rules regarding punishing players who commit domestic violence

Specific details regarding NFL's plans to combat dv in the league

Enforce "zero tolerance" policy regarding dv

Immediately penalize players who have committed a violent act

Develop clear code of conduct

Tangible punishments for players who commit dv

Update policy against dv

Do not punish players multiple time for singular offense

Reinstate player if no legal action taken against player

Only punish players whose misconduct contains clear evidence

Place players accused of domestic violence on administrative leave without pay pending criminal proceedings

Rehab

Rehabilitation for players who commit dv

Provide treatment for player and abused significant other

Rehabilitation for players who commit dv and counseling for their families

*Pre-screening***Psychiatric evaluations before drafting players**

Impose rule barring individuals with criminal records from joining league
 Not allow black athletes into league

*None***None—let law enforcement punish players who commit dv**

Keep policy-making out of sport
 NFL should not succumb so easily to public pressure
 Let law enforcement punish players who commit domestic violence; then,
 NFL can decide if additional punishment is appropriate
 Players who commit a crime should be sent to jail

Anti-dv ads

Should honestly address controversy

Support ads addressing dv

Against ads addressing dv
 Advertisements addressing domestic violence from female AND male
 perspective

Unsure

Respect wishes of players' significant others when handling dv cases
 Dialogue re dv
**Include women in decision-making process regarding handling
 players who commit dv**

Fandom level

High
 Moderate
 Low/non-existent
 Diminished

Appendix F

Thematic-Content Analysis Articles

Posting on NFL page. Here is what it looks like. Dear NFL and Roger Goodell, Why do you support domestic violence? Today the NFL suspended Ray Rice for two games for beating unconscious, his fiancée, now wife, in a casino. Ray Rice then carried his fiancée into an elevator, and while still unconscious, was recorded dragging her out of the elevator. This is all recorded on video, and he has not denied the incident. The NFL and you, Roger Goodell, suspended him for two games for committing this violent physical assault. Meanwhile, the NFL player who is caught smoking marijuana for the second time can be suspended four games under the NFL substance abuse policy. Two game suspension for beating a woman unconscious, four game suspension for smoking weed. Do you not see the problem here? The NFL leadership including Commissioner Roger Goodell continues to demonstrate a severe lack of moral priorities and it is time for fans to step up and do something. Boycott NFL Sponsors 2014 are urging NFL fans to boycott companies, and the products of the companies who sponsor the NFL. Boycott NFL Sponsors 2014 is, in the strongest terms, urging the NFL to revisit this reprehensibly lax stance on domestic violence, and step up your support of charities focused on eliminating domestic violence. Sincerely, Adam Wollmer- Loyal Arizona Cardinals fan and Disappointed NFL fan (Boycott NFL Sponsors, July 24, 2014)

So... time to rant against my second favorite sport... Ray Rice was suspended for 2 games today for beating the crap out of his fiancée, now wife, in a casino, on camera. Then while still unconscious taking her upstairs and dragging her out of an elevator, and it is all on video so there is no denying that it happened. 2 games for violent physical assault on a woman. Meanwhile, the #NFL suspends players who get caught spking weed for the 2nd time for 4 games. 4 games for smoking weed. Now, I am no Rhodes Scholar, but this "logic" is well... let's use an appropriate term. BULLSHIT! There is never a reason to be physical with another person, let alone a woman, and even crazier, a person you have asked to marry. I don't get it, I don't like it. The #NFL leadership has some really screwed up priorities and it is time for the fans to step up and do something. So NFL fans, is this important to you? Is it? Then join me in this mission. Let's identify the companies who advertise on NFL Network and during NFL games. Let's reach out to them and let them know we are going to boycott their products if they continue their association with the NFL. Let's contact the NFL and let them know we are going to boycott their sponsors unless something is done about changing the priorities for player conduct violations. Tonight, I will take my first step. I will create a Facebook page called BoycottNFLSponsors. I will write up a form letter that we can all use to email the marketing departments of the companies who support the NFL. And I will send a letter to Roger Goodell. The ONLY, ONLY way to send a message to the NFL is financially. They see no other color than green. If you can't tell... I'm a little pissed (Boycott NFL Sponsors, July 24, 2014)

The NFL needs to take domestic violence seriously (TIME, July 25, 2014)

On Thursday, the NFL issued a two-game suspension to Baltimore Ravens' running back Ray Rice, who this spring was indicted for allegedly hitting his now-wife so hard that he knocked her unconscious. Rice was caught by a security camera dragging his unconscious then-fiancée out of an elevator in an Atlantic City Casino after the supposed incident. The video went viral, thanks to TMZ. It is truly disturbing: at one point the elevator keeps closing on the motionless fiancée's feet. Considering his actions, Rice's light punishment is a joke.

NFL Commissioner Roger Goodell has suspended players for longer because of DUIs, smoking pot and illegal tattoos. Fourteen other NFL players have been suspended in 2014, all for drug use—performance-enhancing or otherwise. Cleveland Browns wide receiver Josh Gordon is currently appealing a one-year suspension for marijuana use. Indianapolis Colts outside linebacker Robert Mathis will sit out four games for taking illegal fertility drugs in hopes of getting his wife pregnant, according to Mathis. Again, Rice will sit for just two games.

As fans, we can't speculate on details of the altercation: Ray and Janay Rice have tied the knot since the incident, and he has publicly apologized for using violence. But what we do know is this: there's a tape of Ray Rice dragging an unconscious woman out of an elevator; he was charged with third-degree aggravated assault; a grand jury indicted him; a trial never took place, and he has agreed to enter counseling.

We also know that the NFL has a long history of players accused of committing domestic violence. According statistics from U-T San Diego, 21 of 32 NFL teams employed a player with a domestic or sexual violence charge on their record last year. Panthers defensive end Greg Hardy, Cardinals linebacker Daryl Washington and Minnesota Vikings cornerback A.J. Jefferson have all recently been arrested for assault in domestic disputes.

Excusing these players' actions sends the message that the country's number one sports league doesn't care about women (unless they're attending games or buying merchandise). And it perpetuates the idea that these actions are okay when already 25% of women will be the victim of domestic abuse at some point in their lifetime, according to the Bureau of Justice Statistics.

And such a light sentence opens the door to victim blaming. After the video leaked, Ravens general manager Ozzie Newsome speculated that perhaps a "different story" would come out, implying that maybe Janay Rice did something to deserve being hit. (To clarify, no victim of domestic violence, male or female, ever deserves to be hit.) Janay Rice fueled the fire herself in a news conference in May by saying, "I do deeply regret the role I played in the incident that night." Some may rationalize the light punishment by

pointing to Janay's forgiving Rice and Rice's one-on-one meeting with Goodell. That's not the message the NFL should be sending.

The NFL's actions have disturbed fans and players alike. Former player Scott Fujita tweeted:



Figure 11. Scott Fujita tweet regarding NFL's two-game suspension of Rice (sfujita55, 2014a).

Goodell promised in 2012 that the NFL would take a stand on domestic violence arrests. And two years later, Goodell is doling out two game suspensions. Get serious, NFL.

The NFL's domestic violence problem (ABC News, July 28, 2014)

Today the NFL finally issued a two-game suspension for Baltimore running back Ray Rice. What an ugly situation.

This offseason Rice was reportedly caught on an elevator surveillance camera punching his then-girlfriend in the face. A few minutes later, in a video that went viral, Rice was seen pulling her apparently unconscious body out of the elevator.

And now ... two games? Commissioner Roger Goodell has issued longer suspensions for pot smoking, taking Adderall, DUI, illegal tattoos, dogfighting and eating a protein bar thought to be on the NFL's approved list.

Two games. It's a joke, and a bad one. Worse, it leaves the door open for people to think that Janay Rice bears a lot of the responsibility for eliciting the punch that seemingly knocked her out.

Two games. This comes in the same offseason when elite pass-rusher Robert Mathis got four games for, according to him, using an unapproved fertility drug as he and his wife tried to get her pregnant. Is the NFL saying that knocking out your fiancée is less problematic for the league than knocking up your wife without Roger Goodell's sign-off?

The NFL is sending a strong message by issuing such a weak suspension; it's about as meaningful as a yellow card in a soccer game.

And make no mistake, the NFL has a problem on its hands.

Too many NFL players have been arrested in high-profile cases involving violence against women. Panthers defensive end Greg Hardy, Cardinals linebacker Daryl Washington and Rice are recent examples, and just this Wednesday, allegations of domestic violence surfaced against former Redskins tight end Fred Davis.

Washington was sentenced to a year of probation for assaulting the mother of his child after she said he shoved her down with both hands, breaking her collarbone. The NFL booted him for the entire 2014 season ... but a league spokesperson cited a second violation of the league's substance abuse policy as the reason. The suspension for domestic violence has yet to land.

"Any incident of domestic violence is really one too many," NFL VP of human resources Robert Gulliver told *espnW* recently. "Whenever these instances come up, I would say it's tragic and there's obviously a very swift move to address the issues with multiple parties being involved. We take these issues very seriously. Our security department gets involved, our management counsel gets involved, club staff gets involved and we just simply don't tolerate instances of domestic violence."

Right.

The NFL may say it doesn't tolerate domestic violence, but until the league puts its money where its players' fists are, those words are utterly empty.

Harry Edwards, a professor emeritus of sociology at UC Berkeley, has been a staff consultant on player personnel development with the San Francisco 49ers for 30 years. He said domestic violence is a complicated issue—and to look no further than Janay Palmer's decision to marry Rice after he was indicted for aggravated assault.

That said, Edwards—a longtime civil rights advocate—thinks the NFL and other leagues can do more to combat violence against women among players and in society at large.

"This to me is a bigger problem than racism," Edwards said. "This is women, and it cuts across all lines. Domestic violence cuts across ethnic groups and class lines in this country, so is there room for the No. 1 league in this country to do more? Absolutely."

Edwards found the Rice incident particularly troubling because of the reaction from the Ravens. During a May news conference, both Ray and Janay addressed the media. She apologized for her role in the incident, while Rice apologized to his bosses. He never once said he was sorry to Janay. That kind of public showing sends a loud message, Edwards said.

“Now it’s not just a noble act for the league to get its act together in terms of domestic violence,” Edwards said. “It’s now an imperative to get ahead of the curve on this.”

And here we are: two games.

If the NFL is trying to tell players it won’t tolerate domestic violence, how much of that message is getting through to the rank and file around the NFL? Most of the arrests listed above got a collective shrug from other players and executives. After seeing the Rice video, his boss, Ravens general manager Ozzie Newsome, asked whether maybe a “different story” was going to come out.

Seattle wide receiver Golden Tate said there might be “another side to the story” when asked about Washington, who pled guilty to aggravated assault.

The idea underpinning comments like that is that women are in some way responsible for the violence, even if they are the ones who are physically harmed. It’s pretty different from the way people look at someone whose wallet was stolen.

There can be suspicion toward women among pro athletes—women are often characterized as gold-diggers, financial predators in high heels. It’s an us-against-them way of looking at gender relations.

If the NFL wants to show women it cares, growing a spine on domestic violence would send a louder message than pink cleats in October for Breast Cancer Awareness Month.

And, to reiterate, that’s not to say that NFL players and coaches don’t do anything. Gulliver seems sincere in his attempts to create a respectful working environment that extends beyond the walls of the locker room, even if the decision-makers undercut that message with—let me say it again—two games.

There are plenty of coaches and players who contribute to education efforts and fundraisers. In June, Jets quarterback Geno Smith held a football camp that asked parents to bring phones to recycle, with funds from the refurbished phones to be used to benefit domestic violence organizations through Verizon’s HopeLine.

“That’s a worldwide issue, and it’s about the kids,” Smith said. “When kids grow up in homes with domestic violence or in broken homes, the key thing for us out here is to give

back to the community and allow the kids to get out here amongst their peers and enjoy themselves.”

Professional athletes may not be statistically more likely to be arrested for domestic violence than their age cohort in other fields, but maybe that puts a finer point on why these incidents should be taken seriously in such a high-profile community.

What the NFL does now is include anti-domestic violence education in the rookie programs, and former players are often tapped to speak about their experiences or areas of expertise. The NFL said women are in leadership positions within the league and are key in developing the program.

“I think this broader topic of respect really encompasses a lot of areas,” Gulliver said. “When we talk about respect it includes not only the locker room and the playing field. It really encompasses how we treat each other in all walks of life.”

Two games. Not enough.

Domestic violence is addressed in the rookie symposium, in which there is a review of the league’s personal conduct policy. It’s also addressed in the rookie success program, which consists of nine mandatory 60-minute sessions, with two specifically dedicated to personal relationships.

Wade Davis of the You Can Play Project is helping the NFL address issues of sexual identity and inclusiveness. He said issues of sexual violence and identity have things in common, including dismissing anything that seems feminine.

As a former player himself, he knows that this kind of discussion can be hard for players, who don’t want to be talked down to or lectured on social issues.

It’s a tough thing to balance. Rookies are in orientation for two days and hear a raft of personal stories with a point, whether the villain in the story is bankruptcy, DUI or steroid use. All those topics are important, but is it even possible to keep players from tuning out?

Edwards said the NFL could have players sign a pledge as a way of putting more emphasis on the issue and could certainly give more time to groups working to advocate or provide resources for women who have been abused. He noted that neither of those things would be affected by the collective bargaining agreement, which mandates how the league can respond to allegations of impropriety.

Yet Edwards sees domestic violence becoming more of a problem for the league. Noting the Rice video, he said cameras, camera phones and social media will only put more of a

spotlight on the issue. Allegations of alcohol-related impropriety against Colts owner Jim Irsay are also troubling, he noted, but there's no video.

The really scary question then becomes: What kind of a video does Roger Goodell need to see before he takes domestic violence seriously?

NFL apparently thinks marijuana possession roughly same as domestic violence (Yahoo! Sports, July 30, 2014)

The NFL is still being criticized for giving Ray Rice a light, two-game suspension, as well it should.

The league did a really poor job explaining why the Ravens running back got a surprisingly short suspension for an incident in which he allegedly knocked his fiancée (now his wife) unconscious and dragged her in an Atlantic City casino. One possible explanation is that NFL punishment was lighter because Rice avoided trial in his case by accepting a deal in which he entered a pretrial diversion program.

Now we get to a fairly apples vs. apples argument, and that's with the one-game suspension of Bills linebacker Nigel Bradham.

What did Bradham do to get his suspension? Injure another person? Put someone in harm's way? Physically abuse a female companion? Nah, he had a little bit of marijuana on him.

Bradham was charged last year for marijuana possession. He wasn't even arrested because the amount he had was so small. The charges were dropped. Yet, the NFL took it upon itself to protect the masses from the horrible, heinous crime of marijuana possession (legal in two states) and suspended Bradham to ensure the image of the league remains pristine.

So let's get this straight. Possessing a small amount of marijuana with charges dropped? Short suspension. Beating your wife or fiancée? Short suspension. If Bradham's marijuana charges weren't dropped, what does he get, four games?

Way to be entirely tone deaf on not just one issue but *two issues*, NFL.

The league has a domestic violence problem, and it totally blew a chance to send a message in Rice's case. By giving a similar suspension to Bradham for an off-field issue that practically nobody cares much about anymore makes the Rice suspension look even dumber (and don't give me that Rice's suspension was twice as harsh—we all can be honest and throw both of these suspensions into the same "light" category because giving Rice 1/16 tougher of a penalty isn't swaying me).

“It’s related to what happened last year,” said Bradham following Wednesday’s practice, according to the Bills’ website. “The commissioner said I wasn’t disciplined from the NFL last year so I guess it rolls over into this year. Everything was dismissed and I’m not in a substance abuse program or anything. Since everything was dismissed it’s kind of shocking and kind of disappointing that it came back again. I tried to appeal it but the appeal was declined.”

The NFL is usually pretty good at handling unwelcome issues in a way that it avoids public-relations nightmares. Lately, the league just looks like it has no idea what’s going on in the world.

‘We’ve always been there’: Female NFL fans open up on the game’s issues (Sports Illustrated, August 26, 2016)

Over the last decade, the NFL and its teams have made a concerted effort to appeal to women, starting female-only fan groups, launching exclusive product lines and even buying space in *Marie Claire*. From 2009 to ’13, the league saw results, as female viewership rose 26%. But the initiative has caused controversy too, like when the Buccaneers rolled out a women-focused RED campaign that many saw as demeaning. A series of domestic violence scandals and greater concern about the health risks of football at both the youth and professional levels have also threatened the efforts. So, where does the NFL stand with women entering the 2016 season?

Given the demographic’s size and diversity, it’s an impossible question to answer. But, to round out Women’s Week here at SI.com, we checked in with a half-dozen fans of the Seahawks, Broncos and Cowboys. They range from beginners to die-hards and have roots stretching from the Pacific Islands to Canada. We asked each of them a series of questions about enjoying game day as women, their reactions to the biggest debates surrounding the sport and where they see things heading in the future. A quick rundown of our panel:

Tiffany Anderson—A Pacific Islander born and raised in Hawaii, Anderson now lives in Tennessee, where even her house is enemy territory. She’s a Cowboys fan after growing up rooting for the ‘90s dynasty with her dad, her husband roots for the Bears, while her mom is a Giants fan and her daughter pledges allegiance to the nearby Titans.

Meredith Brannon—The Broncos recently recognized Brannon for her dedication to the team, 43 years after a two-year-old Brannon moved to Colorado and started her fandom. Now a single mom, she’s become so recognizable at team events that Taurean Nixon recently let her wear his Super Bowl ring.

Kris Calpin—Calpin's sincere fandom only dates back a couple years to when her husband took her to the 2013 Seahawks-Falcons playoff game. Atlanta won the game, but Seattle earned Calpin's appreciation.

Amanda McDonald—Born in West Virginia, McDonald fell in love with the Seahawks after falling for one of their fans while living in South Carolina. She's now the chapter president of the Carolina Sea Hawkers, a group with nearly as many women as men.

Sharon Smith—Originally from Canada, Smith started out as an Eagles fan but became a Seattle convert around the turn of the century. Now 59, she's hopeful her 10 grandchildren will learn to love the same team.

Kim Tangler—Since becoming a cheerleader when she was seven, Tangler has been a football fan. Now 42, she's committed to the Broncos, having lived in Colorado since 2000. She's an avid sports talk radio listener and has learned to isolate herself in her bedroom on game days to avoid saying any choice words in front of her four children.

The answers in this roundtable have been edited and condensed.

Question 1: The Experience. How is a game day different for a woman? Is being a female fan something you are conscious of?

Anderson: I never really thought of game day being different for a female. I just think personally that we make it look really good [laughs]. We're only different because we'll scream and shout at every play, no matter what, because we don't know all the rules and regulations as a typical sports guy might. I believe that we care about the main things like touchdowns, fumbles and winning the game and being able to brag about it. Since I can't go to the stadium I try to obtain the best experience, whether it's in my living room or at the bar with my fellow Middle Tennessee Dallas Cowboys fan club members. I enjoy watching the game with like-minded individuals both male and female that love football and have so much passion for our team.

Brannon: I don't think it's any different, male or female. It's not just a guy's sport like it used to be. Every game, I go with a girlfriend and they love the game as much as I do and we can talk about it.

Calpin: As a female fan I think that sometimes people look at me like, she doesn't know what she is talking about. I get a staredown like, 'Oh she's a frontrunner or a newer fan.' I think sometimes I have to pull stuff out and show I know what I'm talking about, but I don't like to have to feel like I have to prove myself. A lot of the things I wear just have a logo rather than a player's name because I don't want

to be looked at as just a girl who is wearing the Russell Wilson jersey because he's the hottest thing. Maybe when he is old and retired I could wear it.

But when I'm with our team's fans as a group, it's not a he/she thing, it's an us thing, a we thing. My experiences aren't gender dominated.

Tangler: I do get a little harassment sometimes, you do get a little being a woman having your opinions. There is a little bit of discrimination like, 'Some chick is trying to say something. She doesn't know anything about football,' but I can carry my own. They realize I do know a little bit.

I want to be a fan. I don't want to be a female fan. I tweeted out the other day, my biggest pet peeve is pink Broncos gear. I don't want to put it on my daughter. I want her in the team's colors.

Question 2: The League. How would you rate the league's performance in terms of respecting and promoting its female fans?

Anderson: I really don't know how to answer that because I haven't really seen anything that actually separates the males and the females. I guess they could do a little more that caters to the females. I'm not sure.

McDonald: I don't see a problem with it. It's great, especially with the Seahawks, they embrace it. Going to away games, here against the Carolina Panthers, they talk crap to us, but as far as the NFL itself, they get it.

Smith: I think they are doing a better job trying to get women involved. You'll see a lot more ladies on the field and more women showing up at all of the games. Women are becoming more high-profile now. You can also get a lot more women's gear than you could back in my day. My jerseys were men's jerseys, and I had to put them on like night shirts.

Tangler: I don't know if they've made any differentiating factors for women fans necessarily. I don't really know if they promote female fans or not, but I don't think that matters. I just look at myself as a fan. I don't want any special treatment at all. I do like the female fan club for my organization [Crush]. The Broncos do such a good job with that that I think some of the male fans feel jealous I have all these opportunities for autographs and things like that.

Question 3: The Debates. From Ray Rice to CTE, football has proven to be a violent sport both on and off the field. Have any of the recent debates given you pause? Have you felt any conflict between being a woman and supporting the sport?

Anderson: No, I have not had any mixed feelings at all when it came to these domestic violence incidents because it's not like it hasn't been happening before and it happens to a lot of people, both celebrities and normal people and in every sport and any other occupation. It's unfortunate that because they're celebrities they have their business plastered all over the media for everyone to see.

Brannon: There's all kinds of things. Aqib Talib with the shooting, I really didn't know what to think about that. These guys are role models. Kids look up to them. People know their names. If it was my neighbor you'd never hear about it, but because they are in the limelight, there's so much more pressure. But it'd never make me stop watching the game or pause to think I don't like the NFL.

The new rules, as far as concussions and trying to make it safer, my guy friends don't like that they can't hit as hard as before, but I don't want to see anyone get hurt.

Calpin: There is some stuff that needs to be addressed overall in sports in general. Players need to be held to a higher standard because kids are watching. Everything from domestic violence to drinking and driving to steroids.

As a mom I look at it all and say people need to be held more accountable. It bothers me because my kids are growing up watching this and somebody else's kids are growing up watching this. I get a little disillusioned, but at the same time some players are out there going to children's hospitals. Some players are doing amazing things so I try to focus on that more and as I teach my kids, there is good and bad in everything. We still have the power to do better as a society, and as a person we choose how we want to go and look at it.

McDonald: Being a woman, we've all got a little mommy figure in us I think, so I don't want to see any players hurt, but it hasn't bothered me. The putting hands on women though, that's not cool. I really do think they need to be harder on that if they can prove it. There are two sides to every story but if you can prove someone put hands on her, then I think they need to be punished. We did discuss the whole Hardy thing and the Adrian Peterson thing, but it doesn't really steer anybody away from watching. If a player on my team put his hands on a woman or a child and he came back, I don't know if I'd want to support that team or player any longer. That's where we are. It hasn't happened with Seattle. It seems like our coaches up there, we don't put up with any of that. I hope it doesn't happen. If it does I might be a little reluctant.

Smith: There are more penalties now which makes it easier to know your players are being protected. ... You support your team and you hope and pray they are not going to be in the media for the wrong reasons. The abuse, when you hear of a player that has attacked his wife or girlfriend, that gives you pause. You didn't

expect that. You thought they were above or beyond that. Sometimes we do put our players on a pedestal when we have to stop and realize they are just like everybody else.

Tangler: No, I actually don't care what they do in their personal lives. I like football so I'm not going to judge them. Why should Ray Rice's punishment be more from the NFL than it is legally? I thought he should have been able to play for free and have all that money and publicity go to a good cause.

We are not always the ones getting upset over domestic violence and concussions and things of that nature. We certainly don't like domestic violence, but that outrage—I just don't like that it's a generalization. What I didn't like was when [Cardinals coach Bruce Arians] made a comment about how it was because of women that we have all these concussion protocols, because of women not wanting their children to play football.

Question 4: The Game. How much conversation is there about preventing kids from playing football?

Calpin: As a nurse, I was an emergency room nurse, I saw things come in and I want to, like that old Charmin commercial, put my kids in bubble wrap, but I think it's good for them to learn the sport—get that team camaraderie and competition and sportsmanship.

McDonald: That's more of a media thing I think. I haven't had any conversations. I do have some kids in our group and they play.

Tangler: My sons just started tackle football. I think the media always incites things—sparks it up. I haven't watched the movie [*Concussion*] and I don't want to watch the movie. I love football. I don't want my son to get hurt but they have learned a lot. We'll take it as it comes. I was listening to local sports radio and Brandon Stokley was on there saying he almost feels like because he played the sport and knows how dangerous it was and what it feels like, that's why he opted out for his child. Maybe it's actually the men who understand how hard they hit, rather than the woman. I have one friend who is nervous about it, and another one who is like, 'You got to let them do it.' Definitely mixed views on that amongst my peers.

Question 5: The Future. Where do you see things heading for women in and around the NFL?

Anderson: Women's role in football has already changed. There are more women sports reporters and more women coaches as well. I would hope that they have

more professional women football teams and not just the ones inside arenas playing in bikinis. I just hope that it expands a whole lot more on and off the field.

Calpin: Honestly, I hope we are out there and not just in lingerie and lacy bras. I hope women are getting out there. I really think there are a lot of men that would cringe at that, but I think we need to get more involved. I see lots of sportscasters that are women who are not just pretty faces. I'm not going to be the one that gets out there—not at 47—but I hope someday somebody breaks that barrier to where woman can actually play not as a powderpuff team or a league that's sexualized. Maybe it'll be a female coach someday that eventually changes one level and then we see change at other levels.

It might set a role model for anybody in anything. We have a female running for president these days! Who knows what's next. Who knows what it would change. I just hope it would keep the integrity of the sport intact, regardless of what it is, because I love my football.

McDonald: Honestly I see a lot more women coming out now than I did before, especially single women. I see more and more women in Seattle and talking football on Facebook pages. The NFL only had smaller-size jerseys for women and now they are coming out with 2XL and 3XL. It's all going to grow and there will be as many women as men, I think.

Tangler: I think we've always been there and the more opportunities the team gives or supports these groups, you'll see it more. We're there. We've always been there.

So what's actually new about the NFL's new domestic violence policy? (Deadspin, August 28, 2014)

The most important thing to note about the NFL's new rules on domestic violence is that they are neither new nor are they rules. They are words strung together in such a way that people will respond by saying, "Wow, the NFL takes domestic violence seriously."

And it worked. In my earlier post immediately following the announcement, I referred to the "severe new penalties for domestic violence," but on further reflection, I got okey-doked too. Here's the relevant part of the letter Roger Goodell sent to owners today:

Effective immediately, violations of the Personal Conduct Policy regarding assault, battery, domestic violence or sexual assault that involve physical force will be subject to a suspension without pay of six games for a first offense, with consideration given to mitigating factors, as well as a longer suspension when circumstances warrant... A second offense will result in banishment from the NFL; while an individual may petition for reinstatement after one year, there will

be no presumption or assurance that the petition will be granted. These disciplinary standards will apply to all NFL personnel.

Please note that all this change does is sub in a loose baseline—six games plus or minus “mitigating factors”—for a previously undefined suspension length that could always have been as long as Roger Goodell wanted it to be. The NFL could have chosen to suspend Ray Rice for six games without passing these rules. The NFL could have suspended the next player to beat the shit out of his wife for six games, without needing to refer to any new rules.

Domestic violence offenses still fall under the league’s Personal Conduct Policy, with which the NFLPA inexplicably handed the NFL unilateral control over discipline not specifically covered in the CBA. Players will still have the right to appeal their punishments and likely get them reduced. Literally nothing has changed.

Well, that’s not precisely true. Now the NFL gets to see its name in headlines touting its zero tolerance policy for domestic violence. Look how many stories include the phrase “lifetime ban,” even though a second offense actually garners an “indefinite” suspension from which the player can apply for reinstatement after one year. Josh Gordon is currently serving the same “lifetime ban” for failing a second drug test for marijuana. At least hitting a bong is no longer worse in the league’s eyes than hitting a woman; it’s now equally bad.

But Goodell’s “Message: I care” announcement today isn’t about specifics; it’s about projecting an aura of authority, even in the midst of a frantic rowback on the NFL’s tone-deaf handling of the Rice case. We’re all complicit in allowing the league to present itself as a moral arbiter. Aaron Gordon nailed the dynamic earlier this month:

The personal conduct policy is a tremendously successful marketing effort which has resulted in people equating the NFL and Goodell himself with justice. Regardless of whether the NFL actually has the power to shift societal views, people believe it does, which puts it in rarified territory. It makes the NFL not just a sports league, but a cultural institution.

No one should be looking to the NFL or the sports world for ethical guidance on anything, to say nothing of subjects like domestic violence or recreational drug use, both sufficiently fucked up within our legal system. It’s nice that Goodell recognizes he tripped all over his own dick in the Rice matter, but don’t lose sight of the fact that today he’s nothing more than Moses coming down from the mountain, bearing a press release.

NFL announces new domestic violence policy (SB Nation, August 28, 2014)

NFL commissioner Roger Goodell was criticized earlier this summer for his handling of the discipline for Baltimore Ravens running back Ray Rice, who received only a two-

game suspension following his arrest for domestic violence. That criticism has been addressed with the announcement Thursday of a new domestic violence policy for the NFL.

Goodell sent a letter to the NFL owners, which you can read in its entirety below, outlining the stiffer penalties: a six-game suspension without pay for the first offense and a lifetime ban for a second offense. Goodell specified that these rules will apply to all NFL personnel, including executives and owners, not just players. A player who receives a lifetime ban can petition for reinstatement after one year.

Goodell admitted in the letter that he “didn’t get it right” when he handed out a two-game suspension to Rice earlier this summer.

“I take responsibility both for the decision and for ensuring that our actions in the future properly reflect our values,” Goodell said. “I didn’t get it right. Simply put, we have to do better. And we will.”

There are still some questions about what will qualify as a first offense and other details, but this is a strong statement by the NFL that it is committed to upholding tough standards for its players’ personal conduct.

The NFL Players Association released a statement, noting it will protect its members’ right to due process:

“We were informed today of the NFL’s decision to increase penalties on domestic violence offenders under the Personal Conduct Policy for all NFL employees. As we do in all disciplinary matters, if we believe that players’ due process rights are infringed upon during the course of the discipline, we will assert and defend our members’ rights”

Ray Rice elevator knockout Janay Palmer - Hits fiancée & punch | Punches KO REBLOP.com (ABC News, September 8, 2014)

Football star cut by the Ravens Tonight. Suspended by the NFL after a troubling new video has surfaced. You remember these images. Rice dragging his then fiancée out of an elevator. But tonight, a first time we’re seeing something else. What happened in the moments before and then what happened next. Now costing him his job. Tonight, the NFL taking action. What will authorities now do? ABC’s Ryan Smith.

The video chilling. Football star Ray Rice following his then fiancée Janay to an Atlantic City hotel elevator. Striking her once, then again, seemingly punching her so hard she hits a railing and is knocked out cold. You see her here, lying on the floor. Then slump near the elevator. Players today appalled. By early afternoon the Ravens had terminated Rice’s contract. The NFL suspending him indefinitely. The question for many tonight, what took so long? NFL commissioner Roger Goodell saying he never saw the video of

the assault, but he did see that other video released in February showing Rice dragging the unconscious Janay out of the elevator. Tonight, his jersey no longer for sale online on the NFL store.

If you care about women and still support the NFL, you are a hypocrite (Jezebel, September 8, 2014)

It's been well-established that NFL leadership doesn't give a shit about women, but with newly-released footage of Ray Rice punching his then-fiancée in the face prior to being gently wrist-slapped with a two-game suspension, one has to wonder: do NFL fans give a shit about women?

Of course there was outcry after Rice's suspension went down. I spent most of my life a sports fan surrounded by sports fans; I chose to attend college at a football school and come from a family of jocks. Almost everyone I know who is on Facebook and Twitter was fucking *livid* about how callous the NFL was in issuing punishment to Rice, and, in a more general sense, the NFL's pathetic history of ignoring or minimizing the seriousness of violence against women. Most of my friends and family don't fancy themselves to be assholes. Most of them actively try to be good, conscientious people who don't actively support blatantly socially destructive organizations, if they can help it.

Other people who seem interested in being decent people outside of my circle of friends and family also weighed in on the NFL's atrocious handling of the Rice suspension. TV hosts issued harsh reprimands to the suspension, thinkpieces pointed out that the NFL has a long and troubling history with domestic violence issues. People in positions of power, with audiences who ostensibly watch them because they prefer their punditry with a conscience, openly mused about how maybe the League is bad, and how Things Must Change.

But yesterday, many of the same people who were outraged about Rice back in May were posting social media update after grateful update that the bestest, funnest, sport in the world — NFL football, babyyyyy! — was finally back. And the ones who weren't celebratory were still watching, still pulling for their team, still swapping stats and real and virtual high fives and Surrender Cobras and general sporty giddiness.

Why in the hell would the NFL change a thing about the way it disciplines its players if no matter what the League does, its harshest critics will continue to give the sport their eyeballs, money, and attention? If the Ray Rice incident didn't dent the NFL's ratings, sales, or audience, if seriously fucked up behavior by League leadership doesn't have any consequences to their bottom line, then what was the Ray Rice outcry to NFL leadership but temporarily annoying publicity?

I'm assuming here that most people who were outraged—OUTRAGED!—by the NFL's leniency on Ray Rice and others have at least a passing familiarity with how capitalism

works. When you pay for an officially-licensed product, or a ticket to an event, or contribute to the audience of a game so that the entity behind the game can charge advertisers more money to advertise products during the game, you are contributing to the entity behind the event or license in a monetary way, even if you feel kind of bad about it when you're doing it. Advertisers can't tell the difference between hate-watchers and regular watchers. A ticket or merchandise sale to a morally conflicted fan generates the same revenue for the League than one from a fan who thinks punching women is just fine and dandy, that it's totally cool that NFL brass had seen the video before handing down a 2-game suspension, and that this Tweet, sent out by the Baltimore Ravens' official Twitter account, isn't at all fucked up.

But if you consider yourself a moral consumer who cares about equality, there is no excuse for continuing to be a fan of the NFL. "Not all NFL players!" is not an excuse when leadership is rotten from the top down. "But I'm barely contributing anything bad!" is as valid an excuse for continuing to support the NFL as it is for littering. No matter how fun it is, how thrilling, if you're a person who claims to care about women, watching the NFL is morally indefensible until something changes. No one can be perfectly morally consistent at all times or completely ethical in everything they consume (that would be exhausting), but this one seems like a gimme.

If you won't eat at Chik-fil-A because the company's leadership doesn't support gay marriage (because you believe in equality!) but you still watch NFL football after its leadership made it clear for the millionth time that it shelters and supports domestic abusers, you are a fucking hypocrite.

If you wouldn't think of buying a ticket to a Chris Brown concert because of his history of violence and abuse but you still watch NFL football, you are a fucking hypocrite.

If you buy cage-free eggs because you're against cruelty but you won't stop watching the NFL, a league with a documented history of turning a blind eye to cruelty to human beings, you are a fucking hypocrite.

If you couldn't possibly imagine ever paying to watch a Mike Tyson or Floyd Mayweather fight because of their egregious histories of violence against women, but you still watch the NFL, you are a fucking hypocrite.

If you hated *Two and a Half Men* before it was cool because Charlie Sheen is a piece of shit domestic abuser but you still watch the NFL, you are a fucking hypocrite.

If you wouldn't buy a ticket to a Roman Polanski film festival because you couldn't imagine supporting a person with his history but you are still supporting the NFL, you are a fucking hypocrite.

If you considered boycotting pasta maker Barilla after its CEO made some homophobic comments because you are a staunch believer in human rights but you will not abandon your NFL fandom because ugh it's just so fun, you are a fucking hypocrite.

If you won't buy your groceries from Eden Foods or your craft supplies from Hobby Lobby because the CEOs don't want to provide insurance to female employees that covers contraception because *you support equality for women*, but you still support the NFL, you are a fucking hypocrite.

I realize that letting go of fandom is hard (hell, I was a football fan for most of my life, and I still have stress dreams about Gary Anderson sometimes and I long for the days when I didn't know enough about the League to be morally conflicted). But if all you're doing in response to the NFL's tone-deaf attitude toward violence against women is complain about it without changing your behavior as a consumer, then your complaints only serve to paint yourself as a person who appears to care.

Without actions to back them up, moral declarations are just as empty and self-serving as an NFL press release

Keith Olbermann: On Ray Rice situation (The Resistance, September 8, 2014)

Keith Olbermann adamantly believes that NFL commissioner, Roger Goodell, should resign from his position and Ray Rice should be banned from the league for life.

"We begin tonight on the unavoidable and simple truth that intentionally or by neglect the Atlantic County New Jersey District Attorney's office, the Baltimore Ravens, the National Football League, and commissioner, Roger Goodell, have conducted a cover-up of Ray Rice's brutal assault of his then fiancé on February 15th."

"There is no other conclusion possible. Each body. Each leading individual involved came to a judicial conclusion on what had happened to Janay Palmer, and what should happen to Ray Rice. And each through deception or incompetence mislead the public damaged the efforts of every man and every woman in this country seeking to merely slow down the murderous epidemic of domestic violence, and made a mockery of the process of those who batter those they claim to love are to be brought to justice. And not one of them, not commissioner, Goodell, not NFL senior Vice President, Adolpho Birch, not NFL Chief Counsel, Jeff Pash, not Baltimore team President, Richard Cass, not Baltimore General Manager, Ozzie Newsome, not Assistant Prosecutor, Diane Ruberton, of Atlantic County New Jersey, not Prosecutor, Jim McClain, not Superior Court Judge, Michael Donio, not Ray Rice himself. No matter what actions were taken today against Rice, nor what might be taken in the future, none of them have any remaining credibility and each must leave or be expelled from their current positions."

“And despite the obsession of the moment, it does not truly matter whether they have seen this video before today. The league, the team, the prosecutors, either white-washed Ray Rice’s brutal assault without ever having seen this video. Or, they saw the video and white-washed Rice’s brutal assault anyway.”

NFL players, media members react to new Ray Rice video on Twitter (Sports Illustrated, September 8, 2014)

On Monday morning, a video of Baltimore Ravens running back Ray Rice punching his then-fiancée Janay Palmer in an Atlantic City casino elevator in February was published by TMZ.

Rice had previously been suspended two games by NFL commissioner Roger Goodell after he was charged with third-degree aggravated assault. Rice was accepted into a pretrial diversion program that will allow the charges to be dropped upon completion.

Since handing Rice the two-game ban, Goodell has changed the NFL’s policy for domestic violence offenders. Under the new policy, a first-time violation of the league’s Personal Conduct Policy—regarding assault, battery, domestic violence or sexual assault that involves physical force—will result in a six-game suspension. A second offense will result in a lifetime ban from the NFL.

Current and former NFL players, media members and other NFL figures have taken to Twitter to post their reaction to the new video. Warning: NSFW language below.

Denver Broncos defensive tackle Terrance Knighton:

That man should be thrown out the the nfl and thrown into jail. Shame on those deciding his punishment. Smh –Terrance Knighton (@MrKnighton2u), September 8, 2014

If there’s anyway to open that case up and give this guy the punishment he deserves, it NEEDS to be done. –Terrance Knighton (@MrKnighton2u), September 8, 2014

As players we must speak up. Stand up for what’s right. I don’t give a damn who u are or how much money you make. No place for this. –Terrance Knighton (@MrKnighton2u), September 8, 2014

This video makes me sick to my stomach. –Terrance Knighton (@MrKnighton2u), September 8, 2014

As players we always speak on how we are unfairly treated, well now what?
 – Terrance Knighton (@MrKnighton2u) September 8, 2014

Washington Redskins defensive end Chris Baker:

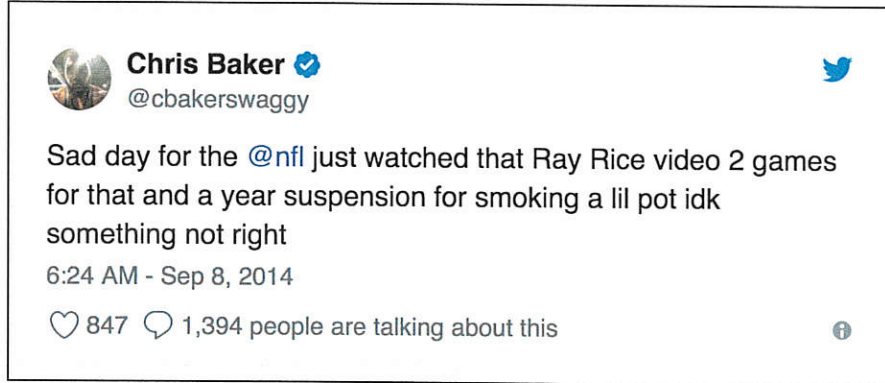


Figure 12. Chris Baker tweet regarding full video of Rice assault (cbakerswaggy, 2014).

Green Bay Packers guard T.J. Lang:

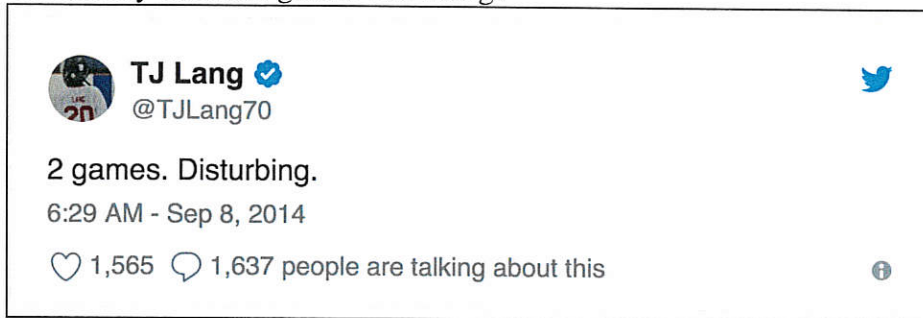


Figure 13. TJ Lang tweet regarding full video of Rice assault (TJLang70, 2014).

Denver Broncos cornerback Chris Harris:



Figure 14. Chris Harris tweet regarding full video of Rice assault (ChrisHarrisJr, 2014).

Redskins long snapper Nick Sundberg:

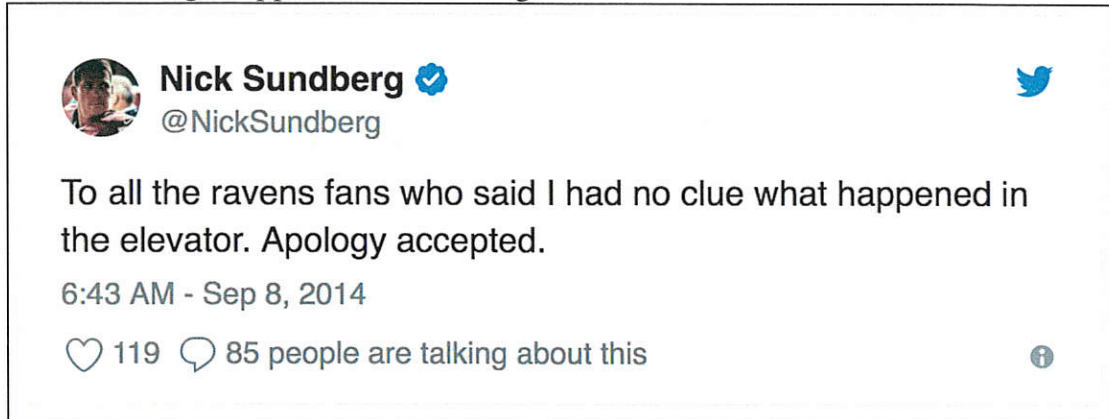


Figure 15. Nick Sundberg tweet regarding full video of Rice assault (NickSundberg, 2014).

Pittsburgh Steelers safety Will Allen:



Figure 16. Will Allen tweet regarding full video of Rice assault (WillAllenWAF, 2014).

New York Giants linebacker Spencer Paysinger:

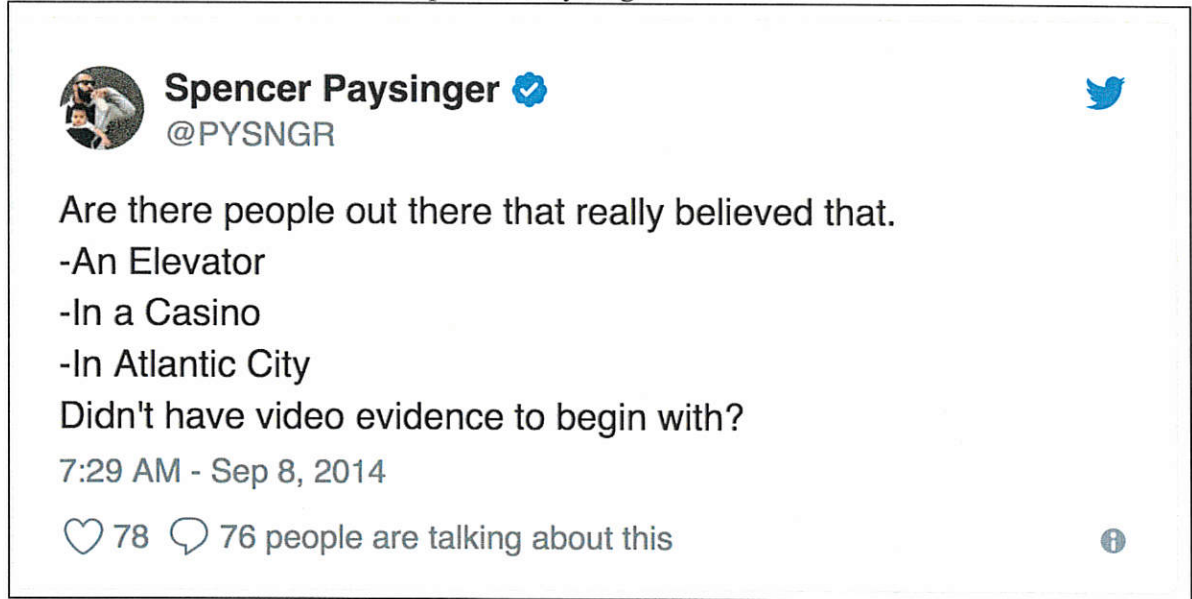


Figure 17. Spencer Paysinger tweet regarding full video of Rice assault (PYSNGR, 2014).

Redskins defensive back Duke Ihenacho:

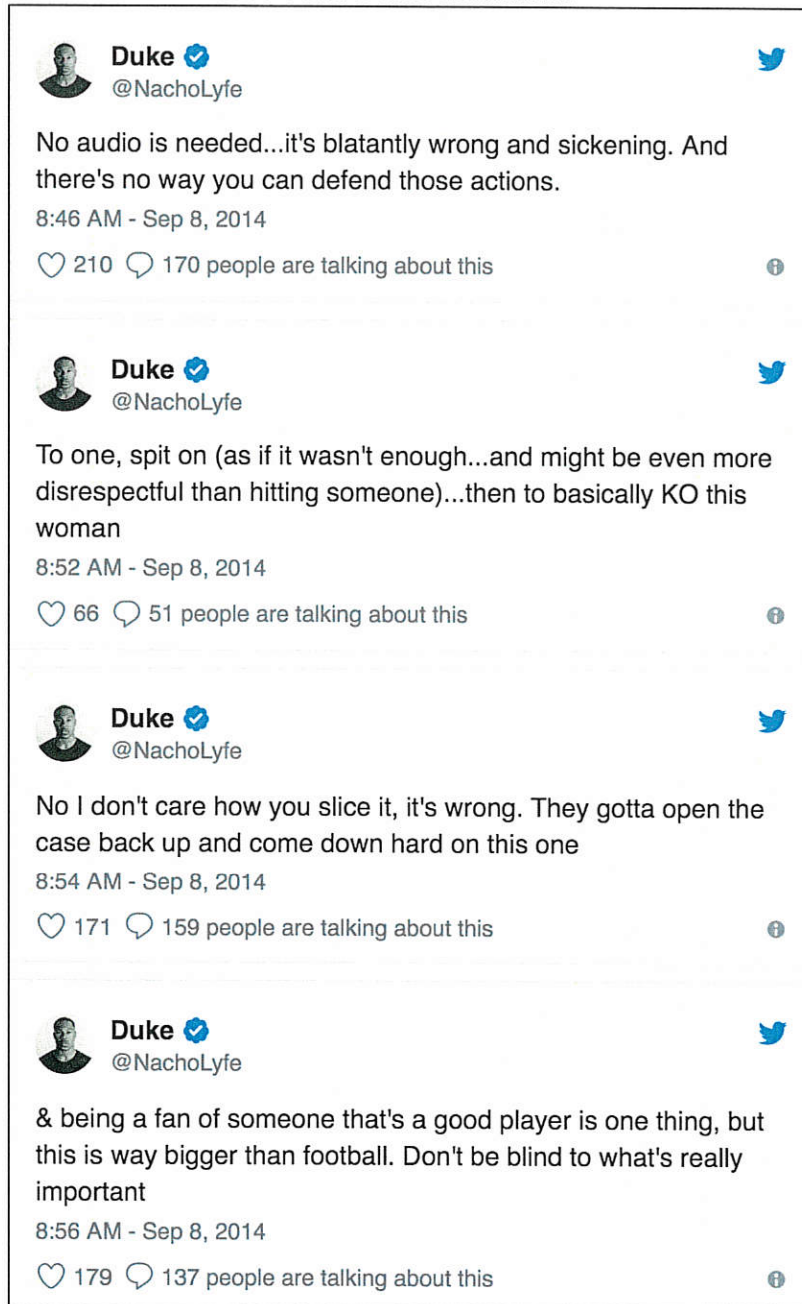


Figure 18. Duke Ihenacho tweets regarding full video of Rice assault (NachoLyfe, 2014a–d).

Former New York Giants center Shaun O'Hara:



Figure 19. Shaun O'Hara tweet regarding full video of Rice assault (ShaunOHara60, 2014).

Former NFL linebacker Scott Fujita:



Figure 20. Scott Fujita tweet regarding full video of Rice assault (sfujita55, 2014b).

Former linebacker London Fletcher:

@nflcommish to say you got that wrong is an understatement. Very disappointed in you. Wow...unbelievable. –London Fletcher (@LFletcher59) September 8, 2014

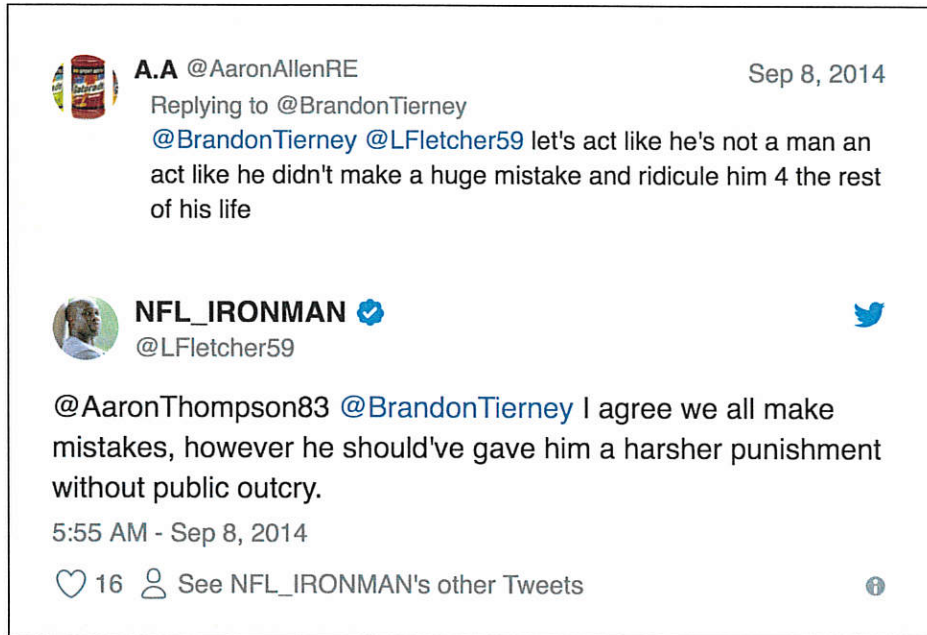


Figure 21. London Fletcher tweet regarding full video of Rice assault (LFletcher59, 2014b).

Former quarterback Sage Rosenfels:

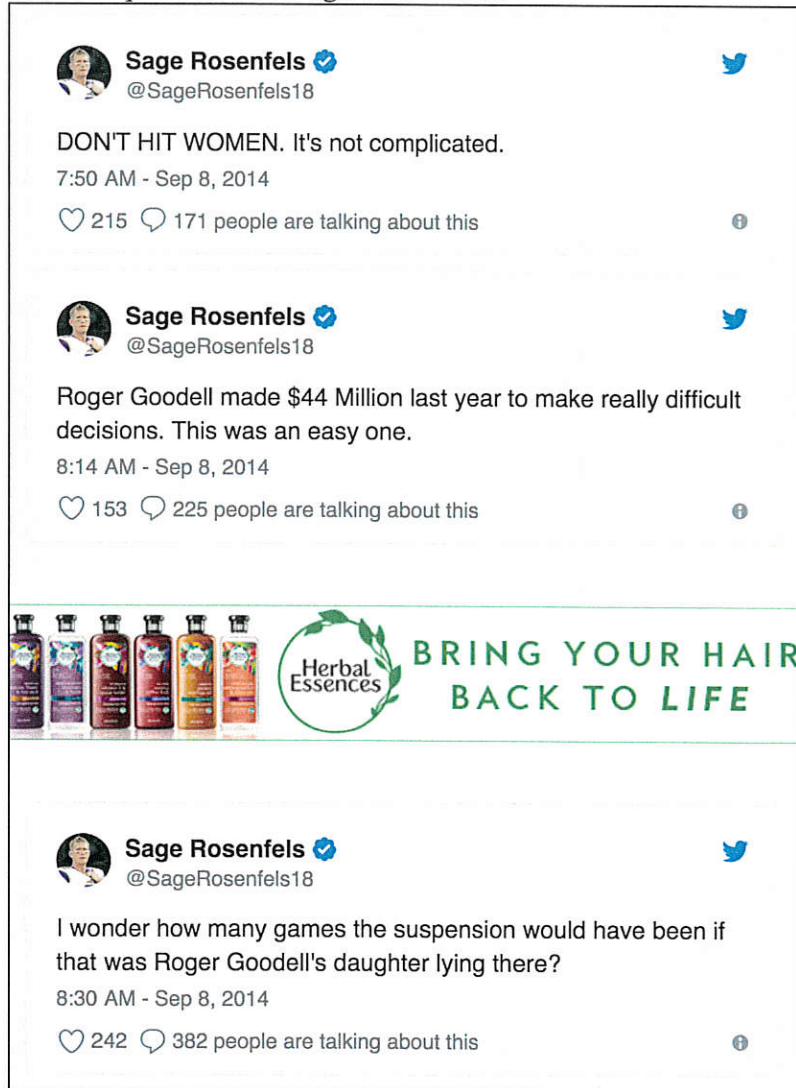


Figure 22. Sage Rosenfels tweets regarding full video of Rice assault (SageRosenfels18, 2014a–c).

Former linebacker Keith Bulluck:



Figure 23. Keith Bulluck tweet regarding full video of Rice assault (kbull53, 2014).

Former guard Ross Tucker:

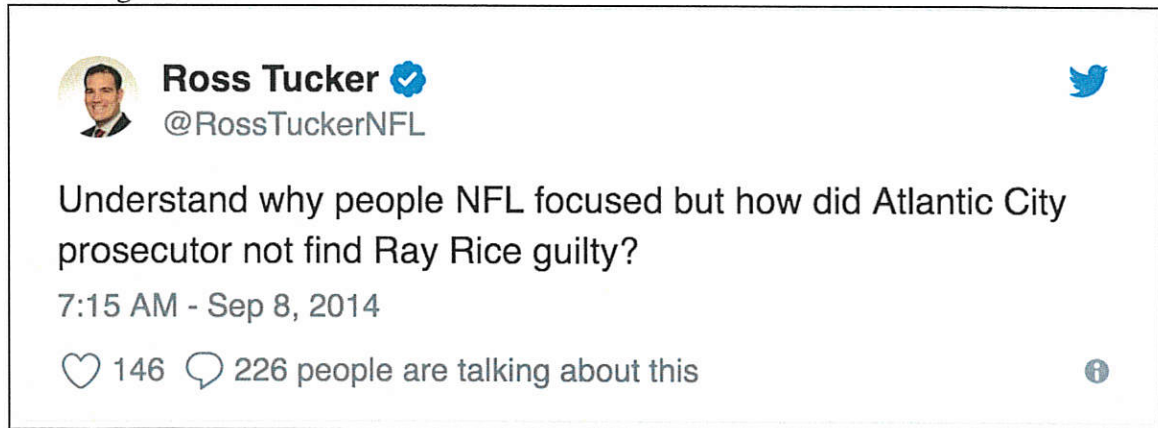






Figure 24. Ross Tucker tweet regarding full video of Rice assault (RossTuckerNFL, 2014).



Former defensive back Mark McMillian:


Mark McMillian 
 @MarkMcMillian29

As I stated months ago the Ray Rice suspension was never handled properly the NFL & the commissioner is on the clock. SMH



6:03 AM - Sep 8, 2014



 9  See Mark McMillian's othe...


Mark McMillian 
 @MarkMcMillian29

I feel bad for the kids who have to attend school & watch all the video. For all the females of domestic violence PLEASE GET HELP



6:04 AM - Sep 8, 2014



 4  See Mark McMillian's othe...


Mark McMillian 
 @MarkMcMillian29

No way I would attend a game with that young man playing the sport so many before us laid it all on the line for [#StopDomesticViolence](#)


6:58 AM - Sep 8, 2014

 7  See Mark McMillian's othe...




Mark McMillian 
 @MarkMcMillian29



You telling me if this was your Mom or daughter you wouldn't be outraged this young man should be done [#NFL](#) WOW
m.bleacherreport.com/articles/21909
 ...

7:03 AM - Sep 8, 2014



Video of Ray Rice Incident wi...
 Updates from Wednesday, Sept. 10 Rob Maaddi of the Associated
bleacherreport.com

 3  See Mark McMillian's othe...


Mark McMillian 
 @MarkMcMillian29

It's so wrong many things wrong with this situation. Spit, punch, trying to wake her up like she passed out on her own it's crazy SMH WOW

9:51 AM - Sep 8, 2014



 1  See Mark McMillian's othe...



Figure 25. MarkMcMillian tweets regarding full video of Rice assault (MarkMcMillian29, 2014a–g).

Former running back Derrick Ward:



Figure 26. Derrick Ward tweets regarding full video of Rice assault (derrickward32, 2014a–g).

Former Minnesota Vikings punter Chris Kluwe:



Figure 27. Chris Kluwe tweet regarding full video of Rice assault (ChrisWarcraft, 2014).

Former offensive lineman LeCharles Bentley:



Figure 28. LeCharles Bentley tweet regarding full video of Rice assault (LeCharlesBent65, 2014a–f).

Former safety Hamza Abdullah:



Figure 29. Hamza Abdullah tweet regarding full video of Rice assault (HamzaAbdullah21, 2014).

Former tackle Wade Smith:



Figure 30. Wade Smith tweet regarding full video of Rice assault (Smitty74allday, 2014).

Former defensive tackle Trevor Law:



Figure 31. Trevor Law tweet regarding full video of Rice assault (TrevorLaws, 2014).

Former tight end Tom Crabtree:

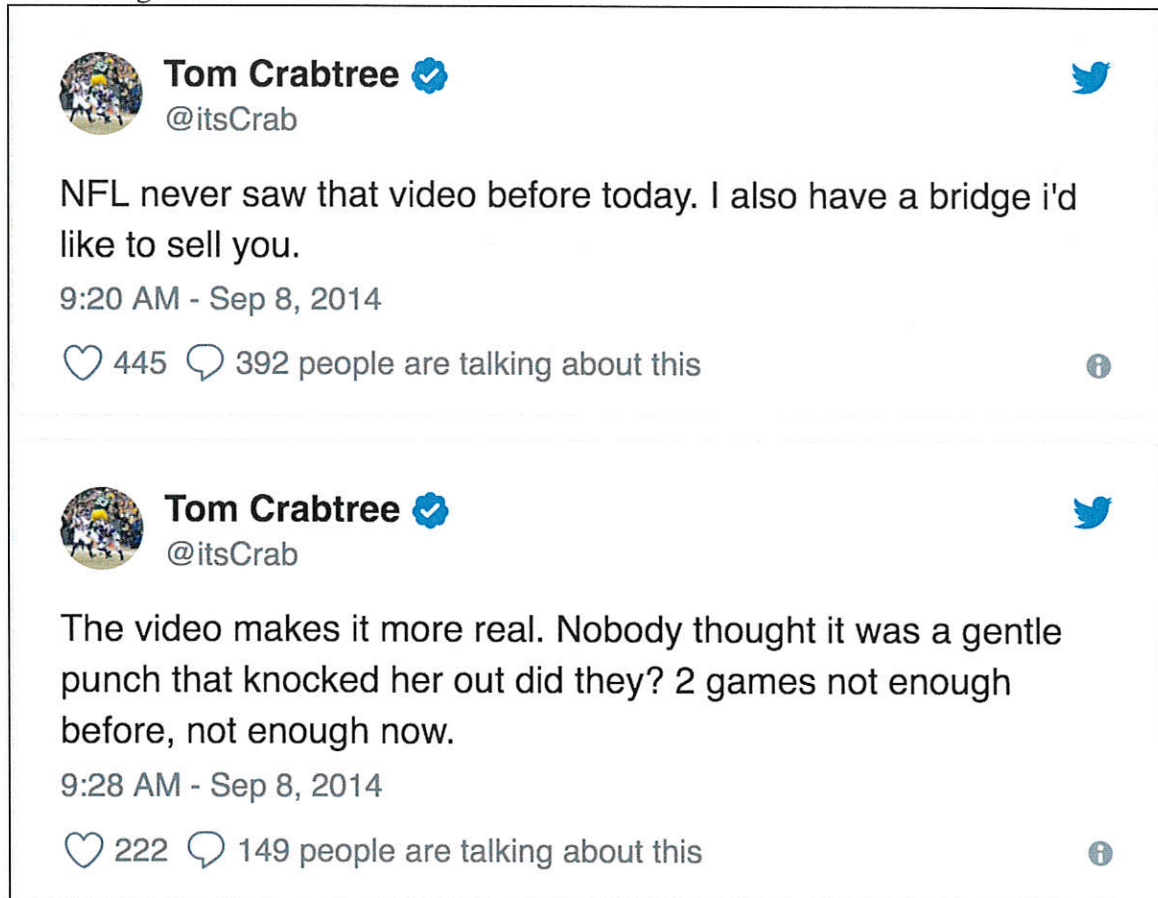


Figure 32. Tom Crabtree tweet regarding full video of Rice assault (itsCrab, 2014a-b).

Former New York Jets receiver Jordan White:

0 Respect for Ray Rice –Jordan White (@_JordanWhite) September 8, 2014

Former quarterback Brady Quinn:



Figure 33. Brady Quinn tweet regarding full video of Rice assault (3rd_Goal, 2014).

Former linebacker Coy Wire:

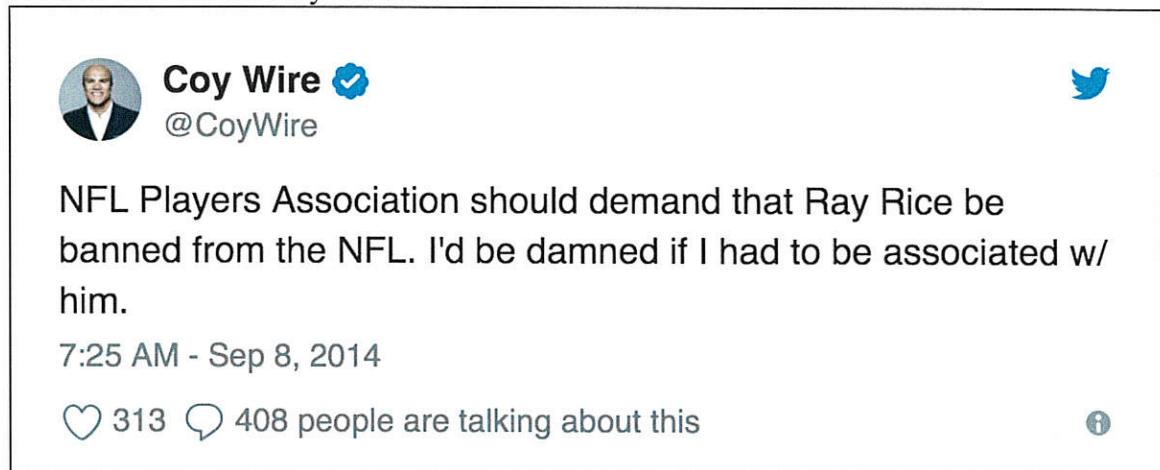


Figure 34. Coy Wire tweet regarding full video of Rice assault (CoyWire, 2014).

Former cornerback D.J. Moore:



Figure 35. D.J. Moore tweet regarding full video of Rice assault (DJMoore30, 2014).

Former punter Reggie Hodges:



Figure 36. Reggie Hodges tweet regarding full video of Rice assault (Reggie_Hodges, 2014).

Former quarterback Charlie Batch:



Figure 37. Charlie Batch tweet regarding full video of Rice assault (CharlieBatch16, 2014).

Former Dallas Cowboys receiver Jesse Holley:

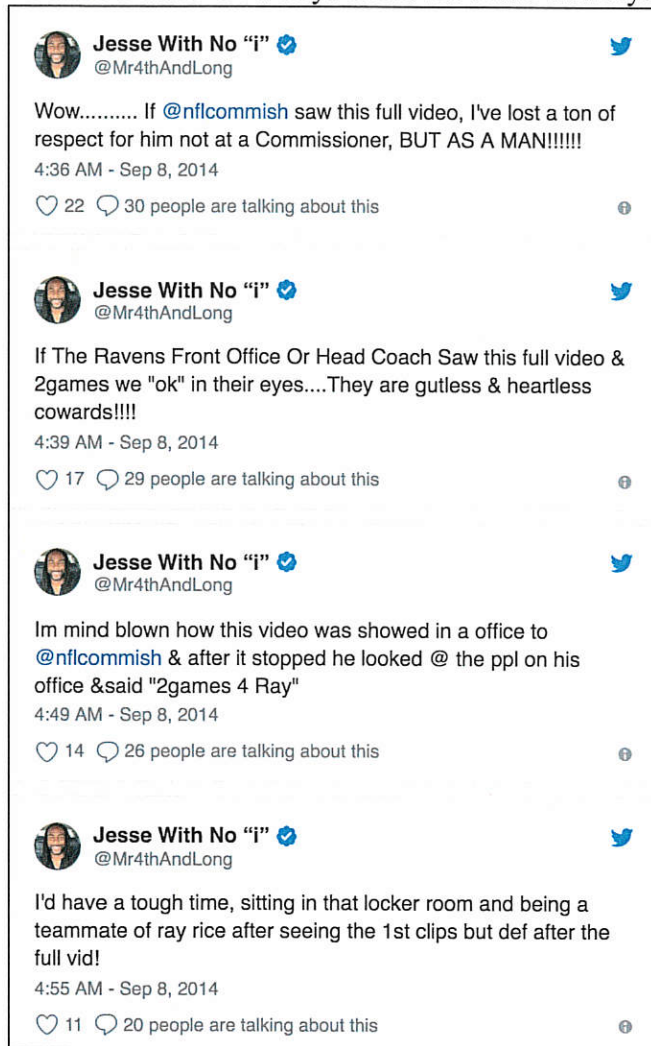


Figure 38. Jesse Holley tweets regarding full video of Rice assault (Mr4thAndLong, 2014a–d).

Former running back Kahlil Bell:



Figure 39. Kahlil Bell tweets regarding full video of Rice assault (KahlilBell32, 2014a–b).

Sports Illustrated writer Robert Klemko:



Figure 40. Robert Klemko tweets regarding full video of Rice assault (RobertKlemko, 2014a–b).

ESPN reporter Adam Schefter:

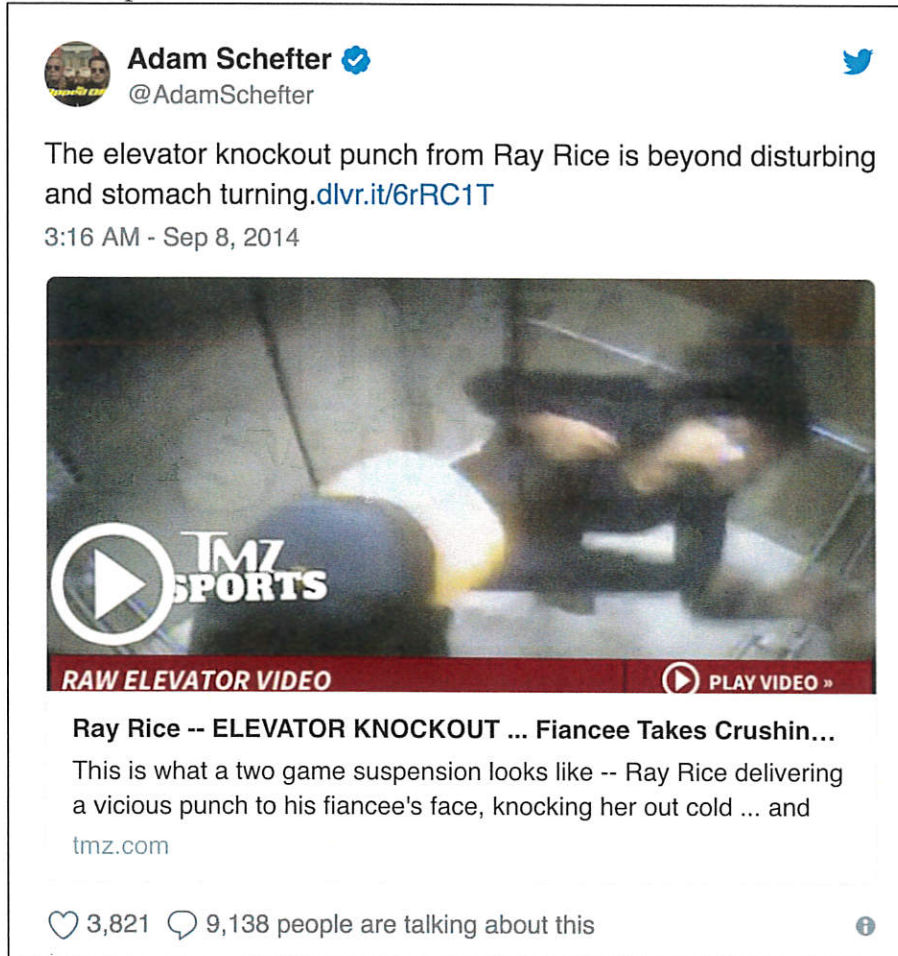


Figure 41. Adam Schefter tweet regarding full video of Rice assault (AdamSchefter, 2014).

ESPN's Bill Simmons:



Figure 42. Bill Simmons tweet regarding full video of Rice assault (BillSimmons, 2014).

New York Times sports reporter Sam Borden:



Figure 43. Sam Borden tweet regarding full video of Rice assault (SamBorden, 2014).

Former NFL defensive tackle Travis Johnson:

Godell,Media,People what the hell did y'all think happened on that elevator? She was freaking sleep! She didn't break a pump! & hit her head
 –Travis Johnson (@trapj99) September 8, 2014

UPDATE: NFL announces that Ray Rice has been suspended indefinitely
<https://twitter.com/SportsCenter/status/509049814232080384> (UltraViolet, September 8, 2014)

Culture of blaming the victim is root cause of failure for NFL, Ravens in Ray Rice case
 (Yahoo! Sports, September 8, 2014)

Whenever there's an allegation of domestic abuse, defenders of the accused bring up due process. In light of Ray Rice being cut by the Baltimore Ravens on Monday, hours after TMZ published a video of the running back assaulting his wife in an elevator, consider the completely undue process Janay Palmer has endured over the past several months. Consider how much hurt and humiliation it took for this sorry semblance of a resolution to be reached:

Palmer was victimized by her then fiancé punching her in the face.

She was immediately victimized again, by Rice failing to comfort or console her or even cover up her exposed legs as she lay unconscious in an opened elevator. Rice, who crouches for a living, didn't even bend over to look at her.

She was victimized by the Ravens rushing not to assist her, a member of their football family who had been assaulted, but to their star player. Palmer's assault was termed a "distraction."

She was victimized by being forced to sit up in front of the media and apologize for her role in being punched in the face.

She was victimized by Rice's lawyer's disgusting "complete hypothetical," wherein it was suggested that it was she who instigated and Rice who defended himself.

She was victimized by the justice system, which somehow didn't pursue full charges against Rice.

She was victimized by the NFL's justice system, which somehow didn't see enough evidence to suspend Rice for more than two games. Now the league is being loudly questioned over why it hadn't seen the tape before issuing punishment. If Major League Baseball was able to get evidence during the Biogenesis scandal, why couldn't the NFL get a tape from a hotel?

She was victimized by Ravens fans, who cheered Rice upon his return to the field, where he was asked on TV what "encouraging words" his wife had for him before getting this ovation.

And there would be one more victimization: the footage of the punch. Palmer was assaulted again Monday morning, in a brutal invasion of her privacy. And it was that final intrusion that woke up a world that had slumbered through her ordeal.

This undue process happened because it was comforting to think there were two sides to this story. Many people didn't really want to see that video. They wanted to believe Rice was attacked by Palmer and did something to warrant being punched in the face. From the moment part of the video became public over the summer until Monday morning, it was easy to put some blame on Janay Palmer.

The woman always gets the burden of proof and the burden of pain. The woman is always cast as the gold digger, the mentally imbalanced stalker, the inappropriate dresser. The woman is always the provocateur.

If Palmer didn't have her privacy invaded—if Rice's punch happened in their non-videotaped home—he would still be a hero and she would still be the hero's suffering wife.

How do we know this? Well, look at Floyd Mayweather. He's been convicted of domestic violence (and recently accused again of troubling behavior) and there will be plenty of cheers for him this weekend. There were plenty of cheers for San Francisco 49ers defensive lineman Ray McDonald when he played against the Dallas Cowboys on Sunday despite being arrested for allegedly abusing his pregnant girlfriend. And there were plenty of cheers on Sunday for Carolina Panthers defensive tackle Greg Hardy, who was convicted this summer for assaulting his girlfriend.

The details of the Hardy case are arguably more appalling than that of the Rice incident. Hardy's girlfriend, Nicole Holder, testified that Hardy "looked me in my eyes and he told me he was going to kill me. I was so scared I wanted to die. When he loosened his grip slightly, I said, 'Just do it. Kill me.'"

That came after the testimony of Hardy throwing Holder into a bathtub, tossing her onto a futon covered with rifles, slamming a toilet seat cover onto her arm, dragging her by her hair, and putting his hands around her throat.

Hardy is 6-foot-4, 275 pounds.

His defense attorney, per the Charlotte Observer, "described Holder as an erratic young woman desperate to be back at Hardy's side and in the limelight that commands. He said she was high on hours of drinking and buzzing on cocaine when she flew into a jealous rage after Hardy told her to leave the apartment."

Can you really blame the lawyer for casting a woman in this light? After all, it works.

Hardy was convicted by a judge, exercised his right to a jury trial, and then was further protected by the Panthers, who restricted questions from media about the case. He played in the season opener against Tampa Bay, a day before Rice was suspended.

Place the blame on any institution here: the Panthers or Ravens, the NFL, the legal system, or the media. But this isn't an institutional failure. It's a societal failure. We don't believe women. We think they're wrong and we have to be convinced they are right. It took weeks of humiliation and a videotape before Janay Palmer got some justice, and it isn't much justice.

According to a 2013 story in *The New Yorker*, "One in every four women is a victim of domestic physical violence at some point in her life, and the Justice Department estimates that three women and one man are killed by their partners every day. [Roughly eighty-five per cent of the victims of domestic violence are women.] Between 2000 and 2006, thirty-two hundred American soldiers were killed; during that period, domestic homicide in the United States claimed ten thousand six hundred lives."

Yet the victimization continues because the burden of proof continues to be misplaced. Why didn't Janay Palmer simply dump Ray Rice? If he was that bad, she wouldn't have married him.

But that's even more victimization—another part of what *The New Yorker* describes as "a deep cultural misunderstanding of how violence operates. We assume that victims incite abuse, or that if the situation at home was truly threatening they would leave."

Here again, it's on the victim. It's the woman who should take action. It's the woman who needs to solve her own problem.

Janay Palmer was helpless in that elevator, helpless as she lay unconscious, helpless when placed in front of the nation's media, helpless to prevent the onslaught of judgment, and helpless to keep the world from viewing her assault. She is only one of millions of women who are helpless.

Their undue process goes on and on.

Ravens cut running back Ray Rice after domestic violence video is released (Yahoo! Sports, September 8, 2014)

All the support the Baltimore Ravens gave Ray Rice this offseason as he dealt with his domestic violence incident evaporated after TMZ released video of the running back knocking out his wife.

The team cut him on Monday afternoon.



Figure 44. Baltimore Ravens tweet regarding Rice's release from the team (Ravens, 2014).

Just over 20 minutes later, the NFL responded as well:

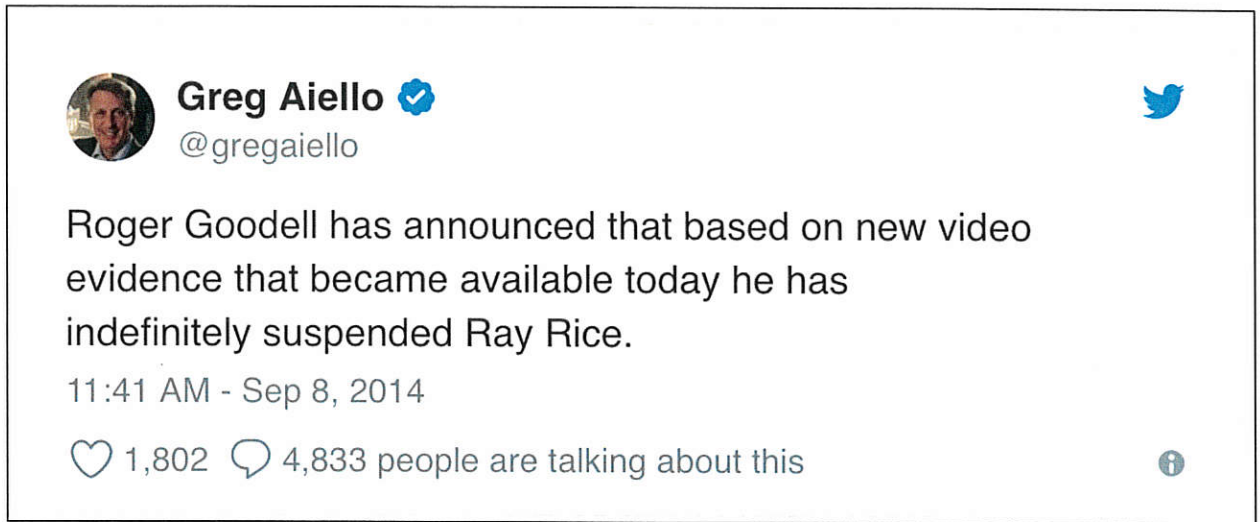


Figure 45. Greg Aiello tweet regarding NFL's decision to indefinitely suspend Rice (gregaiello, 2014).

That's how powerful the video of the incident is. There was no way the Ravens could keep Rice around any longer.

Just a few months ago, members of the Ravens roster and front office were singing a different tune:

Haloti Ngata, defensive tackle, according to the Ravens website: "He's a great guy. Always been a great guy. Jokes around, has fun. He's the same guy."

Ozzie Newsome, Ravens general manager: "We respect the efforts Ray has made to become the best partner and father he can be. That night was not typical of the Ray Rice we know and respect."

John Harbaugh, head coach, in March: "He will be part of our team. He's a person of character. The thing that's really important is to be able to support the person without condoning the action. He makes a mistake. There's no justifying what happened. When you drink too much in public, those kind of things happen."

Those are supportive comments from three different levels of the organization, and they're just a sampling. The Ravens went out of their way to support Rice this offseason, even after he was suspended two games by the NFL.

Maybe public pressure on Monday got to the team. The outrage over Rice was fierce on Monday after the video was released by TMZ. Maybe the Ravens didn't realize how ugly the incident was, although that's dubious considering everyone knew for months that Rice knocked out his then-fiancée, and it's tough to think the team didn't realize that a

NFL running back knocking out a woman was a disgusting act before seeing the actual video of it.

Whatever the reason for the 180-degree turn in support, the Ravens gave up on Rice on Monday. It's hard to imagine, after the video came out and current and former NFL players strongly spoke out against Rice, that any other team would welcome him in its locker room.

I'm a domestic violence survivor and I don't know how to stop watching football (Daily Dot, September 9, 2014)

Fandom is hard to give up.

My memory is impeccable. I can map out exactly where Reggie Miller was in the backcourt when he hit the game-winning three-pointer over Michael Jordan to tie up the 1998 Eastern Conference finals (three steps behind the line, top right of the key, it was perfect). I remember every trick play (there were three), and how many seconds were left on the clock when they decided Hail Marys were the way to win a game (18 seconds).

My ex-boyfriend used to tease me that I didn't remember meeting him at a party a year before we began dating, drunk on wine coolers and my own ego of being a 20-something who wasn't interested in his small talk, but I do. I remember our first date, even though it was unremarkable. I remember skipping the healthier salad option because I can never turn down congealed broccoli and cheese soup, even though I've had roughly 1,300 bowls of it in my life. I know exactly what Tim Lincecum's ERA was the first of many nights we'd brave traffic up to Elysian Parkway to watch the Giants beat the Dodgers, and how he would lean in every few minutes and tell me that my hair smelled like pomegranates, even though we both knew it smelled like Head & Shoulders.

What I don't remember? Exactly when he started hitting me or why I was okay with it. That's where things get a little fuzzy.

I stayed, for longer than I should have. It wasn't always bad. We were both passionate and quick-tempered—an empirical fact. There was nothing more I loved than arguing with him, and all of our fights were stupid—the kinds of things you fight about in your young 20s, like “You literally never like my Facebook photos” or “You promised you wouldn't start drinking vodka this early.”

When the fights started getting physical, I chalked it up to the fact that neither of us was immune to hot-headedness or being passionate. He only drank whiskey once in a blue moon, I'd tell my friends. (That the blue moon lunar cycle was now a truncated seven days, I conveniently left out.) I bruise easily; anemia runs in my family. (It doesn't.) He tells me my hair smells like pomegranates, even when it clearly smells medicinal, at best. He gets every part of me.

Even now, years later, I still have more fond memories of our time together than I do bad ones, and I wonder what he's doing these days, a lot. I wonder if the issue was timing, even though I know that the issue was his ability to slam me against a wall if he didn't like that I was hassling him with my feelings. I miss him.

But still, I left. I was lucky, I was young, and I had an excellent group of friends who rotated in shifts of keeping me company, while my friend Monica and I sat on a deck all summer in Beverly Hills, both recently unemployed, drinking sangria, smoking Parliament Lights, and sleeping a lot—anything to avoid having to think about the relationships we just left, even though we knew we were all the better for having left them. I went to therapy. I started volunteering with domestic violence organizations, and talking to other people, women and children, who went through far worse than I did. I found feminism, a concept I had previously tried to avoid, because Beyoncé hadn't made it cool to be a feminist back then.

I moved to New York and joined the board of a different domestic violence organization, because helping other women deal with what I dealt with is that important to me, and I started writing, a lot, and publicly: about feminism, about women's issues. About all of it.

And then Ray Rice happened.

I love sports. I possess exactly zero athletic ability whatsoever, but I grew up watching basketball until my eyes bled. I paid \$200 for cellular data just to stream last year's Super Bowl on my phone, on a tour bus in Delhi, while on vacation. I found my pros and cons list for moving to New York recently, and in the cons column was a very serious "Monday Night Football won't be over until past midnight, it's a work day." And then Ray Rice beat his then fiancée, now-wife Janay Palmer to the point of unconsciousness, and the NFL made a mockery of his punishment. Ray McDonald of the 49ers abused his pregnant girlfriend just weeks later and was still allowed to play in the season opener.

And suddenly, being an NFL fan and being a woman, just became a lot harder. Being an NFL fan, being a woman, and a survivor of domestic violence? Near impossible. Jezebel's Erin Ryan was pitch-perfect in her recent piece, "If You Care and Still Support the NFL, You're a Hypocrite." Ryan wrote:

But if you consider yourself a moral consumer who cares about equality, there is no excuse for continuing to be a fan of the NFL. 'Not all NFL players!' is not an excuse when leadership is rotten from the top down. 'But I'm barely contributing anything bad!' is as valid an excuse for continuing to support the NFL as it is for littering. No matter how fun it is, how thrilling, if you're a person who claims to care about women, watching the NFL is morally indefensible until something changes. No one can be perfectly morally consistent at all times or completely ethical in everything they consume (that would be exhausting), but this one seems like a gimme.

And she's right, in every way. (Her essay should be required reading around America, for what it's worth.) The NFL fucked up. The Baltimore Ravens fucked up. The San Francisco 49ers are currently fucking up. As Keith Olbermann said last night, this was not a mistake, this was a cover-up, and every single person involved should resign.

Yet I'm still sitting here, trying to find a rationalization to be able to be a feminist and an NFL fan, and convincing myself that boycotts aren't the right way to go, discourse is. That I need to keep watching, no matter what my moral compass and charitable obligations would tell me, because I write a weekly column about football and as a freelance writer I can't turn down that money. Ruminating on whether I can stop watching football entirely but still play fantasy, because I've enjoyed domination in my fantasy league for so many years now, and that's how I stay close to friends I'm 3,000 miles away from.

But that's not really the reason, you know? I know the real reason: Watching football at a bar with all my friends is fun. Living and dying by third downs, as if I'm the one facing pressure in the pocket myself instead of Jake Locker, is fun. Talking about pre-snap adjustments as my go-to move to get cute former frat boys to make out with me is fun. Standing up for women, even when it's tough? That's not fun.

Erin Ryan is right, I am a hypocrite. Fandom is hard to give up, and even though it should be crystal fucking clear, I don't know how to walk away from all I've known and loved on Thursdays, Sundays, and Mondays. Much like the compromises I used to make for my boyfriend, I find myself making similar ones to keep watching football week in and week out. I'm constantly paralyzed by the fact that I post stories to Facebook, tweet incessantly, and discuss feminism ad infinitum with anyone and everyone I can, because these aren't isolated incidents and I know that, but I also can't stop turning the dial to NBC on Monday nights, and getting upset that Time Warner Cable doesn't show all the games. I'm in an emotionally abusive relationship with the NFL. I haven't found the strength to walk away, even though I've done it once before, because I don't want to, badly enough.

I can no longer reconcile being an NFL fan and a domestic violence victim, but I don't know how to stop being one, and I never get to stop being the other.

In Five Tweets, Lena Dunham Perfectly Sums Up People's Disgust with the NFL (Mic Daily, September 9, 2014)

The news: Monday, TMZ released video footage of Ray Rice knocking his then-fiancée Janay Palmer unconscious. That same day, Rice was cut from the Ravens and suspended indefinitely from the NFL.

Though many people were supportive of those moves, many criticized them for coming too late. Zerlina Maxwell, writing for Cosmopolitan, argued:

“... the bottom line is that there are not that many different ways in which two people can get on an elevator, only to have one exit unconscious, especially since Rice admitted to hitting Palmer. And the Baltimore Ravens and NFL commissioner Roger Goodell knew this back in July.”

Enter Lena Dunham. HBO's *Girls* creator began her response to the incident by retweeting Maxwell, but then started tweeting her own thoughts:

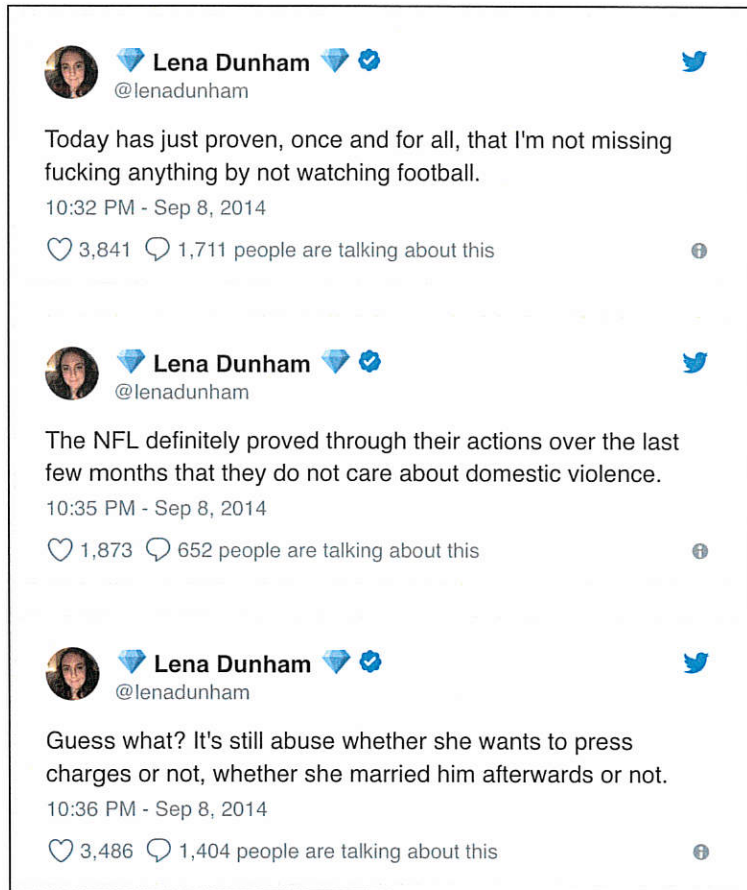




Figure 46. Lena Dunham tweets regarding full video of Rice assault (lenadunham, 2014a–e).

Dunham perfectly echoes the thoughts of people everywhere. The NFL's actions, though welcome, came much too late and prove that the league bends to bad publicity and nothing else — not even horrific domestic violence.

Like the #WhyIStayed hashtag, which encourages victims of domestic abuse to share their stories, Dunham's response shows that social media can act as a conversation starter, particularly when it comes to difficult topics. Bravo Lena, we can use a voice like yours.

NFL commissioner Roger Goodell responds to Janay Rice (CBS This Morning, September 10, 2014)

Rice's wife Janay posted an emotional statement Tuesday lashing out at the media and the NFL. We asked commissioner Goodell about that in his first interview since the violent video was posted online.

Interviewer: Janay spoke out on Instagram and she said, "To take something away from the man I love... just to gain ratings is horrific." You effectively ended Ray Rice's career. How does that make you feel?

Goodell: It never is easy to take difficult positions, but people expect that from us. The victim is never at fault here. That's not the issue. The issue here is, Ray was a player in the NFL and he cannot engage in that kind of behavior.

Interviewer: When you first took the action in terms of the two games suspension, did you speak with Ray and Janay?

Goodell: I spoke to them before that. I met with them probably a month before the decision.

Interviewer: And what did you learn from that meeting?

Goodell: He indicated what he and Janay were doing as a couple to try to address their issues. It's a very difficult issue for families. What I'm learning about this whole issue with domestic violence is that it's very complicated, very difficult on families. There are victims, there are family members that are impacted by this and we have to have the resources necessary to try to help them. What we wanted to do is to make sure they understood that you have resources, and we still do that. We've been in touch with the family to make sure they have resources in the last 24 hours.

Ray Rice—The botched NFL investigation (TMZ, September 10, 2014)

Turns out the NFL could have EASILY gotten their hands on the video of Ray Rice knocking out his fiancée, but they never tried.

TMZ presents: How to investigate a crime! Step 1: INVESTIGATE THE CRIME. "Something the NFL chose not to do seven months ago when Ray Rice knocked out his fiancée in an elevator."

"So, this is a total failure on the part of Roger Goodell and his team of investigators. And they didn't do the obvious thing which is go to the Revel Hotel in Atlantic City and say, 'Hey! Can we get the video?'"

Narrator: "Sources from the casino tell TMZ that they would have happily handed the video over if anybody would have asked, but, uh, nobody asked."

"And we know Ray Rice's lawyer had a copy!"

"And they would have had leverage over Ray Rice. They could go to him and say, 'we have to see the video to determine what your punishment is.'"

"So, was this an oversight, or was it by design? I don't think it's obvious that this is an oversight. There are things sometimes you don't want to see if you've already reached your conclusion."

Narrator: "And without seeing the video, Goodell's conclusion was to suspend Rice for a measly two games, based on Rice telling him this was a case of mutual combat. Well that, and of course the work of his crack investigators see here..." "But back to the crime and the tale the NFL made no effort to see."

“If they thought the video tape might be explosive, then wouldn’t they buy the tape?”

“Oh, if they did that there would be severely fired and even more.”

“Okay, then this makes them look bad too. My question is: Why didn’t they come in and somehow get somebody or do something -”

“To clean it up? Ray Donovan, or...”

“That’s what they should have done, Ray Donovan style.”

Narrator: “Anyway, the commissioner never sees the video, until now, Ray Donovan, not involved, and Ray Rice, dumped by the Ravens, and Madden 15. Yeah, that happened. Dude can’t even play pretend football.

James Brown delivers powerful speech about domestic violence (CBS, September 11, 2014)

I challenge the NFL community and all men to seriously confront the problem of domestic violence. Especially coming on the heels of the murder suicide of Kansas City Chiefs football player Jovan Belcher and his girlfriend Casandra Perkins. Yet, here we are again dealing with the same issue of violence against women. Now let’s be clear, this problem is bigger than football. There has been, appropriately so, intense and widespread outrage following the release of the video showing what happened inside the elevator at the casino. But wouldn’t it be productive if this collective outrage, as my colleagues have said, could be channeled to truly hear and address the long-suffering cries for help by so many women, and as they said ‘do something about it’. Like an ongoing, comprehensive education of men about what healthy, respectable manhood is all about, and it starts with how we view women. Our language is important. For instance, when a guy says you throw the ball like a girl or you’re a little sissy it reflects an attitude that devalues women, and attitudes will eventually manifest in some fashion. Women have been at the forefront in the domestic violence awareness and prevention arena, and whether Janay Rice considers herself a victim or not, millions of women in this country are. Consider this, according to domestic violence experts, more than three women per day lose their lives at the hands of their partners. That means that since the night of February 15th, in Atlantic City, more than 600 women have died. So this is yet another call to men to stand up and take responsibility for their thoughts, their words, their deeds, and as Deon says “to give help, or to get help because our silence is deafening and deadly.”

Friend of Ray Rice gives her opinion (CNN, September 11, 2014)

Anchor: “Mioshi, how do you explain, given that you know them so well, and you say that they are just a normal NFL couple, how do you explain what you have seen on this video tape?”

Mioshi: “I won’t try to make an excuse and condone it. They know how I feel and they know they admittedly said that was the worst mistake they have ever made, but also I will say that they took full responsibility for whatever parts they played. Ray and Janay took full responsibility. I wasn’t there that night I can’t say exactly what was going on and what led to that blow. But I do know that when I spoke to her neither one of them tried to make an excuse for each other, or for one another and play the blame game. They took full responsibility and said ‘Now how can we help? Who can help us with this?’”

Anchor: “Well, Dawn and Mioshi, we really appreciate you speaking out about this. Every time that someone talks about it, it removes a little bit of the stigma and the shame. Thanks so much for your work with that.”

Mioshi: “Thank you.”

Dawn: “Thank you for having us.”

NFL keeps digging deeper hole (ESPN, September 11, 2014)

Just watch. Pigs get fat, hogs get slaughtered. When you try to take it too far, people turn the other way. I’m just telling you, when you’ve got a good thing and you get greedy, it always, always, always, always, always turns on you. That’s rule No. 1 of business. –Mark Cuban on the NFL, March 23, 2014

When Mark Cuban said “the NFL is 10 years away from an implosion,” it was this moment he was trying to warn us about.

By the hour, the lines of ineptness, incompetence, supreme arrogance and the loss of absolute power seems to blur. One after the other. Until, by the time you read this, all of those lines may have totally disappeared. And we can finally see the NFL for what it really is.

On the cover of Tuesday morning’s Red Eye, a free daily newspaper published by the Chicago Tribune, one image said it all. The image: the NFL shield. The words: “Still A Fan?”

And that was before Goodell’s CBS interview. Before The Associated Press filed stories that refuted and contradicted almost every word that came out of Goodell’s mouth. Before the allegation that an NFL executive had actually received the tape months ago and left evidence in the form of a voice message confirming the video’s arrival to their offices with a “You’re right, it’s terrible.” Before they set up what they’re calling an “independent” investigation by former FBI director Robert S. Mueller III, except his law firm often represents the NFL.

Before whatever happens next.

Could this be the tipping point? Will this be the tipping point? The beginning of the downfall? Is the NFL's cultural reign of America over? Or is it about to begin a slide down a slope so dirty because it is so covered with its own filth that it can't crawl its way back to any sort of respectability?

How is it that the NFL has failed to figure out that it has a problem?

It's not as if there were no red flags. Jovan Belcher, who in college was a member of Male Athletes Against Violence, killed the mother of his baby, Kasandra Perkins, and then shot himself in the parking lot at the Chiefs' facility. Did the league address the issues that might have caused this dramatic behavior switch or start an education campaign against domestic violence?

No, it did not. So when Ray Rice was arrested for domestic violence, some played the victim-blame game and a minor penalty was bestowed minimizing its import. Until a video came out that couldn't be denied. The shock expressed amazed some who wondered what the league thought happened in the elevator. The "best" reactions were professions of ignorance about domestic abusers.

"It will never be the same," current Super Bowl champion Seattle Seahawks coach Pete Carroll said in response to viewing the Ray Rice video in full and how he will evaluate players. "I have to admit, my awareness is different than it was and will never be the same. Hopefully, we can head off any issue that could come up in the future."

Which unfortunately is what the NFL (apparently, allegedly) attempted to do: Head off an issue. And it failed.

Everything we wanted to believe about what the NFL stood for now hangs unbalanced, teetering on the edge, ready to fall. To the point that calling the recent actions surrounding the league's entire handling of the Ray Rice crime a breach of trust is an insult to the phrase "breach of trust."

"The current leadership of the NFL cannot be trusted to fairly, genuinely implement policies that address domestic violence," Sen. Richard Blumenthal (D-Conn.) said in a statement that echoed the concerns outlined by 12 Democratic members of the House Judiciary Committee. Saying that there is a "burgeoning, insurmountable credibility gap," Blumenthal went further, "The NFL has an obligation to do better, and a position of public trust—benefiting from broad antitrust exemptions granted by Congress, and hundreds of millions of dollars in taxpayer benefits."

So true. Inarguable. Damn.

The evidence builds against the NFL. Sports, lies and videotape. Reports claiming that 56 NFL players have been convicted of domestic violence, and only a total of 13 games have

collectively been missed by those players. According to a *USA Today* database, there have been 19 arrests (21 if you include warrants) of NFL players in 2014 alone. Going back to 2000, 85 arrests out of 713 total arrests of NFL players were on domestic violence charges. And that's not including Colts owner Jim Irsay and Chiefs assistant coach Adam Zimmer for their recent DUIs.

And this is how a sports league becomes a \$10 billion religion.

This could easily be the "enough is enough" point of contention that challenges the loyalty of the fan base. It could lead to a conclusion that of all the professional sports we love in America, the sport we love most is the one that is toxic and least in line with our core personal values.

And from the looks of things, it might be in the process of happening—just spend some time in social media.

"Scandals involving athletes in the NFL as well as other sports are hardly new," Roger Noll, a professor emeritus of economics at Stanford University, explained via email. "And thus far have not materially affected the popularity of sports."

"What is new is revelations that owners and the league office seem to be callous about unacceptable behavior. Whereas domestic violence is a serious issue, the impact of the Rice case is enhanced and made potentially of greater significance because it comes after cases such as the New Orleans Saints case [intentionally hurting players on other teams], the Miami Dolphins case [doing nothing about racial abuse within a team] and other cases of violent acts in which a team and the league [were] slow to act or did not seriously punish the player. I suspect most fans realize that occasional bad acts by players are inevitable, but what they may be less willing to overlook is behavior by management that does not take bad behavior seriously."

And this is what it has come to. Not because of Ray Rice, because of everything management has done or failed to do.

Nothing is bigger than the league? Well, yes it is. And this is it. All of this is it.

The order of priority: Profit over principle. It's the business of football's ethics and morality, women's physical safety and lives be damned.

Are we still fans? That answer is much closer to "no" than it is "yes." And that's something no one saw coming.

Except Mark Cuban, of course. But remember, we're still 10 years away from when the real NFL implosion is going to happen.

Look at that... my little page has 39 likes~~YAY!! I hope this page keeps growing. I am an admitted NFL fan and I want those in power in the NFL to take a leadership role on moral issues. Domestic violence is only one of these issues and it is a VERY important one. LET THE NFL SPONSORS KNOW OF YOUR DISDAIN FOR THE ACTION, OR LACK OF INACTION, BY THE NFL ON THIS ISSUE!!!!!! As sad as it is kids idolize athletes and football players. They should be an example whether they like it or not. Honestly.. It's not like I am asking you to be a homebody, but for crying out loud, take a cab, and don't beat your significant other or hit anyone off of the football field!! (September 12, 2014)

After Ray Rice, will women forgive the NFL? (Chicago Tribune, September 13, 2014)

Pittsburgh native Julia Garrity, 28, has long been a diehard Steelers fan. Even after moving to Washington, she attends five home games a year and has accumulated hundreds of dollars' worth of Steelers jerseys, bottle openers and flip-flops.

But tension is developing with a fellow fan: her mother, who is troubled by the NFL's handling of the domestic assault case involving former Baltimore Ravens running back Ray Rice.

"I couldn't imagine not watching it on Sundays," Garrity said. "But my mom's very turned off. She said, 'The NFL makes me not want to watch the sport.'"

Women make up an estimated 45 percent of the NFL's more than 150 million American fans and have become perhaps pro football's most valuable players. Female fans, a group beloved by advertisers, represent the league's biggest opportunity for growth. Keeping these women spending has become a chief goal of the NFL, which has funded research, expanded merchandising and sponsored spreads in women's magazines.

But crisis after crisis, from a string of lawsuits accusing some NFL teams of underpaying cheerleaders to the Ray Rice scandal, now threaten to undermine the league's efforts to expand beyond its saturated boy's club and attract new female fans. League watchers are beginning to wonder: Will women forgive the NFL?

"The value of women in professional sports as fans matters more than ever before. The real question is: Will that group of women put two and two together?" said Wendy Murphy, a former prosecutor and New England Patriots cheerleader who now runs the Women's and Children's Advocacy Project in Boston.

"I hope and expect that women as consumers of sports ... feel empowered enough not only to say this is unacceptable but to do something about it. ... But it's so easy to default to the gentle version of the narrative. We don't want to believe our heroes can be so brutal."

Women, and the companies who depend on them, helped NFL revenue top a record-high \$9.5 billion last year, and Nielsen data show women have grown to represent more than a third of the league's average viewership. Sunday Night Football ranked first among women aged 18 to 49 for the first time ever last season, and Fox reported that its female football viewing audience had hit an all-time high.

Super Bowl XLVIII, during which advertisers paid \$4 million for 30 seconds of airtime, was the most-watched TV program for women this year, with 45 million female viewers. According to Nielsen, recent Super Bowls have logged higher female viewership than the Oscars, Grammys and Emmys combined.

Yet before this season's ticketholders had even entered the stadium, their eyes have turned to a casino elevator in Atlantic City, where video showed Rice knock out his then-fiancee, Janay Palmer. Rice was dismissed by the team and indefinitely suspended by the league, but former FBI director Robert Mueller has been hired to investigate, after an Associated Press report contradicted the league's insistence that no one at NFL headquarters had seen video of the attack.

The National Organization for Women called on Wednesday for NFL Commissioner Roger Goodell's resignation, saying the league "has a violence against women problem." Women who had been abused shared stories on Twitter, via hashtags like #whyistayed, that sparked a national debate on the everyday tragedies of domestic abuse. ESPN's Keith Olbermann said the images of Ray Rice's assault were "symbolically knocking out every woman football fan in this country."

Though no sponsor has cut ties with the NFL yet, corporate partners of the league, a marketing juggernaut, have found themselves suddenly on the defensive. Facing criticism on social media about their relationship with the NFL, Marriott Hotels and FedEx said on Twitter they were "closely" watching for new developments. PepsiCo, a key sponsor, said in a statement, "Domestic violence is completely unacceptable. We are encouraged to see the NFL is now treating this with the seriousness it deserves."

After a rash of NFL controversies — most notably, the imprisonment of the Carolina Panthers' Rae Carruth for conspiring to kill his then-pregnant girlfriend in 1999 — the league sought to reinvent itself in the eyes of women. It invested in marketing campaigns aimed at women and sponsored studies on how to become more welcoming to women spectators. Its most visible effort begins in October, breast-cancer awareness month, when players wear pink and the league devotes a small percentage of merchandise sales to cancer research.

The NFL strategy is not all about damage control. Women tend to be more skeptical about some aspects of the game. In a 2012 Washington Post poll, women were much more likely than men — 61 percent to 47 percent — to say "something needs to be done" about the NFL's worrying pattern of concussions, for example.

Women make or influence 85 percent of all disposable-income purchasing decisions, said C. Keith Harrison, a University of Central Florida associate professor who conducted a study on women for the NFL. The league saw them as crucial to multiplying its hyper-profitable lines of licensed merchandise, he said.

The NFL has pushed to stock more options for women's team apparel, shifting away from simply resizing men's clothing, what league executives called the "shrink it and pink it" approach. NFL's online women's-centered "style lounge" now sells not just women's-sized jerseys, but also charm bracelets, vintage tees, leggings, necklaces and skinny jeans. As NFL's director of apparel Rhiannon Madden told AdWeek, "We weren't giving them the best outlet to express their fandom." NFL spokespeople did not return repeated calls or emails seeking comment.

It was a business move dressed up as a crusade for equality, and it worked for the league beautifully, industry watchers say. Women's clothing is now the league's fastest growing segment of sales, having tripled in the last four years, NFL executives have said.

The league sponsored glossy features in magazines like Marie Claire, which has run a "Savvy Girl's Guide to Football," and it forged partnerships with brands like CoverGirl, now the "official beauty sponsor of the NFL." The makeup giant has enlisted sportscaster Erin Andrews as a brand ambassador and, in its 2014 campaign, encourages female fans to glamourize their gameday spirit with team-themed "fanicures."

But the league's effort has often clashed with the scandals surrounding its most famous faces. Seventy-seven players across 27 of the league's 32 teams have been arrested since 2000 on charges of domestic violence, according to a *USA Today* NFL arrests database. And earlier this year, cheerleaders from nearly a half dozen NFL teams filed lawsuits alleging they were paid dismal wages, harshly examined through physical "jiggle tests," and demeaned in public appearances in which they'd be expected to sit on strangers' laps.

Yet some league experts expect fans' response to the Ray Rice episode will play out much as it has in the way of past controversies: a brief outrage that dissipates in the hype and spotlights of a Sunday kickoff.

"Sports fans have an incredible ability to disconnect their love of their favorite teams and their athletes from these kinds of issues," said Jim Andrews, a senior vice president at sponsorship consulting firm IEG.

The NFL "can't afford to lose their female fan base, and there are a lot of fans out there who will be up in arms about the way the league has handled this," he said. "But, worst case scenario, fans will put all of the blame on the league office or the commissioner. ... Then they can separate it from: It's Sunday afternoon, my team's playing, I'm going to turn on the TV and watch my game."

We're flying #GoodellMustGo banners at 3 NFL stadiums today and we'll also be flying them for Monday Night Football. Join the chorus of people calling for Roger Goodell to go: <http://bit.ly/1wiMc2x> (UltraViolet, September 14, 2014)

Asking Roger Goodell to resign is akin to cutting the tail off a 32 headed dragon. (NFL Fans Against Domestic Violence, September 15, 2014)

Radisson pulling sponsorship of Vikings "effective immediately" (NBC Sports, September 15, 2014)

A Vikings sponsor is ending its corporate support of the club for the time being after Adrian Peterson's Friday arrest on a charge of recklessly or negligently injuring a child.

The Radisson hotel chain announced Monday night it was "suspending its limited sponsorship of the Minnesota Vikings while we evaluate the facts and circumstances."

Said the hotel in a statement issued on the website of its parent company, Carlson Rezidor Hotel Group: "Radisson takes this matter very seriously particularly in light of our long-standing commitment to the protection of children."

The suspension of the company's sponsorship is "effective immediately," Radisson said.

The Radisson logo was present behind the Vikings' press conference podium on Monday, when G.M. Rick Spielman and coach Mike Zimmer met with the media and were asked about the decision to reinstate Peterson, who was deactivated for Sunday's game vs. New England.

Peterson's arrest stems from an incident in which he disciplined his four-year-old son with a switch. In a statement Monday, Peterson said he "never ever intended to harm" his son.

NFL fallout: Domestic violence cases lead some fans to #BoycottNFL (CNN, September 16 2014)

With a slew of domestic violence cases permeating the NFL, some football fans are benching America's favorite fall pastime.

Even after the league enacted tougher punishments for domestic violence and three accused players sat out during games Sunday, the Twitter hashtag #BoycottNFL and calls for Commissioner Roger Goodell's removal are running rampant.

"No football for me today. Fire Goodell and I may return. #BoycottNFL @nflcommish @nfl #FireGoodell," Scott Allen tweeted.

And the women's rights group Ultraviolet flew a banner over the New York Giants-Arizona Cardinals game Sunday, saying Goodell must go.

Our #GoodellMustGo banner flying above @MLStadium today before the @Giants game.

—UltraViolet (@UltraViolet) September 14, 2014

According to a *USA Today* database, at least 84 NFL players have been arrested and accused of domestic violence since 2000.

But the recent cases of four players — Ray Rice, Greg Hardy, Adrian Peterson and Ray McDonald — have hurled the topic into the spotlight.

Newsom: Sideline McDonald

California Lt. Gov. Gavin Newsom is publicly asking the San Francisco 49ers to bench McDonald pending the outcome of his felony domestic violence investigation.

“(T)he 49ers’ continued insistence on playing Ray McDonald during his ongoing criminal investigation is a painful affront to every victim of domestic violence and sends a troubling message to our community and especially our children that ‘zero tolerance’ are empty words, not real actions,” Newsom and his wife said in a message on Facebook.

McDonald was arrested on August 31 on suspicion of felony domestic violence after he allegedly got involved in an altercation with his fiancée, who was 10 weeks pregnant, a police source told The Sacramento Bee.

The fiancée showed police minor bruises on her neck and arms, the newspaper said.

After McDonald posted bail, he said he couldn’t say much about the case.

“The truth will come out,” he told CNN affiliate KTVU. “Everybody knows what kind of person I am ... a good-hearted person.”

Last week, San Francisco 49ers CEO Jed York said the team was awaiting the outcome of the criminal case against McDonald before determining whether to punish him.

“I think it’s very important that we do let due process take its course,” York told KNBR-AM.

Rice could appeal

Baltimore Ravens running back Ray Rice, who was videotaped in February punching his then-fiancée in an elevator and dragging her unconscious body out, could appeal his indefinite suspension from the NFL.

ESPN and Pro Football Talk said Rice will appeal Monday.

But the NFL Players Association said Sunday that it could not confirm whether an appeal decision has been made.

“We don’t know yet if or when our filing will come,” said George Atallah, assistant executive director of NFLPA external affairs.

Rice’s attorney has not responded to CNN’s request for comment.

Ray Rice case: Did NFL execs know the truth earlier?

The NFL’s actions

After public outcry over a two-game suspension for Rice, the NFL established a six-game unpaid ban for personnel who violate the league’s policy on domestic violence, Goodell said Thursday.

A second incident would be punished by a lifetime ban from the league, Goodell said in a letter to the owners of the league’s 32 teams.

Other players have been disciplined over the past week.

Minnesota Vikings running back Adrian Peterson was deactivated after he was indicted by a grand jury last week on a child abuse charge. He allegedly whipped his 4-year-old son repeatedly with a “switch.”

But his attorney said Peterson is “a loving father” who was disciplining his son. “He used the same kind of discipline with his child that he experienced as a child growing up in east Texas,” attorney Rusty Hardin said.

And on Sunday, the Carolina Panthers announced just before game time that defensive end Greg Hardy would not be playing against the Detroit Lions.

In May, authorities say, Hardy choked his then-girlfriend, dragged her by her hair and threatened to kill her. He was sentenced in July to 18 months of probation and a 60-day suspended sentence for the misdemeanors he was charged with.

Hardy said he is innocent and has appealed a guilty verdict.

In his post-game remarks Sunday, Panthers coach Ron Rivera alluded to the controversy looming over not just Hardy, but over the entire league.

“The climate has changed,” he said. “We really do have to get this right. Believe me. I understand that.”

Tough questions

ESPN anchor and “life-long fan” Hannah Storm deplored the abuse cases in an emotional sign-off on Sunday.

“On Monday morning, I was genuinely excited to come to work and break down what I thought was a fascinating first weekend in the NFL,” Storm told viewers. “Instead, I kicked off ESPN’s coverage of the horrific Ray Rice elevator video.”

She described trying to answer her daughters’ difficult questions over the weekend — “Mom, why did he do that? Why is he in jail? Why didn’t he get fired?”

Storm said she has some lingering questions of her own.

“What does all of this mean for the future? What does it mean for female fans whose dollars are so coveted by the NFL (and) who make up an estimated 45% of the NFL’s fan base?”

“What exactly does the NFL stand for?”

So true James Brown. This is a problem bigger than the NFL. But is there a more prevalent organization that has taken numerous steps to hide? Used it’s media strength to blame victims? And succumbed to no pressure (except sponsors in the 11th hour) to change its systemic non-response? <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6IIo3PEyVxE> (NFL Fans Against Domestic Violence, September 17, 2014)

Women’s views on NFL dim in wake of domestic violence cases (New York Times, September 17, 2014)

This time of year, families throughout the Chicago area schedule their weekends around the Bears. Nearly half the city’s televisions tune in to Bears games when they play, and an empty seat is rarely seen at Soldier Field.

Nicole Larvick, a 30-year-old mother in Chicago, said “it would take a lot” for her family to stop watching football. But this week, with the N.F.L. struggling to deal with unseemly accusations of domestic violence and child abuse by some of its biggest stars, Ms. Larvick has a new perspective.

“Before this week I held the N.F.L. in a different view,” Ms. Larvick said as she waited for her children outside an elementary school on Chicago’s North Side. “It seemed

different—like families and communities were important to them. But I know it’s just a business now.”

Like Ms. Larvick, women around the country expressed disillusionment this week as the N.F.L. desperately tried to stanch the public criticism around several controversial cases: Baltimore Ravens running back Ray Rice punching his fiancée in the face, a police report describing abuse of a 4-year-old by Minnesota Vikings running back Adrian Peterson, and the league’s prediction in court documents that nearly a third of its players would end up with severe brain damage.

The league announced Wednesday that Peterson and the Carolina Panthers’ Greg Hardy, who is appealing a guilty verdict for assaulting and threatening his ex-girlfriend, were barred from all team activities until their cases were resolved. But by day’s end, another N.F.L. player had been arrested in a domestic-violence case: Arizona Cardinals running back Jonathan Dwyer.

Critics of the league’s handling of these issues include fans of all types, as well as politicians and some of the N.F.L.’s biggest corporate sponsors. But the anger voiced by women — including those who count themselves as fans — is particularly troubling for the N.F.L., which has invested heavily in trying to overcome its reputation as a domain for alpha males and find new consumers for its merchandise.

“I think the league is tone deaf to a lot of cultural things,” said Elise Johnson, 50, a social worker from Manhattan Beach, Calif. She added: “Society has evolved. I don’t think the N.F.L. has evolved.”

Executives at the N.F.L. claim that a significant portion of their millions of fans are women. This helps them bolster their assertion that football is America’s pre-eminent sport while also underscoring the immense possibilities for adding to the \$10 billion in revenue the league generates each year.

“The matriarch of the family predetermines an awful lot that goes on, from what sport you play to what media you watch to what products get bought,” Mark Waller, the N.F.L.’s chief marketing officer, said in explaining why women were important to the league. “The role of the female in the household is huge. On the emotional side, the role that the female builds that a family can gather around is fundamental. That sort of communal aspect, which is such a part of the game in America.”

Five years ago, around the time Commissioner Roger Goodell said he wanted to turn the league into a \$25 billion business by 2027, the N.F.L. set out to court women, “listening to their needs much more aggressively and really trying to get under the skin of what needs they have and what can we do better,” Mr. Waller said.

The most visible manifestation of that effort appears annually in October, when the league covers much of the game in pink for Breast Cancer Awareness month.

Another example of the N.F.L.'s outreach to women was on display Tuesday night at a chic Manhattan event space, where the league held a fashion show to roll out its latest collections, complete with actresses and Victoria's Secret models.

"This week has certainly been tough for us, but we know we have to do better," Leo Kane, senior vice president for consumer products at the N.F.L., said to start the event. He then moved on to thank the designers and licensees.

"The league could have a real problem on their hands," said Ira Mayer, who writes the Licensing Letter, which tracks sports licensing. According to his calculations, the league generated about \$30 million in royalties from the sale of women's apparel last year. "They already have a public relations problem and a sponsor problem, and that can translate to the licensing market, too," he said.

Goodell has scrambled to mitigate the damage to the league's reputation in the weeks after he initially suspended Rice for only two games. After consulting advocates for victims of domestic abuse, he apologized a month later because he "didn't get it right" and announced stiffer penalties for players and employees found to have committed domestic abuse. But the uproar has only intensified this week.

The Radisson Hotel chain suspended its endorsement deal with the Vikings. Anheuser-Busch, one of the league's most prominent sponsors, said Tuesday that it had told the league it was concerned with the N.F.L.'s handling of the scandals.

A CoverGirl ad campaign featuring N.F.L. team colors became an Internet lightning rod when someone altered an image to put a black eye on the model for the Ravens, drawing greater attention to the company's relationship with the league and catalyzing public pressure for CoverGirl to sever ties.

"As the mother of two school-age children, I'm dismayed that a major sports organization like the N.F.L. does not take allegations of abuse serious," said Katherine Johnson, 41, a football fan in Sarasota, Fla. "Why do sponsors serve as the voice of reason and morality in the N.F.L.? Why can't we demand and expect better as fans, as women, and as a society from a multibillion-dollar sports business?"

Amid the outcry, Goodell appointed four women to help shape the league's policies on domestic abuse and hired Cynthia Hogan as the N.F.L.'s chief lobbyist in Washington. She has worked in the Obama administration and helped Vice President Joseph R. Biden Jr. shape the Violence Against Women Act when he was in the Senate.

Indra Nooyi, the PepsiCo chairman and chief executive, said: "I urge them to seize this moment. How they handle these cases going forward can help shape how we as a nation, as a society and as individuals treat domestic violence and child abuse."

Leigh Ann Tuohy, the mother who was portrayed in the football film "The Blind Side," said in a telephone interview Wednesday that the N.F.L. should have included women in the decision-making process from the beginning, not after the scandal erupted. "We need to be included," she said. "I guarantee there wasn't a woman involved in any of these decisions."

Ms. Tuohy said she knew Rice and Peterson, as well as Hardy, who grew up in Tennessee, where she lives. She said their transgressions were out of character. "Good people do bad things," she said, adding that she did not think female fans would abandon the N.F.L. because of this issue.

Other women said they, too, would continue watching. Stephanie Cobb, a 51-year old from Long Beach, Calif., said she and her family were big sports fans, and her youngest son, Jack, 14, roots for Adrian Peterson. "It's a shame, and it's sad," she said. "But I don't think it's a problem for the N.F.L. as a whole. It's all about personal responsibility."

For many N.F.L. supporters, football fandom is local. Despite everything that has happened over the past week, Ms. Larvick, the Bears fan in Chicago, said it would take something else to compel her family to stop watching.

"Something would have to happen with the Bears," she said. "If Jay Cutler did what Ray Rice did, I would stop watching."

The NFL's domestic violence problem just keeps getting worse and worse. It's time for sponsors to drop the NFL (UltraViolet, September 18, 2014)

NFL Commissioner Roger Goodell admits he 'got it wrong' regarding Ray Rice Domestic violence incident (ABC News, September 19, 2014)

NFL Commissioner Roger Goodell admitted today that he "got it wrong" when it came to the recent Ray Rice incident, pledging that he "will get it right" going forward.

"At our best, the NFL sets an example that makes a positive difference. Unfortunately, over the past several weeks we have seen all too much of the NFL doing wrong and that starts with me," he said at a news conference in New York.

"We will re-examine, enhance and improve all of our current programs and then we'll do more," he added.

Goodell said that he never considered resigning, saying he holds himself to “the highest possible standard” and was disappointed in himself for making a mistake.

The remarks were the first time that the NFL commissioner has been seen in public for more than a week.

“I got it wrong with the handling of the Ray Rice matter and I am sorry for that. I got it wrong on a number of levels from the process that I led to the decision that I reached. I don’t expect anyone just to take my word,” Goodell admitted. “I believe in accountability. I understand the challenges before me and I will be held accountable for meeting them.”

The news conference came a day after Goodell sent out a memo to teams, saying the NFL has initiated a “long-term commitment to help people affected by domestic violence and sexual assault.”

Also Thursday, the NFL partnered with the National Domestic Violence Hotline and the National Sexual Violence Resource Center to help women who have suffered from abuse.

“We have never had the funding needed to meet the demand for our services from those seeking help with domestic violence and dating abuse. Last year, because of this lack of resources, more than 77,000 calls went unanswered. Recent domestic violence incidents involving NFL players pushed the capacity of our organization to unprecedented levels,” said Katie Ray-Jones, President and CEO of the National Domestic Violence Hotline.

The move comes after the NFL has been hit with several high-profile cases of players arrested for domestic violence. The league has also come under fire for the way it has handled cases in the past.

The National Domestic Violence Hotline said that just days after the release of a video last week showing Baltimore Ravens running back Ray Rice punching his then-fiancé in an elevator, the Hotline’s call volume increased by 84 percent.

Goodell, who has come under fire in recent days with some calling on him to resign, said the NFL is also educating all its employees.

“We are also proceeding to implement broad educational programs within our league. Starting within the next 30 days, all league and team personnel—including executives, coaches, players and staff—will participate in education sessions on domestic violence and sexual assault. These initial sessions will begin to provide the men and women of the NFL with information and tools to understand and recognize domestic violence and sexual assault. We will work with the NFL Players Association to develop and present this training in the most effective way,” he said in the memo.

Not everyone, however, is happy with the NFL’s efforts.

In a statement prior to Goodell's remarks, Crest, a league sponsor, said "it believes Breast Cancer Awareness is a critically important program to support women and their health, and, as planned, is making a \$100,000 donation to the American Cancer Society for breast cancer awareness and will participate in media and retailer activities to help drive attention to the cause. The brand has decided to cancel on-field activation with NFL teams."

In response, the league said, "We are looking forward to our sixth year of the Crucial Catch campaign, in partnership with the American Cancer Society. We understand the ways the last week have impacted our partners, including Crest. Players will still have the option to wear pink gear, including mouthguards, as planned, this year."

9 of the harshest tweets about Roger Goodell's press conference on NFL domestic violence (CBS SF Bay Area, September 19, 2014)

If the rest of the world reacts to Roger Goodell's abuse mea culpa the way Twitter did Friday, the NFL's commissioner is going to have a hard time keeping his job.

Goodell vowed major changes to how the league addresses player conduct issues, saying the NFL plans to implement new personal conduct policies by the Super Bowl. "We will get our house in order first," he said. But those who watched the event were not convinced:

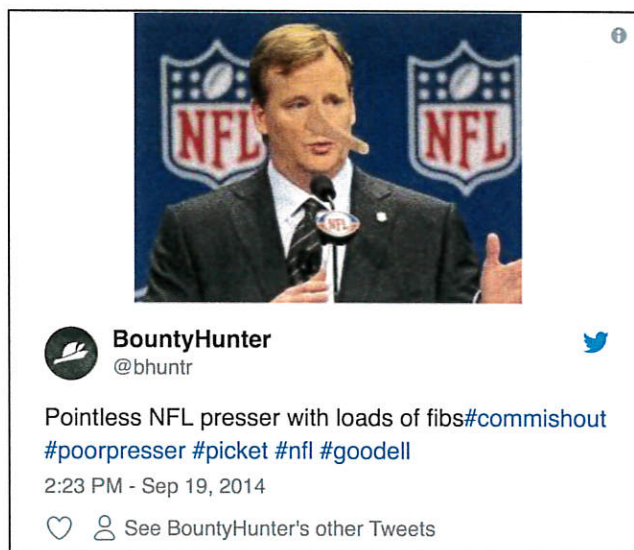


Figure 47. BountyHunter tweet regarding Goodell press conference (bhuntr, 2014).



Figure 48. Lynn Zinser tweet regarding Goodell press conference (lynn_zinser, 2014).



Figure 49. Zach Harper tweet regarding Goodell press conference (talkhoops, 2014).



Figure 50. DM tweet regarding Goodell press conference (uclabruin97, 2014).

With some even suggesting Goodell had surpassed other social media villains:

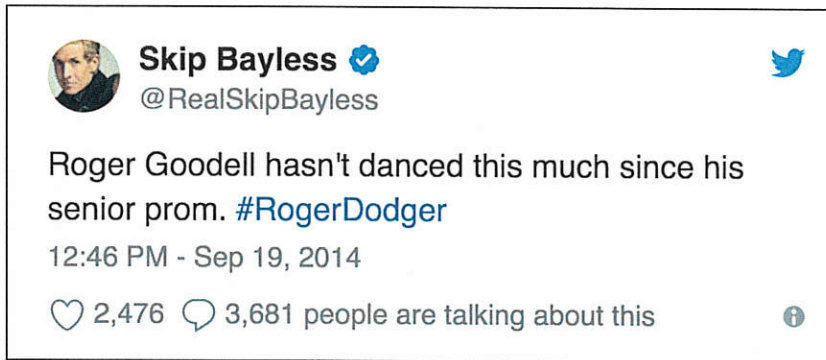


Figure 51. Skip Bayless tweet regarding Goodell press conference (RealSkipBayless, 2014).



Figure 52. Pete Abraham tweet regarding Goodell press conference (PeteAbe, 2014).

Even current and former NFL players couldn't resist taking shots at Goodell

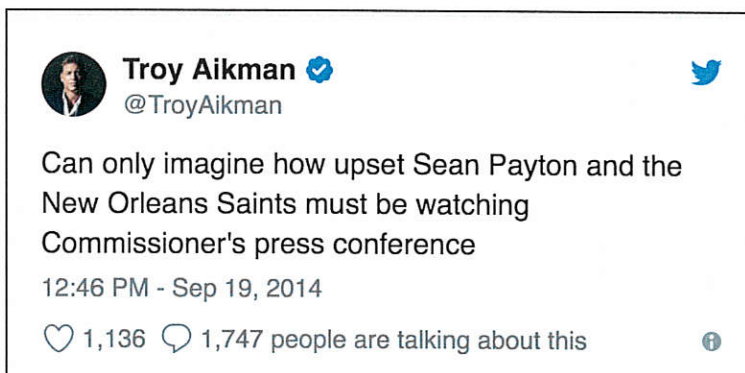


Figure 53. Troy Aikman tweet regarding Goodell press conference (TroyAikman, 2014).



Figure 54. Sidney Rice tweet regarding Goodell press conference (sidneyrice, 2014).

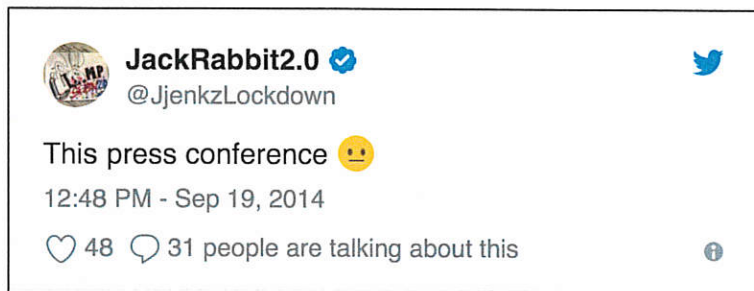


Figure 55. JackRabbit2.0 tweet regarding Goodell press conference (JjenkzLockdown, 2014).

What do you think?

NFL scandal: Calls to boycott sponsors after Ray Rice and Greg Hardy suspensions (Independent, September 22, 2014)

Fans of disgraced NFL player Ray Rice queued up to hand in their replica shirts over the weekend as posters criticising the league and its sponsors' stance on domestic violence went viral.

Thousands of Baltimore Ravens supporters waited outside M&T Bank Stadium on Friday in order to swap their number 27 tops for those of other players, *The Baltimore Sun* reported.

The protest took place as social media users continued to pile pressure on CoverGirl, the NFL's official beauty sponsor, by sharing doctored images of a poster produced by the company.

The artwork, which features a model wearing Ravens colours-inspired make-up alongside the slogan "Get You Game Face On" has been altered to include a black eye, after footage emerged showing Rice striking his fiancée Janay Palmer, who he has since married, in a hotel elevator in February.



Figure 56. Torrey Barnes tweet regarding CoverGirl–NFL ad edit (T_Bone72, 2014).

Other posters promoting the San Francisco 49ers and Carolina Panthers have also been edited, to highlight other instances of alleged domestic violence involving league players.

Ready for some football? Share the new #Covergirlcott board. <http://t.co/jPHQ2r0ZgG#GoodellMustGo> via @addiestanpic.twitter.com/vxh7joS33E
 ; Tim Shaw (@Goldenpipe) September 21, 2014
 @COVERGIRL Your continued promotion of the NFL, despite it's serious problem w/ Domestic Violence, is #Shameful #Boycott now in effect.
 ; Angelique (@Dysgyzed) September 21, 2014

The shocking images encourage people to boycott the beauty company until it withdraws its sponsorship of the NFL and have been accompanied by calls for Commissioner Roger Goodell to resign.

CoverGirl issued the following response when the posters first emerged last week:



Figure 57. CoverGirl tweet in response to calls for boycott (COVERGIRL, 2014).

According to the *LA Times*, the statement said: “As a brand that has always supported women and stood for female empowerment, CoverGirl believes domestic violence is completely unacceptable. We developed our NFL program to celebrate the more than 80 million female football fans.

“In light of recent events, we have encouraged the NFL to take swift action on their path forward to address the issue of domestic violence.”

Last week, Rice was suspended indefinitely by the NFL - but Goodell had already come under fire for the league’s slow response to the domestic violence.

At a news conference on Friday, Goodell said: “I got it wrong in the handling of the Ray Rice matter.

“And I’m sorry for that. I got it wrong on a number of levels, from the process that I led to the decision that I reached.”

Rules governing personal conduct for players and other employees will change, he said, and experts from outside the league will help it shape that new policy.

A “conduct committee” will be established by the NFL to review policy, a significant concession for an organization known for its top-down, fortress-like approach to management.

“We will get our house in order,” Goodell said.

“I know this because we will make it happen,” he said. “Nothing is off the table. Let me say it again, we will implement new conduct policies.”

Other sponsors have been highly critical of the NFL, including brewing giant Anheuser-Busch.

Enjoying the idiocy of the NFL leadership and their priorities... You're going to love this: The bullshit that is the NFL leadership.. Anquan Boldin was fined 8K for a head butt to an opposing player and this guy was fined 11K for wearing the wrong color socks. Nice priorities NFL. Really.. well done.. A-holes...

<http://profootballtalk.nbcsports.com/.../red-socks-cost-mike.../>

<http://profootballtalk.nbcsports.com/.../anquan-boldin-fined.../> (September 27, 2014)

We wish to draw attention to the lack of leadership by NFL ownership for the sake of on field performance. We aspire for dignity and positive action. (NFL Fans Against Domestic Violence, October 2, 2014)

Comments? <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cfto6ZXgt70> (NFL Fans Against Domestic Violence, October 23, 2014)

NFL players say 'No more' to domestic violence (NFL: 60, October 23, 2014)

No more "boys will be boys."
 No more "what's the big deal."
 No more "it's just the way he is".
 No more "he just has a temperament."
 No more "but he's such a nice guy."
 No more "but he has such a bright future."
 No more "not my problem."
 No more "I will say something next time."
 No more "why didn't she tell anyone."
 No more "why doesn't she just leave."
 No more "I'm sure they will just work it out."
 No more "she seems fine to me."
 No more "what was she wearing."
 No more "she was drunk."
 No more "he was drunk."
 No more "she was asking for it."
 No more "she never said no."
 No more "not in this family."
 No more "not on this team."
 No more "we don't talk about that."
 No more bystanders.
 No more ignorance.
 No more excuses.
 No more.

NFL failing at more than just discipline in its domestic violence policy (Yahoo! Sports, October 26, 2016)

The focus of the outrage over NFL players accused of domestic violence-related crimes has been about punishment. That's understandable, as domestic violence is a scourge on our society and it's almost never an isolated incident or "mistake." But it's clear the NFL is not only failing at discipline, it is also failing at rehabilitation. That should be of more concern to the league and to the communities in which NFL players live.

The latest perpetrator is Josh Brown, the New York Giants kicker who was arrested in May 2015 on domestic abuse charges and was suspended for only a game this season. This punishment came after an incident in January at the Pro Bowl, where his ex-wife, Molly, called security after Brown pounded on her door in the middle of the night. The NFL helped her move rooms, but that still didn't lead to anything more than a one-game suspension.

To rail against this leniency is appropriate, just as it's appropriate to rail against the non-suspension of Bruce Miller, the former San Francisco 49ers fullback who plead no contest to vandalism in an incident involving his girlfriend in 2015. In August, Miller was arrested for allegedly assaulting an elderly man with a deadly weapon: the man's cane. Miller, like Brown, was allowed to play through his troubles before the latest incident.

It's not just that the NFL knew and did little. It's also that the player—the person—was not treated successfully. The punishment, or lack thereof, is usually tied closely to the legal outcome of a case when the way forward for a player should be more intricately tied to evidence of an anger management or abusive behavior issue. Miller pleaded only to a misdemeanor, but that was not a sign of a minor problem. One Bay Area report quoted Miller's counselor through a mandatory 16-week rehabilitation program, who said the 49er "struggled with setting appropriate boundaries with family, friends, and his victim. He feels implementing and adhering consistently to health boundaries will continue to be challenging."

That was a red flag: Miller was not all better, even after a season's worth of counseling. It should have been a clear sign to the NFL and the 49ers that it wasn't yet time for him to refocus on football.

The same could be said of Miller's former teammate, Ray McDonald, who played for Jim Harbaugh after a domestic violence arrest in August 2014. He was not charged, and that was enough of a reason to keep him on the field. But something was amiss, and not enough was done about it. In December, news outlets reported McDonald was investigated for a sexual assault, and the team cut him. Still he got another chance with the Chicago Bears in 2015 before being arrested on domestic abuse and child endangerment charges. McDonald had a serious problem, and football was either impeding him or not helping him heal. He's now out of football. So is Miller, most likely for good.

And so perhaps is former Dallas Cowboy Greg Hardy. Eight months after a North Carolina judge convicted him for domestic violence in 2014, the Cowboys gave him a \$13.1 million contract. Team executive vice president Charlotte Jones Anderson—Jerry Jones' daughter—sounded compassionate when she told the Dallas Morning News, "The experts have told us it is far better to provide a way out, coupled with educational and rehabilitative services and therapy. That does more to protect the victim and prevent future violence than a zero-tolerance policy. We have to trust the advice of the experts." Yet the Cowboys failed on that measure, as Hardy continued to make inappropriate comments in interviews and even got into an argument with a Cowboys coach during a game. Dallas let him go and last month he was arrested on a cocaine possession charge in Texas.

"I think you will look back," Anderson said at the time of Hardy's signing, "and you will say this is the right move for the Cowboys." It was not the right move for the Cowboys, and it was not the right move for Hardy either.

Now there is a mutual failure in the Brown case. The Giants knew enough and didn't do enough. But a two-game or a four-game suspension would probably not have helped either. People like Brown, and McDonald, and Hardy, are sick. The question on the minds of the league, the team and the media should be, "How sick is this person?" instead of simply, "How wayward is this player?" Suspensions and terminations have a purpose, but it's only part of the treatment needed to protect victims in the present and future.

"I became an abuser and hurt Molly physically, emotionally and verbally," Brown wrote in a letter to friends and family in 2014. Giants owner John Mara said Brown "certainly" told the team as well. Admission is a major step in rehabilitation, and that's to Brown's credit, but consistent actions must follow. A commitment to getting better has to be obvious to those in an abuser's orbit, and too often coaches and executives look only for a commitment to football.

When Cowboys coach Jason Garrett was asked about Hardy's character in the months leading up to his team debut, he said, "I think he's an intense person. I think he cares a great deal about football. I think he wants to be the right kind of guy and what we're going to do is we're going to try to approach this thing on a day-by-day basis." Caring a great deal about football has nothing to do with caring a great deal about healing. In fact, the former can interfere with the latter.

This is the central problem with football culture: It's a culture about football. A man can be broken as long as he seems whole on the field of a violent sport. It should not be this way. A good psychologist on every team staff can spend an hour with a troubled player and determine if he wants to be whole, or if he's saying something or writing something just to get back on the field. This should be the true test of rehabilitation: the kind of commitment to healing that every coach wants to see in a player's commitment to winning.

Yes, there are some players who cannot be helped. There are some people who will spiral and never get better. Maybe nothing can be done for Josh Brown. But as long as football has the highest priority, rather than true rehabilitation, the NFL's image will continue to suffer along with the people it fails to assist.

Arbitrator rules NFL can keep Adrian Peterson on exempt list during appeal of suspension (Washington Post, November 18, 2014)

The NFL brought some clarity to Adrian Peterson's playing status by announcing Tuesday morning it had suspended the standout running back for the Minnesota Vikings without pay for at least the remainder of the 2014 season.

But the running back's future is not yet entirely clear. Some procedural and legal maneuvering remains to be done, although Peterson's bid for immediate reinstatement was denied by an arbitrator later Tuesday.

Arbitrator Shyam Das ruled that the NFL can keep Peterson on the exempt-commissioner's permission list pending his appeal of his suspension, a person familiar with the case said, which apparently eliminates the possibility of Peterson playing this weekend against the Green Bay Packers.

The NFL Players Association had filed a grievance on Peterson's behalf seeking to have him reinstated from the exempt list. A ruling in Peterson's favor could have made him eligible to play while appealing his suspension.

So now Peterson's attempt to return to the playing field this season seemingly depends solely on a successful appeal of his suspension. The NFLPA announced quickly Tuesday morning that it would appeal Peterson's suspension on his behalf and would demand that a neutral arbitrator hear the appeal.

Even if Peterson were to become eligible, it doesn't mean the Vikings would allow him to play. The team already placed Peterson on its game-day inactive list once this season, and it could do so again. That uncertainty underscores the point that the Peterson situation is not quite settled.

The NFL has made its intentions clear: It does not want to see Peterson on the field for any of the Vikings' six remaining games this season.

The league could have taken the "time served" approach favored, it appeared, by Peterson's representatives. Peterson already has missed nine games. The first of those missed games came when the Vikings de-activated him for a game while he still was on the 53-man roster. The last eight of those games came after Peterson agreed in September to be placed on the exempt-commissioner's permission list.

The use of the previously obscure exempt list put Peterson on paid leave while he faced charges in Texas stemming from him disciplining his 4-year-old son by striking the child with a switch. It was a temporary solution crafted with the NFL and the Vikings under immense public pressure from fans, politicians and business partners to act sooner rather than later in the wake of Peterson's charges, as well as the domestic violence scandals involving Baltimore Ravens running back Ray Rice and Carolina Panthers defensive end Greg Hardy.

Peterson has been paid his weekly salary of \$691,176 while not playing for the Vikings. Some of those who argued in favor of immediate reinstatement for Peterson said that Peterson could pay a fine that would have made at least a portion of the games he already has missed equivalent, in their view, to a suspension.

The NFL rejected that approach, saying it believes a suspension without pay beyond Peterson's stay on the exempt list is warranted. People familiar with the thinking of league officials said NFL decision-makers remained mindful of what Peterson had admitted doing in the case as he struck a plea deal to resolve his legal charges.

That mindset was clear in the letter that NFL Commissioner Roger Goodell wrote to Peterson, portions of which were released by the league Tuesday.

"The well-being of your children is of paramount concern," Goodell wrote. "In the absence of speaking to you to understand your current disposition toward child discipline, we cannot be sure that this conduct will not be repeated. Moreover, we are unaware of any effort on your part to acknowledge the seriousness of your conduct and your responsibility to demonstrate a genuine commitment to change."

The NFL on Tuesday cited the six-game guideline for a suspension for a first-time offender. The league put that penalty in place in August when it amended the sport's personal conduct policy. The league also said in August that a suspension could be longer (or shorter) for a first-time offender depending on circumstances.

A more complete overhaul of the conduct policy is pending, and Goodell has left open the possibility of him surrendering some of the power that he currently possesses to make disciplinary decisions under the policy. He also has raised the prospect of having a panel of outside experts make future decisions about players being placed on paid leave while facing criminal charges.

In the meantime, Goodell and the NFL have to deal with the Peterson case, and they and the union have been at odds at virtually every step. Those complications leave Peterson's future in the NFL in doubt.

The battles between the league and union led to the grievance filed by the union seeking Peterson's immediate reinstatement from the exempt list. The grievance was heard Monday via conference call by Das. He could have ruled to overturn the league's position

that Peterson remains on the exempt list and ineligible to play while he appeals the suspension. Under the terms of the current collective bargaining agreement, that appeal will be heard by Goodell.

The union's demand to have a neutral arbitrator resolve Peterson's appeal of the suspension comes with recent precedent. The NFL agreed to have former federal judge Barbara S. Jones hear and resolve Rice's appeal of his indefinite suspension by the league. Her ruling on Rice's appeal is pending.

The NFL said it will not consider Peterson's possible reinstatement before April 15. By then, Peterson will have turned 30, the age at which many NFL front office executives long have considered running backs' careers to be in decline. Peterson is an exceptional player who ran for more than 2,000 yards in a season as recently as 2012. But Vikings owner Zygi Wilf has not said whether he wants Peterson back.

There has been talk of Peterson finishing his career with the Dallas Cowboys. But the Cowboys already have the NFL's current rushing leader, DeMarco Murray. Still, Peterson likely would find a team willing to sign him if the Vikings choose not to retain him. But such decisions will occur down the road, after the next round of maneuvering by the union and league over Peterson's reinstatement.

Roger Goodell put little effort into Ray Rice investigation, report reveals (SB Nation, December 10, 2014)

Roger Goodell's testimony during Ray Rice's suspension appeal hearing revealed the NFL commissioner to be "a CEO who more than once contradicted himself on key questions," according to a report released by ESPN's *Outside the Lines*. The OTL report went over the 631-page transcript of Rice's hearing held in early November, and found several instances where Goodell was unable to recall key moments of his June 16 disciplinary hearing with the running back, or gave testimony that suggested that he failed to do his due diligence in the case.

From over-delegation to assistants, to comically bad note taking, the report paints Goodell as out of touch and ill-prepared to handle Rice's case, especially ahead of the onrush of criticism he received following TMZ's release of a video tape depicting Rice knocking out his then-fiancee in an elevator.

The OTL report was released shortly after the NFL revealed its new personal conduct policy, approved unanimously by owners during a Wednesday meeting in Dallas. The new policy puts a greater emphasis on the NFL's internal investigative arm to determine discipline for violations of the policy by players and personnel. It also leaves the commissioner overall appeals with the power to rule on them.

What we learned:

1) Goodell didn't do due diligence

Most damning for Goodell may be that the commissioner seemingly put little effort into preparing for his June disciplinary hearing with Rice, nor did he pay much attention during the hearing itself. Goodell reportedly received several security reports about Rice detailing the incident in the elevator ... and didn't read them.

Goodell received several NFL security reports prior to meeting with Rice on June 16 that quoted media reports and other sourced information developed by security officials saying Rice had hit his fiancée and knocked her out. But he acknowledged that in some cases he "didn't read it from start to finish" and that on other notes, "I didn't look at them closely, no."

2) Goodell received several witness reports suggesting what he eventually saw on the tape

Goodell has claimed that one of his primary reasons for increasing Rice's suspension from two games to six was that the tape released by TMZ revealed new information that contradicted what Rice had told the commissioner during their June 16 disciplinary hearing. Not only was Rice reportedly up front with the commissioner that he "hit" Janay Rice and did not "slap" her, *OTL* revealed that the commissioner was aware of accurate witness testimony to what took place in the elevator.

One mid-February report from "The Baltimore Sun" quoted an anonymous casino source saying Rice's attack "was horrific, it shocked the conscious, he knocked her out with one punch, she was out for three minutes, he dragged her out like a limp noodle, he hit her so hard it was unbelievable, we have her ice packs for her head." Another report quoted a security official saying a source said Rice had hit his fiancée. Goodell acknowledged he had seen the reports in a binder of materials provided by a NFL security official prior to the June 16 meeting with Rice. Miller said because "The Baltimore Sun" report was "anonymous" there was no way for league officials to know for sure whether it was accurate.

3) Goodell did not try to obtain a copy of the tape, but he told his bosses that he did

The *OTL* report suggests that any fact gathering in the league's investigation of Rice was handed down to assistants and that Goodell "relied on his security staffers to come to him with information about the Rice case." Goodell seemingly gave little oversight to the investigation, or was ill-informed of its proceedings. In a Sept. 10 memo, Goodell wrote to all 32 NFL owners that "on multiple occasions, we asked the proper law enforcement authorities to share with us all relevant information, including any video of the incident."

It's unclear where Goodell would have gotten the idea that his security staff had requested video, however. Just before the memo went out, the NFL's lead investigator had informed NFL executives that he had never contacted anyone about the tape. Via the report:

But one day before Goodell sent that memo, the league's lead investigator on the Rice matter had actually told the league's director of security that he had never requested the inside-casino elevator video from the one law enforcement agency that actually had it, the Atlantic City Police Department: "Again, I never spoke to anyone at the casino or the police department about the tape," NFL investigator Jim Buckley wrote in a Sept. 9 email to NFL executive vice president and chief security officer Jeffrey B. Miller. The last e-mail on the chain from Buckley says: "I never contacted anyone about the tape."

None of the four potential police departments that *could* have had the tape had heard anything from the league, either:

Attorneys and witnesses sparred over just how aggressive the league was in trying to get a copy of the full video. The four law enforcement agencies that Goodell told the owners the league had sought the video from were the "New jersey State Police, the Atlantic County Solicitor's Office, the Atlantic County Police Department and the Atlantic City Police Department."

However, none of those agencies say they had a formal request from the NFL for any such video. Three of the four agencies named by Goodell never had a copy of the surveillance video; only the Atlantic City Police Department had it, but it never received a written request from the NFL, Miller testified.

When questioned during Rice's hearing whether he knew if the league had tried to obtain the tape, Goodell was vague.

Kessler: "Did you ever learn before or after that that in fact no formal request was made for videos about your security department of the police department who had it is that in fact they never made such a formal request?"

Goodell: "[What] does a formal request mean?"

Kessler: "Are you aware that there [are] laws in the State of New Jersey where people can file formal requests for information from the police department?"

Goodell: "I'm not an attorney."

Kessler: "So on September 9th, Mr. Buckley writes to Mr. Miller, 'again, I never spoke to anyone from the casino or police department about the tape.' Okay. What I'm going to ask you, did you ever become aware prior to imposing your second discipline that security people had not really spoken to the police department or the casino about getting the inside the elevator tape?"

Goodell: “I wasn’t aware of the fact that they tried to get it from law enforcement. I do not know the specifics.”

4) Goodell doomed himself with his own note taking

The poor quality of the NFL’s note-taking was criticized extensively by judge Barbara Jones in her decision to reinstate Rice. Goodell explained why his notes were so sparse during his testimony.

Goodell’s handwritten notes from that hearing were difficult to read and purposely not extensive, he testified, because he prefers to observe players’ actions during a disciplinary hearing.

Most of Goodell’s notes dealt with Rice’s character, including quotes from Ravens officials in the room about the running back’s status in the locker room and in the community. Unfortunately for Goodell, perhaps because he didn’t have reliable notes, he was unable to recall one of the most important pieces of information from the hearing.

Only one of Goodell’s notes deal with the altercation—he wrote the word “struck,” which Goodell initially testified had referred to Janay striking Ray, though he later said it could have referred to Rice saying he had struck Janay.

The NFL tried to win the Rice appeal on a battle of semantics but given the evidence it’s a wonder it tried to fight at all.

Goodell was back in front of the cameras Wednesday touting the league’s new conduct policy. He and his bosses and others were throwing around words like “transparency” and proclaiming that this new policy would fulfill Goodell’s earlier promise to “get it right” in the future. It’s fair to question that assertion after reading the latest OTL report revealing more about Goodell and league’s bumbling of the Rice case.

7 takeaways from the Robert Mueller investigation into the NFL and Ray Rice (SB Nation, January 8, 2015)

An independent investigation into the NFL’s handling of the Ray Rice case has concluded with findings that clear up some of the mysteries surrounding early reports about what took place, as well further condemn commissioner Roger Goodell, the league and the Baltimore Ravens for failing to do their due diligence.

The investigation, led by former FBI director Robert Mueller, encompassed “millions of documents, emails, text messages and electronic data logs” and included interviews with “more than 200 NFL employees and contractors.” Its mission was two-fold: 1) Find out whether the NFL ever obtained the in-elevator video depicting Ray Rice punching his

then-fiancée Janay Palmer and 2) Determine what information was available to the NFL during its investigation before it handed Rice an indefinite suspension.

According to report, the NFL was likely telling the truth when it insisted that it never saw the video before it was released to the public by TMZ last September. That doesn't mean that it did everything it could to obtain the video, nor that it even needed to see it to understand exactly what Rice had done, however.

Sources including message board posters and employees within the league office appeared to be aware of the video's contents when Goodell released a memo to team owners claiming that the TMZ leak had changed his perception of the case. It appears that Goodell, nor the Ravens and others close to the case, did not do as much as he could to determine the truth.

Seven things we learned:

1) The NFL investigation mostly started and ended with law enforcement

The Mueller report castigated the NFL for being overly reliant on law enforcement for information. The NFL did attempt to collect records from the Atlantic City Police Department, but Jim Buckley, the NFL's lead investigator on the case, was rebuffed twice shortly after the incident inside the elevator took place. Buckley also placed calls to the Atlantic City Solicitor's Office, which went unreturned, and spoke with a confidential source who confirmed the existence of an elevator camera but had no access to the tape.

2) Here is everything that the NFL *didn't* do

From the report:

The League could have, but did not, do the following:

- League investigators did not contact any of the police officers involved in responding to or investigating the incident for information about the incident.
- League investigators did not contact the Atlantic County Prosecutor's Office.
- League investigators did not contact the Revel in an effort to obtain a copy of or at least see the video of what had occurred in the elevator or to obtain a copy of any internal Revel reports.
- After the initial contacts with Sanders in February, League investigators did not periodically check with the Ravens to determine whether the team was in possession of additional information. The Ravens, in turn, did not share information that the team learned with the League.
- League investigators did not contact Rice's lawyer for information either while the criminal case was active or after the PTI disposition on May 20 in

anticipation of the June 16 meeting, nor did League investigators contact Rice himself at any point in time.

- League investigators did not go back to ACPD or the Revel after May 20, when Rice's PTI application was approved, to see if more information might then be available to the League.

The Revel Casino and the Ravens were both seemingly well aware of what took place in the elevator, but the NFL did not deem it necessary to check in with them. Nor did the league do much follow-up with police after Buckley's inquiries in February.

3) The Ravens held back information

While the Mueller report condemns the NFL for the not asking the Ravens for information, it doesn't hold the Ravens blameless. The organization, well aware that the NFL was investigating its star running back, did not come forward with the materials it had, including:

- An account of the in-elevator tape's contents as told by Lt. Rodney Ruark, an officer in the Atlantic City Police Department, to Darren Sanders, the Ravens' director of security.
- That Rice's lawyer, Michael Diamondstein, was in possession of the tape.
- That Ravens president Dick Cass had been given a description of the reaction to tape by Diamondstein.

From the report:

Indeed, both Sanders and Cass stated that if the League had asked them directly for information, they would have responded to the League's request. That said, the Ravens possessed this information and well understood that the events inside the elevator were under League investigation. They should have shared with the League information critical to its investigation.

4) The NFL did not see the tape

When Roger Goodell said in September that TMZ's release of the in-elevator tape caught him off guard, it appears he meant it, despite an Associated Press report that the news organization had heard a voicemail from a female employee within the league office confirming receipt of the video.

The AP would not reveal its sources to Mueller for the investigation, so the investigatory team went to exhaustive lengths to determine whether the call to the league office could have taken place. Investigators talked to 50 employees who might have knowledge if the office received the tape, and 188 female employees who denied leaving the voicemail. They found email exchanges that referred to the tape without any hint that any NFL

employee had seen it. They searched the computers and mobile devices of top league executives, including Goodell, for evidence of the tape. Perhaps most impressively, the investigators placed A LOT of phone calls ...

We assembled a database of every call placed on April 9 from the NFL's main number—1,583 calls to 1,050 unique telephone numbers in total. ... As part of that effort, we asked each NFL employee from whose extension calls were placed to identify the person they called. The employees identified NFL vendors, former players, nearby restaurants, doctors' offices, family members, and the like. We then validated that information by calling each person or entity identified. Through this process, we ultimately called all 938 numbers and found no unexplained or unidentified calls from the League on April 9 that reasonably could have been a call acknowledging receipt of the in-elevator video.

... and still found nothing.

5) The NFL didn't *need* to see the tape

But even if someone in the NFL office had seen the tape, it wouldn't have provided any more clarity. The Mueller report corroborated what Judge Barbara Jones had determined in her appeal decision to reinstate Rice: The NFL already knew what was on the tape before it was leaked.

From the report:

Specifically, our investigation found that the League knew the following information:

- On February 19, the League was aware of the outside-the-elevator video, showing Rice dragging an unconscious Palmer out of the elevator. Birch described this video to Goodell as “pretty bad.”
- On February 20, the League received a copy of the complaint-summons, written by ACPD officers who had seen the in-elevator video and charging Rice with “striking [Palmer] with his hand, rendering her unconscious.” A contemporaneous press release from ACPD indicated that the arresting officers reviewed video before making the arrest. Given that it was issued publicly, that release was available to the League.
- By June 6, the League had a copy of the March 27 grand jury indictment, alleging that Rice “did attempt to cause significant bodily injury to [Palmer], and/or did purposely or knowingly cause significant bodily injury to [Palmer] and/or under circumstances manifesting extreme indifference to the value of human life, did recklessly cause significant bodily injury to [Palmer].”

Standing alone, those three pieces of information—one piece of concrete visual evidence from outside the elevator and two generated by the criminal justice system indicated that a serious assault had occurred inside the elevator, thus suggesting a need for further investigation.

6) Message board posters and anonymous sources had the story right

One of the odder facts from the Mueller report was that the news of the Rice incident may have been broken by an InsideHoops message board poster:

In the early morning of February 15 (less than 5 hours after the incident), a commenter named “StateProperty” on InsideHoops—a website relating principally to news about the National Basketball Association—started a thread on a message board titled “Ray Rice arrested for domestic last night.” The comment stated: “My ex coworker texted me said he got arrested last night for a domestic at my old job Don’t know the details but it’ll probably get released later today.” The comment ended with “Revel Casino in Atlantic City.” Just over an hour later, the StateProperty commenter replied to his own thread, stating, “Knocked out his girlfriend TKO [*sic*] style.” At 8:51 p.m., another commenter wrote, “I dare you to call the Baltimore Sun. You could be the anonymous tipster that breaks the story!” StateProperty responded: “I live in Bmore now, I’m walking over as soon as I awake!”

The league was also aware of a report in the Baltimore Sun by reporter Aaron Wilson, who cited an anonymous source who had explicit details of the incident.

By February 16, the League was aware of information provided to Wilson by an anonymous source who identified himself as a Revel employee. The source allegedly stated: “It was horrific. It shocked the conscience. He knocked her out with one punch. She was out for three minutes. He dragged her out like a limp noodle. He hit her so hard. It was unbelievable. We gave her ice packs for her head.” Wilson’s source included specific details like Rice’s full name, date of birth, and home address (all of which appeared in the Revel’s non-public incident file) suggesting that the source had first-hand-or access to first-hand-information. This report was labeled a “witness account” in the materials assembled by the League for the June 16 meeting.

7) The NFL needs to be WAY better organized

The report made a list of recommendations. Among the most glaring is the suggestion that the NFL start transcribing its hearings:

Where a player and interested parties appear before the disciplinary officer, Commissioner, or designee during a disciplinary proceeding, the meeting should

be transcribed so that there is no ambiguity as to what was presented and discussed.

The poor note-taking by Goodell and others who sat in on Rice's disciplinary meeting in June was cited by Jones in her decision to overturn the running back's suspension.

The NFL enacted a new personal conduct policy last month that, among other things, gives the league the flexibility to conduct its own fact-finding independent of police investigation. In addition to that flexibility, however, and the establishment of a Special Counsel for Investigations and Conduct, Mueller report also suggested a series of measures to significantly beef up the NFL's investigatory arm, including:

- Expanding the league's security department.
- Establish a specialized investigative team geared to handle domestic violence or sexual assault cases.
- Creating written guidelines for conducting future investigations.
- Providing annual training for security staff.
- Establishing formal performance reviews of security representatives.
- Clarifying the league's policy on information sharing by clubs during an investigation.

The NFL Players Association objected to much of the new conduct policy, which was not collectively bargained. There is little doubt that the players union would protest again if the NFL adopts some of Mueller's recommendations, which could put players under more scrutiny. Given how Goodell and the NFL league office have handled the Rice case, it's understandable why players may be hesitant to allow the league even more power during investigations.

Thank everyone for supporting this page. With the release of the Mueller report I was disappointed that the NFL was again not held truly accountable. Our dollars are what speaks the loudest. The NFL is trying to get messaging out there about DV and I appreciate that. Let's make sure to keep pushing them when it comes to player conduct. Whether the players think they are role models or not, they are. Keep the pressure on the NFL sponsors to speak out on DV. I still have seen nothing for Gatorade or Gillette or Anheiser Busch. Write them, post on their FB page. Do something!! Don't be silent (January 9, 2015)

Appendix G

Thematic-Content Analysis Findings

	Data Item	Primary Theme	Secondary Themes
1.	“Pointless NFL presser with loads of fibs#commishout [sic] #poorpresser #picket #nfl #goodell” (bhuntr, 2014).	Perception	Deceitful—lied Action: Relieve leadership of duties—Goodell
2.	“Ok commissioner, now that the evidence w/[with]Ray Rice [sic] has surfaced.Here [sic] is your chance 2 right a wrong&prove [sic] your [sic] serious about Domestic Violence” (CharlieBatch16, 2014).	Perception	Apathetic—domestic violence
3.	“@COVERGIRL no. You are just like the @nfl [sic] You just want your \$\$. You don’t stand with us or our children. Shame on you. #boycottcovergirl” (Donna_West, 2014).	Perception	Business first—profit
4.	“@COVERGIRL Your continued promotion of the NFL, despite it’s [sic] serious problem w/ [with] Domestic Violence, is #Shameful #Boycott now in effect” (Dysgyzed, 2014).	Perception	Violent
5.	“The NFL is going to cover it’s [sic] behind and say they never saw the video....you’re [sic] talking about the big bad NFL. They saw it” (HamzaAbdullah21, 2014).	Perception	Deceitful—cover-up Powerful
6.	“The NFL definitely proved through their actions over the last few months that they do not care about domestic violence.”	Perception	Apathetic—domestic violence

	(lenadunham, 2014)		
7.	“As I stated months ago, the Ray Rice suspension was never handled properly [<i>sic</i>] the NFL & the commissioner is [<i>sic</i>] on the clock. SMH [shaking my head]” (MarkMcMillian29, 2014a).	Perception	Incompetent— mishandled domestic violence case
8.	“Now that the #Ravens know what we all new [<i>sic</i>] happened months ago what should be the next step ? [<i>sic</i>] Roger & the #NFL dropped the ball SMH [shaking my head]” (MarkMcMillian29, 2014b).	Perception	Incompetent— mishandled domestic violence case
9.	<p>“[...] The commissioner is merely a CEO of a company he is not any ones [<i>sic</i>] father to teacher someone how to act. If this same situation happened in another company how would you feel if your husband’s job [<i>sic</i>] on the line because he is the CEO of a company and a group wants him thrown out. [<i>sic</i>]</p> <p>The two game [<i>sic</i>] suspension was plenty if there is [<i>sic</i>] no charges. He also put in place fist [<i>sic</i>] and second offenses before the video surfaced.</p> <p>Also no one was saying fire commissioner in other domestic violence cases [<i>sic</i>] this is all like this because there is video evidence. His job should not be on the line this organization is in the wrong and I am a women [<i>sic</i>] speaking on this!!!!” (Iris Phelps, 2014).</p>	Perception	<p>Business first</p> <p>Responsibility—not responsible for players’ misconduct</p> <p>Action: Suspension—two games if no charges filed Action: Relieve leadership—no</p>

10.	“Roger Goodell hasn’t danced this much since his senior prom. #RogerDodger” (RealSkipBayless, 2014).	Perception	Deceitful
11.	“Watched Ray Rice Video. As a man [<i>sic</i>] I am disgusted. As former NFL player [<i>sic</i>] I am ashamed by handling of this by the league. Despicable” (ShaunOHara60, 2014).	Perception	Incompetent— mishandled domestic violence case
12.	“Roger Goodell just doesn’t seem to get it” (talkhoops, 2014).	Perception	Incompetent—weak leadership
13.	“The nfl [<i>sic</i>] is a fuckin [<i>sic</i>] joke! EVERYBODY SHOULD BOYCOTT THE NFL! WATCH IT GO BANKRUPT AND SHUT DOWN! BUNCHA [<i>sic</i>] IDIOTS WORK THERE! AND THEY HIRE STUPID PEOPLE WHO MAKE THE COMPANY LOOK BAD! THEY’VE LOST MY SUPPORT!” (84chevypickup, 2015).	Perception	Incompetent Fandom level— diminished Fan—no
14.	“hitting [<i>sic</i>] females is not cool [<i>sic</i>] but wtf [what the fuck] does that have to do with his football career [<i>sic</i>] such a [<i>sic</i>] over the top reactions from the NFL” (Alex Fernandez, 2016).	Perception	Image driven
15.	“[...] Women continually get blamed for men’s violence. Children become instantly invisible when the mainstream media colludes with NFL ‘leadership’—and the perp is hyped into a ‘victim’” (Alice Bowron, 2014).	Perception	Apathetic—women

16.	<p>“They did it to themselves: recruited head banging thugs, told them they were heroes and role models, paid them more money than [<i>sic</i>] god [<i>sic</i>] and let them get away with anything including murder of people and dogs, because they could sell tickets and bring in the bucks. What the owners did, and NFL management condoned, was a violent culture equal to street gangs.</p> <p>So when that violence spills beyond the legal limits and is memorialized on video, remorseful management is now going to ‘do something about it.’ Yeah, right. And I’m the pope [<i>sic</i>]” (Alice Sullivan Farrell, 2014).</p>	Perception	<p>Violent—players</p> <p>Business first—profit</p> <p>Image driven</p>
17.	<p>“the [<i>sic</i>] NFL is going to fail if it continues with its cavalier attitude that it is above everything. We have elevated this game to a place that it does not deserve. We have foolishly attached city patriotism to a game that leaves men with brain damage and steroid use that is never investigated or reported. Time to bring this ‘sport’ back down off the pedestal and get real” (Angela Sanders, 2014).</p>	Perception	Powerful—operate with impunity
18.	<p>“Everyone is blaming Ray Rice—which they should. Don’t forget: *The cowardly NFL who has at least two other domestic abusers currently playing. *The cowardly NFL who gives</p>	Perception	Incompetent—hypocritical

	<p>four game suspension for Adderall use and two games for knocking out your fiance <i>[sic]</i>. *The NFL who employs former FBI agents on their security team BUT never chose to get the tape. You don't really believe TMZ can get it, but the NFL, with their money, can't. [...]” (asa, 2014).</p>		<p>Deceitful—lied Powerful—money</p>
19.	<p>“[...] This is way more widespread in the NFL and in society than just Ray Rice! I cannot believe that it took a video for people to get outraged. We needed to be outraged when we first heard about it. We need to be outraged still.</p> <p>If the NFL continues to ignore this behavior, they are no better than Ray Rice. If we continue to ignore this behavior, we are no better than Ray Rice, Ray McDonald, Greg Hardy, and the many others that have committed these crimes in and out of the NFL” (Ashley, 2014).</p>	Perception	<p>Violent—culture Apathetic—domestic violence</p>
20.	<p>“wat <i>[sic]</i> can we really do 2 make a difference bsides <i>[sic]</i> talk about it tho <i>[sic]</i> # <i>[sic]</i> they don't giv <i>[sic]</i> a s!?t <i>[sic]</i>” (audreysdad23, 2014).</p>	Perception	Apathetic—domestic violence
21.	<p>“but <i>[sic]</i> they have pink shoes and gloves! They have to care. Just hit'em <i>[sic]</i> where it hurts... <i>[sic]</i> sales...<i>[sic]</i>” (Jdd_NtxRedRdr, 2014).</p>	Perception	Apathetic—women
22.	<p>“Because the NFL is influential, and the information was relevant</p>	Perception	Powerful—influential

	considering the recent incident” (BDSandM, 2014).		
23.	<p>“[...] The NFL fucked up. The Baltimore Ravens fucked up. The San Francisco 49ers are currently fucking up.</p> <p>As Keith Olbermann said last night, this was not a mistake, this was a cover-up, and every single person involved should resign” (Beejoli Shah, 2014).</p>	Perception	<p>Incompetent—mishandled domestic violence case</p> <p>Deceitful—cover-up</p> <p>Relieve leadership of duties</p>
24.	<p>“Domestic violence can simply be a 4th degree charge of yelling too loud at your girlfriend. They’re gonna <i>[sic]</i> suspend a player 6 <i>[sic]</i> games for that? Goodell is a coward and part of the liberal mafia that is destroying this nation” (BigTalk, 2014).</p>	Perception	<p>Image driven</p> <p>Incompetent—weak leadership</p>
25.	<p>“The NFL puts talent over morals and jersey sales. They tried to bury this and it back fired” (Billy Jean, 2014).</p>	Perception	<p>Business first—talent</p> <p>Deceitful—cover-up</p>
26.	<p>“It’s not about hate... <i>[sic]</i> It’s about sending a message and forcing change. That typically comes with some sacrifice. The multi billions <i>[sic]</i> the NFL generates allows them to act with relative immunity, especially as popularity grows. Doing the right thing hurts their on the field <i>[sic]</i> product and fans have proven that that is more important than being morally right in their decisions. [...]” (bj316, 2014).</p>	Perception	Powerful—money
27.	<p>“[...] I see the league as enabling horrible behavior—behavior that</p>	Perception	Violent—culture

	<p>society at large still decides to be slow about punishing. I think at its most fundamental level, the league isn't inextricably tied to, say, spousal abuse—but it enables a culture where violent behavior is permissible as long as you're showing up on the field.</p> <p>Maybe it's a fool's errand to try to make that distinction, but I think it does matter in some — because what I love about football is the sport itself. I don't think the sport of football is laden with these issues—the institution of the NFL just enables their perpetuation. [...]</p> <p>The rest of it I see as boys-club culture that can be understood in a broader social context—without being sport-specific (just enabled by the power and money associated with the sport)” (BlueJeans, 2014).</p>		<p>Fan—yes</p> <p>Fandom level—high</p> <p>Powerful—money</p>
28.	<p>““Stop hitting your women it is making it difficult for us to continue to swindle the american [<i>sic</i>] people out of their money’—Roger Goodell” (bobjonesishere, 2014).</p>	Perception	Business first—profit
29.	<p>“They don't give a fuck about domestic violence, [<i>sic</i>] They got a [<i>sic</i>] agenda. what it is, I don't know” (Break The Chains, 2015).</p>	Perception	Apathetic—domestic violence
30.	<p>“This guy lied, and covered the abuse up, for his own gain(greed) [<i>sic</i>], now he wants to educate people?? Please..... someone</p>	Perception	<p>Deceitful—lied, cover-up</p> <p>Business first—profit</p>

	hand me a bucket, I'm going to throw up now" (BriteDiamond, 2014).		Action: Education—insufficient
31.	<p>"Until today, the NFL considered beating your girlfriend to be more acceptable than substance abuse violations.</p> <p>I thought I was cynical, but I just don't see this as bad. It's a victory against abusive culture perpetuated in sports that begins in high schools across America and lasts lifetime with brutal consequences.</p> <p>I'm not [<i>sic</i>] Goodell fan, and everything he does is reactive. He had complete control over the Rice situation and still does, the only thing that's changed since the laughable 2 game suspension of Rice was that Goodell buckled. It's obvious all that matters is image. [...]</p> <p>I'm glad the NFL tackles the role they do in insisting that the players follow a standard of conduct. [...] These guys are not victims of a social condition, they are the benefactors and abusers" (Bro Namath, 2014).</p>	Action	<p>Perception: Apathetic—domestic violence Perception: Violent—culture Perception: Incompetent—hypocritical</p> <p>Suspension—approval of first offense penalty Ban—approval of second offense penalty</p> <p>Perception: Image driven</p> <p>Code of conduct—enforce stricter policies</p>
32.	<p>"[...] It's a slap in the face that a player that smoked pot received a harsher punishment than the guy that beat his wife unconscious. It's appalling that the NFL is trying to use plausible deniability to cover up their poor reaction to this event. IT'S. JUST. PLAIN. SAD" (Carla, 2014).</p>	Perception	<p>Incompetent—hypocritical; mishandled domestic violence case</p> <p>Deceitful—cover-up</p> <p>Action: Code of conduct—equitable</p>

			punishment depending on misconduct
33.	<p>“[...] the NFL is actively engaged in changing. They have been trying to own up, and reform, and to create a better environment overall in the NFL. [...] Ray Rice is the one who ‘got away with everything’ and it wasn’t the NFL that let him...it was the U.S. justice system” (chachaslide, 2014).</p>	Perception	Responsibility—accepted
34.	<p>“my [<i>sic</i>] tax money is already taken for this stupid fucking sport. now [<i>sic</i>] its [<i>sic</i>] used to sell laws into action.....</p> <p>holy [<i>sic</i>] fuck I hate this sport even more....</p> <p>[<i>sic</i>] men are not born assholes. women [<i>sic</i>] hit too!!! infact [<i>sic</i>], its [<i>sic</i>] more often but men dont [<i>sic</i>] call the police about it.. [<i>sic</i>]” (Chad W, 2015).</p>	Perception	<p>Powerful—influential</p> <p>Fan: No Fandom level: Low</p>
35.	<p>“[...] nfl [<i>sic</i>] needs to practice what they preach. To me drugs are just as bad and should have a little more than a fine and a game suspension” (Chelsea Dawson, 2015a).</p>	Action	<p>Code of conduct—equitable punishment depending on misconduct</p> <p>Perception: Incompetent—hypocritical</p>
36.	<p>“This is a joke and a slap to the face to the women fans of the NFL” (cleija3, 2014).</p>	Perception	<p>Apathetic—domestic violence; women</p> <p>Action: Suspension—more than two games</p>
37.	<p>“It’s a shame, and it’s sad, but I don’t think it’s a problem for the NFL as a whole. It’s all about</p>	Perception	Responsibility—not responsible for players’ misconduct

	personal responsibility” (Stephanie Cobb, 2014).		
38.	<p>“I’m a feminist and the NFL’s treatment of the whole situation is bullshit. Pressuring HER to apologize?!? Fuck that shit. Only two game suspension?!? Bullshit!</p> <p>But, I can’t start hating the game that easy... It’s a shitty internal struggle... : (“ (coffeebeanqueen, 2014).</p>	Perception	<p>Incompetent— mishandled domestic violence case</p> <p>Action: Suspension— more than two games</p> <p>Fan—yes Fandom level—high</p>
39.	<p>“[...] It is sad that the NFL hold [<i>sic</i>] so lightly the overall character of these players as necessary to give a well-rounded view of a team sport so many people love to watch [...]” (concerned, 2014).</p>	Perception	<p>Apathetic—players</p> <p>Fan—yes Fandom level— unclear</p>
40.	<p>“That man should be thrown out of the nfl [<i>sic</i>] and thrown into jail.</p> <p>Shame on those deciding his punishment. Smh [shaking my head]” (MrKnighton2u, 2014a).</p>	Action	<p>Ban</p> <p>Perception: Incompetent</p>
41.	<p>“Unless Peyton Manning violates the new policy. If he does they will rip this page right out of the rule book and say we never had a domestic violence policy.</p> <p>I hope all players are held to the same standard” (12hawksfan12, 2014).</p>	Perception	<p>Incompetent— hypocritical</p> <p>Action: Code of conduct—equitable punishment depending on misconduct</p>
42.	“Good. Now, I’d like Goodell to hold a conference and explain	Perception	Deceitful—lied

	<p>how Peter King had seen the video, wrote about it, and reported it play by play before the head of the entire National Football League even knew about it. Goodell has made a string of awful decisions. [...] You absolutely cannot convince me that Roger Goodell is not lying himself about ‘not seeing’ it and labeling it as ‘new video evidence’.</p> <p>If you watch that and still give him the two, Goodell should be packing his bags, too” (Alex, 2014).</p>		<p>Action: Relieve leadership of duties—Goodell</p>
43.	<p>“We have politicians asking for Goodell to resign, [<i>sic</i>] look the NFL is a business, any business acts in this way, this is why we have laws and law enforcement who are supposed to be separate from big business in doing the job of protecting the people. The truth here is that we are asking the NFL to do what law enforcement is supposed to do and that is throw these bullies in jail. Politicians are supposed to create laws to ensure these beaters are thrown in jail, fined or at least detained so they can’t show up on the football field. [...]</p> <p>The Point [<i>sic</i>] is, we have to stop expecting the NFL to be Judge and Jury and then executioner. [...] Therefore [<i>sic</i>] while it is commendable to ask the NFL to do something, it dose [<i>sic</i>] not solve the problem.</p>	Action	<p>Perception: Business first</p> <p>None—law enforcement punishes criminal activity</p> <p>Perception: Responsibility—not responsible for players’ misconduct</p>

	Abuse in the NFL is a very small number compared to over all [sic] society [...] Goodell has felt the pressure and he is taking action. The Politicians [sic] and Law [sic] enforcement should do their part as well or whatever the NFL does is mute” (Alter, 2014).		Perception: Violent—overstated
44.	<p>“The current leadership of the NFL cannot be trusted to fairly, genuinely implement policies that address domestic violence. There is a burgeoning, insurmountable credibility gap.</p> <p>The NFL has an obligation to do better, and a position of public trust—benefiting from broad antitrust exemptions granted by Congress, and hundreds of millions of dollars in taxpayer benefits” (Richard Blumenthal, 2014).</p>	Perception	<p>Deceitful—lied</p> <p>Apathetic—domestic violence</p> <p>Powerful—money</p>
45.	<p>“This is disgusting. The NFL needs to come down much harder on Domesti [sic] Violence [sic]. Furthermore [sic] the NFL needs to come down hard on Teame [sic] that aware of Domestic [sic] Violence [sic] incidents and do not report them to Law [sic] Enforcement [sic] and the League [sic] Office [sic].</p> <p>Rehabilitation is great but I do not know how well that would work if the the [sic] player does not truly want to change.</p> <p>If the NFL suspends Tom Brady 4 games and the Team [sic] gets fined a million dollars and loses</p>	Perception	<p>Apathetic—domestic violence</p> <p>Action: Rehabilitation</p> <p>Incompetent—hypocritical</p>

	First Round Draft Pick for letting a little bit of air out of a ball, the NFL can certainly punish real crimes such as Domestic [<i>sic</i>] Violence [<i>sic</i>] much more seriously. No wonder the NFL is losing ratings” (BubbaB, 2016).		
46.	<p>“I’m a HUGE football fan but I am not going to watch anymore NFL football until Roger Goodell resigns. I am going to share this on my Facebook page and I’m going to challenge all my friends, especially the men, to not watch any more NFL football until this happens.</p> <p>There is a severe cover-up going on about to domestic violence in their ranks and the NFL administration needs to address this” (Devon Corcoran Boyd, 2014).</p>	Action	<p>Fan—yes Fandom level—diminished Relieve leadership of duties—Goodell</p> <p>Perception: Deceitful—cover-up</p>
47.	“nor [<i>sic</i>] do they care about animal torture, since [<i>sic</i>] Michael Vick still has a job. I do not care about football” (MaryAnnRoseMD, 2014).	Perception	<p>Apathetic—domestic violence Fan—no Fandom level—low/nonexistent</p>
48.	“‘educate’ [<i>sic</i>] playes [<i>sic</i>] on domestic violence? what [<i>sic</i>] does that even mean [<i>sic</i>], how [<i>sic</i>] do you need ‘education’? Is taking a 2 hour [<i>sic</i>] seminar going to suddenly open these steroid abusing jock bullies that hitting a woman is wrong—they just never thought of it before they were ‘educated’ [<i>sic</i>]” (Ethan Velling, 2014).	Action	<p>Education—insufficient</p> <p>Perception: Violent</p>
49.	“He may be a weasal [<i>sic</i>] or	Perception	Responsibility—not

	whatever, but what happened to her happened because of ray [<i>sic</i>] rice [<i>sic</i>] and not about this dude..." (Gidget Hrobowski, 2015)		responsible for players' misconduct
50.	".....and [<i>sic</i>] after he teaches them about domestic violence, he will move on to teaching about using condoms, the threat of STD's, firearm safety and the responsibility of financially supporting your baby mamas and your kids....thank God, America has a football league to show them the right way to live....lol [laugh out loud]..." (Guest, 2014).	Action	Education—insufficient
51.	"Well these guys have children looking up to them as role models. That's one reason [for the NFL to care about domestic violence]" (Kyle McCormick, 2015).	Perception	Powerful—influential
52.	"Ousting him won't fix the culture of dismissiveness. Why don't they make all coaches and him to an HR training on how to handle these in the future?" (Lacie Wallace, 2014)	Action	Relieve leadership of duties—no Perception: Apathetic—domestic violence Education—all personnel
53.	"Way to go Radisson [for pulling sponsorship of Minnesota Vikings following Adrian Peterson child abuse case]! Now that someone has spoken the owners [<i>sic</i>] language (money), perhaps the right thing will be done" (brucetrimble, 2014).	Perception	Business first—profit
54.	"Good for the Radisson [for pulling sponsorship of Minnesota	Perception	Business first—profit

	Vikings following Adrian Peterson child abuse case]. Hitting these NFL owners in their wallets is the only thing they understand” (nyneal, 2014).		
55.	“sponsors [<i>sic</i>] of the nfl [<i>sic</i>] need to start doing the same..... Would even that get Goondell [<i>sic</i>] fired? Only if 31 billionaires and the Packers agree.. [<i>sic</i>]” (eljefedelmunro, 2014)	Action	Relieve leadership of duties—Goodell
56.	“[...] Ask yourself then when do corporations have any kind of moral compass over profit?” (briang123, 2014)	Perception	Business first—profit
57.	“Very good points, but I fear that a new commissioner will simply be a symbolic way to mislead the public. That being said, his furious efforts at damage control are amusing at best and condescending at worst. [...]” (NFL Fans Against Domestic Violence, 2014a)	Perception	Deceitful—misleading Image driven Incompetent—weak leadership
58.	“It’s infuriatingly ridiculous to say it’s men’s responsibility to stop domestic violence. It’s the same as saying it’s black people’s responsibility to stop going to jail. Fuck this politically correct bullshit. I’m sick of the NFL” (Rusty Shackelford, 2015).	Perception	Responsibility—not responsible for players’ misconduct Fan—no Fandom level—diminished
59.	“[...] Although the NFL dragged their heels in this, I am glad to see this reaction in the long run” (Sandra Grace Doner, 2014).	Action	Perception: Apathetic—domestic violence Suspension—approval of first offense penalty Ban—approval of

	<p>never sinned would disagree.</p> <p>The N FLI [<i>sic</i>] cares MORE about the significant others then [<i>sic</i>] there [<i>sic</i>] own players.e [<i>sic</i>] the players in the league with playing a money making Thursday game with no Bye [<i>sic</i>] week beforehand. Hypocrites.</p> <p>Of course [<i>sic</i>] the NFL like most Sports [<i>sic</i>] believes in guilty until proven innocent. [...] THE [<i>sic</i>] NFL should tell the do gooders [<i>sic</i>] to mind their own business! Talent wins out” (wayno, 2016).</p>		<p>Perception: Incompetent— hypocritical</p>
64.	<p>“I have no love for this dude, and I was horrified the NFL originally gave him a two game [<i>sic</i>] suspension. That said, I can’t help but feel like it was wrong to fire him suddenly for the same crime. It doesn’t take a genius to know something BAD happened in that elevator.</p> <p>I don’t think the NFL suddenly cared that this man is a wife beater. They just don’t want to look bad. Too late” (wilde flower, 2015).</p>	Action	<p>Code of conduct— equitable punishment depending on misconduct</p> <p>Suspension—more than two games</p> <p>Perception: Image driven</p> <p>Perception: Apathetic—domestic violence</p>
65.	<p>“In the NFL’s defense, they also don’t give a shit about the men that play on their teams, given their collective ‘meh’ about the life-destroying effects of chronic traumatic encephalopathy” (Cunctator, 2014).</p>	Perception	<p>Apathetic—players</p>

66.	<p>“And before anyone gets it twisted, the Black [<i>sic</i>] men who are being splashed all over the media as the face of the NFL’s abuse problem are not the sole alleged perpetrators. PLENTY of white players have been accused and/or convicted of abuse but their stories have been conveniently ignored. The NFL has been covering up this issue for AGES and ALL players guilty of abuse need to be exposed, not just the Black [<i>sic</i>] ones” (Cynthia Hamlin, 2014).</p>	Perception	<p>Deceitful—cover-up</p> <p>Action: equitable punishment depending on misconduct</p>
67.	<p>“Excellent. I never cared one way or another about football, and have never in my life even considered supporting the NFL. The fact that they appear to be tone deaf assholes is even more justification for my position. Win!” (dalila, 2014).</p>	Perception	<p>Apathetic—domestic violence</p> <p>Fan—no</p> <p>Fandom level—low/nonexistent</p>
68.	<p>“What the Commissioner REALLY means to say is: ‘You all have really short memories, and if you’re [<i>sic</i>] team wins, you’ll forget all about how almost all the players abuse their kids and women. Now how about you go buy some season tickets...’ Does that about sum it up?” (darknesscrown, 2014)</p>	Perception	<p>Apathetic—domestic violence</p> <p>Violent—players</p> <p>Business first</p>
69.	<p>“NFL claims they never saw the video. What a crock. You mean to tell me that little ole TMZ can get hold of it, yet the 9 billion dollar a year NFL couldn’t? Please, how stupid does Goodell think people truly are? This is a classic case of CYA [cover your</p>	Perception	<p>Deceitful—lied, cover-up</p> <p>Powerful—money</p> <p>Image driven</p> <p>Business—profit</p>

	<p>ass]. They hoped no one else would see it and now that it's out in public domain, they want to cover their a\$\$es [sic].</p> <p>Goodell is an idiot. Always has been always will be. Owners better smarten up, or this stupid fool is going to cost them dearly.</p> <p>Plus [sic] the fact [sic], I love how this idiot comes down hard on people who weren't even charged or arrested, let alone appear in court, but comes down easy on those who were. I say we make ourselves heard and hit them where it hurts, their wallets. But that will never happen and business will go on as usual. Cause [sic], heaven forbid, there be no football" (darkone, 2014).</p>		<p>Action: Relieve leadership of duties—Goodell</p> <p>Incompetent—hypocritical</p>
70.	"I'm not surprised the nfl [sic] would do that" (ree, 2014).	Perception	Deceitful
71.	<p>"Amen. I can't say I have watched a football game in my entire adult life, but the phony war on women has never been much of a passion for me.</p> <p>Perhaps the good folks here could chronicle how many of these athletes who happen who share a melanin level treat their women like shit instead of railing on every honkey, redneck gun owner" (dirtlumpio, 2014).</p>	Perception	<p>Fan—no Fandom level—low/non-existent</p> <p>Violent—players</p>
72.	"Even if I bothered to be a couch potato and watch that mindless fake-masculinity crap called football, I wouldn't enjoy being	Action	<p>Fan—no Fandom level—low/non-existent</p> <p>None—separate policy</p>

	preached at about domestic violence in the process. Now everybody get out your pink for October and sever your testicles while you're at it. [...]" (DisturbedToad, 2014).		from sport
73.	"Pretty much what I figured, just didn't try to find out so they can later play ignorant...." (DodgersKings323, 2015).	Perception	Deceitful—lied
74.	"I'm sorry, but I have to wholeheartedly disagree with this article. I am supposed to stop supporting a team I grew up loving because the asshole higher ups made and [<i>sic</i>] a completely terrible decision? I have to choose between being a feminist and supporting a team whose fan ship [<i>sic</i>] is huge part of my identity? Of course [<i>sic</i>] Ray Rice is a piece of shit and so are the people supporting him, but I'm not a bad person for still loving my team. I thought we were allowed to disagree with the way people and organizations handle things, but that doesn't mean we hate them. I'm mad at SCOTUS. Should I abandon the United States? Yeah, they fucked up big time. But I will not give up my team because Goodell is a fucking idiot" (DonnaDraper, 2014a).	Perception	Incompetent— mishandled domestic violence case Fan—yes Fandom level—high
75.	"Calling the lawyer you just hired to do a billion dollar TV deal with DirecTV an independent investigator is an insult to everyone's intelligence" (DrunkWino, 2015).	Perception	Deceitful—misleading

76.	<p>“Mueller was bought and paid for by Goodell and his supporters. That he found ‘no evidence’ of a call is the least shocking thing ever” (KevinBailey, 2015).</p>	Perception	Deceitful—misleading
77.	<p>“The NFL is not your family. It is a multi-billion dollar [<i>sic</i>] enterprise that doesn’t give two shits about you. [...]” (DrunkyMcStumbles, 2014).</p>	Perception	<p>Business first—profit</p> <p>Apathetic—fans</p>
78.	<p>“it’s all about money” (Elflaco_RM, 2014)</p>	Perception	Business first—profit
79.	<p>“I’m kind of shocked that your support of a professional sports team is a huge part of your identity (it’s [<i>sic</i>] surprises me because it’s just a brand, being a fanatical supporter of Windex makes as much sense to me).</p> <p>It illustrates how the NFL can get away with almost anything, though. If your support of your team is unconditional, then, as is pointed out in the article, they have no reason to change.</p> <p>Unless they lose eyeballs by the millions, yours included, they will go on their merry way” (Enfant de Chienne, 2014).</p>	Perception	<p>Fan—no Fandom level— low/non-existent</p> <p>Powerful—operate with impunity</p> <p>Business first—profit</p>
80.	<p>“The NFL has lower rates of crime/misconduct than society on average, but more is expected of them. There seems to be an agenda underway by the media...let’s be rational and fair.</p> <p>I don’t like Goodell...too many</p>	Perception	<p>Violent—overstated</p> <p>Deceitful—cover-up</p>

	rules during the game, and he hasn't been forthcoming/clear on major stuff like domestic violence" (Eric Joseph Williams, 2014).		
81.	<p>"Rodger Goodell is paid nearly \$1M a week to do the right thing. Either he needs a raise or needs to [sic] fired because he is not doing the right thing. The NFL could actually implode and be out of business because of what is going on. All it takes is for one major sponsor to pull their advertising money because of substantial customer backlash, and the rest will immediately follow. As long as Goodell remains things can only continue to go downhill because he is dishonest. There is no fixing stupid. This is not about NFL player criminality which is drastically less than the general population of same age group statistically. This is about NFL owner ego, greed, and careless attitude about player criminality. The NFL is an entertainment business, and when that message reaches home, forget about player suspensions, there wont [sic] be any NFL period. It has been mentioned that Condelezza Rice who has always had interest in the commissioner job be brought on board" (Fareed Ansari, 2014).</p>	Action	<p>Perception: Incompetent—weak leadership</p> <p>Relieve leadership of duties—Goodell</p>
82.	<p>"We can hate Ray Rice, the Baltimore ravens, and goodell's [sic] punishment while we enjoy our nfl [sic] Sundays [sic]. You</p>	Action	<p>Fan—yes Fandom level—unclear</p>

	<p>see ray [sic] rice [sic] is one player on one team of 53 players. The ravens are 1 of many teams.</p> <p>Yes [sic] the nfl [sic] has criminals in it. And yes [sic] some have committed horrendous act [sic].</p> <p>But i [sic] ask you how does such a large company stay up to your standards. [sic] I am not defending the nfl [sic] but they can only punish the players according to policy and the facts at the time. Mainly due to lawyers from the other side. I am more disappointed in the police in charge of this case. They had the ability to charge and convict ray [sic] rice [sic] with more than they did. Its [sic] a bad deal all around. But to boycott a game in seattle [sic] st [sic] louis [sic] or Miami because of the individual actions of one moron is ridiculous” (gablesanderson 3, 2014).</p>		<p>Perception: Violent—players</p> <p>None—law enforcement punishes criminal activity</p>
83.	<p>“I couldn’t imagine not watching it on Sundays, but my mom’s very turned off [by how the NFL handled the Rice case]. She said, ‘The NFL makes me not want to watch the sport’” (Julia Garrity, 2014).</p>	Perception	<p>Fan—yes Fandom level—high</p> <p>Incompetent— mishandled domestic violence case</p>
84.	<p>“@sfujita55 @MsMoochelle I completely agree with you...poor look by the #NFL” (gcat43207, 2014).</p>	Perception	<p>Incompetent— mishandled domestic violence case</p>
85.	<p>“But since the NFL, the umbrella organization for all professional</p>	Perception	<p>Apathetic—domestic violence</p>

	<p>football in the United States, thinks that arranging dog fights is deserving of a harsher punishment than knocking your partner out cold, no you really can't support professional football with your money and not be a hypocrite if you actually believe that people shouldn't be able to BEAT THE SHIT OUT OF OTHER HUMAN BEINGS" (GertrudeRises, 2014).</p>		
86.	<p>"This was a cover - up [<i>sic</i>] from the start. Problem is players are forgiven just about anything short of murder because fans do not want to lose the game. Everyone covers up for them. Coaches do not want to lose a good player. It [<i>sic</i>] time [for] professional players to be treated like regular people. They are not heroes - they just play a game. There are plenty of people out there who could play just as well. This is all about big money" (good ole boy, 2014).</p>	Perception	<p>Deceitful—cover-up Business first—profit</p>
87.	<p>"one OJ isn't enough? I'm getting done w/ [with] NFL. Can't abide w/ [with] that message. Peace" (harrison2911, 2014).</p>	Perception	<p>Violent—players Fan—no Fandom level—diminished</p>
88.	<p>"all I can say is wow. NFL did terribly on this one" (IngravenVids, 2014).</p>	Perception	<p>Incompetent— mishandled domestic violence case</p>
89.	<p>"Public [<i>sic</i>] Relations [<i>sic</i>] move by Goodell and the National Felon League" (Isayshowmee, 2014).</p>	Perception	<p>Image driven Violent—culture</p>
90.	<p>"The order of priority: Profit</p>	Perception	<p>Business first—profit</p>

	over principle. It's the business of football's ethics and morality, women's physical safety and lives be damned" (Scoop Jackson, 2014).		Apathetic—domestic violence
91.	"As sportswriter Dave Zirin noted, the NFL doesn't have a domestic violence problem, the U.S. does. The NFL has a cover-up problem" (Jacob Brown, 2014).	Perception	Deceitful—cover-up
92.	"NFL = Thugs , Thugs , Thugs nothing more , bunch of guys on steroids bashing each others [sic] brain, amazing how much attention these thugs get & how much \$\$ they make. Our kids have to work 3 jobs just to b [sic] able to finish college with no real future with all that hard work & here is these Thugs [sic] make more in 1 game than an engineer or a Dr [sic] makes in a yr [sic], our priorities r [sic] screwed up [sic]. American [sic] is doing dwn [sic], dwn [sic], dwn [sic] & the world knows it" (jamicaman900, 2014).	Perception	Violent—players
93.	<p>"Like Junior Seau, the NFL exploits these players [sic] talents through violence, then jus [sic] releases them. We know not all soldiers get 'shell shocked' yet debriefed before released. NFL backs avg [sic] 30 autowrecks [sic] a game getting slammed around.</p> <p>**NFL FAILED, Ray Rice and wife should of [sic] been forced treatment 1st!!!! as Junior Seau</p>	Perception	<p>Apathetic—players</p> <p>Incompetent—mishandled domestic violence case</p>

	who cracked several times before he died” (James, 2014).		Action: Rehabilitation
94.	<p>“Easily researched the Net [<i>sic</i>], the incredibly long list of NFL players involved with criminal activity, is dis-heartening [<i>sic</i>] and opens the league to charges of being nothing more than thugs and college dropouts. Most of the criminal offenders are black.</p> <p>This latest round of bad behavior is not new. It has been going on for decades in this league, a profession prone to looking the other way in order to keep the gravy train of profits on [<i>sic</i>] tract [<i>sic</i>]. [...]</p> <p>I think the commissioner should step down, based on a long, long track record of criminal behavior tolerated by the office.</p> <p>Then, the new person needs to sit down with folks from all walks of life and draft a new moral code of some type. The current status quo obviously isn’t working” (John Schwendler, 2014).</p>	Perception	<p>Violent—culture</p> <p>Deceitful—cover-up</p> <p>Business—profit</p> <p>Action: Relieve leadership of duties—Goodell</p> <p>Action: Code of conduct—update</p>
95.	<p>“This is all such a crock! The Ravens had to have seen this full video months ago and it wasn’t a problem until the PR got negative [<i>sic</i>]! Same with the NFL [<i>sic</i>]! The fans had no problem with how they received him at camp (giving him a rousing welcome), the legal system said it’s OK (no jail) and his ‘then fiancée [<i>sic</i>]’ didn’t</p>	Perception	<p>Deceitful—lied</p> <p>Image driven</p>

	<p>have a problem with his behavior (she married him later) but now that it's a big deal from a PR standpoint, let's throw him overboard [<i>sic</i>]!</p> <p>What Ray Rice did was despicable but this move makes everyone else look like the total hypocrites they are where no one will take a stance about anything based on morals and/or ethics but only dollars ! [<i>sic</i>] And it includes the NFL, the Ravens, the bulk of all NFL players who offered no condemnation of Ray Rice and his wife too since she's made the choice to raise a daughter in that environment. Everybody likes to play the victim and blame someone else for all their problems but this leaves everyone looking bad [<i>sic</i>]!" (John, 2014a).</p>		<p>Incompetent—hypocritical</p> <p>Business first—profit</p>
96.	<p>"Story headline should read: 'Now That Everyone Sees What Really Happened, NFL and Ravens Have No Choice'. Raise your hand if you believe for one second that the NFL and the Ravens only saw a 'portion' of the video. This is bologna and is disgusting... they [<i>sic</i>] almost certainly saw this full footage months ago and were willing to brush it under the rug. But now that we all get to see it, and react, they act like they're also shocked and are doing the right thing" (John, 2014b).</p>	Perception	<p>Deceitful—cover-up</p> <p>Image driven</p>
97.	<p>"I think the league is tone deaf to a lot of cultural things. Society</p>	Perception	<p>Apathetic—domestic violence</p>

	has evolved, I don't think the NFL has evolved'" (Elise Johnson, 2014).		
98.	<p>"As the mother of two school-age children, I'm dismayed that a major sports organization like the NFL does not take allegations of abuse serious [<i>sic</i>]. Why do sponsors serve as the voice of reason and morality in the NFL? Why can't we demand and expect better as fans, as women, and as a society from a multibillion-dollar sports business?'" (Katherine Johnson, 2014).</p>	Perception	<p>Apathetic—domestic violence</p> <p>Fan—yes Fandom level—high Powerful—money</p>
99.	<p>"Goodell institutes an ad hoc hearing outside of CBA [Collective Bargaining Agreement] rules, when a player fails to comply with the ad hoc rule, [<i>sic</i>] he then delivers an ad hoc penalty that is going to do serious damage to the player's livelihood and career - [<i>sic</i>] and this after demanding sealed Court [<i>sic</i>] documents, which the player had no ability to unilaterally deliver, and which were not delivered. He's pushing this issue without any pretense of due process for the player, which would be understandable if these guys were at-will employees, but I thought the CBA existed at least in part for these kind of issues. [<i>sic</i>] It will be interesting to see how an arbitrator rules. Hard to see how Goodell could ever serve as a disinterested party at this point.</p>	Perception	<p>Incompetent—hypocritical</p> <p>Business first—profit</p>

	And he should drop the b.s. [<i>sic</i>] About [<i>sic</i>] caring for Peterson's kids. Goodell represents the NFL owners in this case. That's it" (JPRS, 2014).		
100.	<p>"The message is, 'We don't care what you did off the field as long as you and your talent help us win'. That has always been the problem. Owners and teams can thump their chests talking about how they banished Ray Rice because of how morally upstanding they are, but were he talented enough to help a team he would have found a place. Michael Vick ran a dog fighting ring in which dogs were horrifically murdered and he has played for two teams since then. Donte Stallworth killed a man while driving drunk and high and he played for several teams after. Ray Lewis was involved in a murder and he played for over a decade after. The bottom line is talent will always override personal issues. As long as the NFL allows these players to keep playing teams will take advantage of it, just like the Cowboys did with Hardy" (JT, 2016).</p>	Perception	Business first—talent
101.	<p>"The NFL is no different then [<i>sic</i>] any other large competitive organization (NHL, NCAA, NBA) or for that matter any other organization (Target, Walmart, McDonalds, Kmart, etc, etc.) the list goes on and on. All organizations and corporations have a certain</p>	Perception	Image driven

	<p>reputation they wish to maintain and uphold. Large sports organizations are unlike local or national business because their employees (players) are sense [sic] on TV and in their local community, as such fans idolizes [sic] them (including children) and these players as such become role models [sic] wanted or not. So, when illegal or irrepressible circumstances transpire the league is forced to act in an appropriate manor [sic] that says ‘we [sic] do not wish to deal with men who are immature, or unhealthy for the NFL and fan base. It may be a hard concept to understand, but the NFL has to maintain a certain reputation and cannot let people who break the law go unpunished. This would in turn hurt their reputation, ratings and eventually their financial situation. As ESPN has said numerous times when a player is charged for criminal or domestic offenses they become ‘bad for business’. Eventually, time, community service and winning games will heal these wounds and people will grow to forget past mistakes. But when they first initially happen its [sic] all about damage control for the NFL and the player” (Justin R, 2015).</p>		
102.	<p>“This is going to make e-sports more popular. I don’t watch sports. It’s for neanderthals [sic] and frat boy douchebags. Why bother in this barbaric behaviour [sic] when you can take out your</p>	Perception	<p>Incompetent— mishandled domestic violence case</p> <p>Fan—no Fan—low/non-existent</p>

	frustrations by playing video games? Ray Rice is a beta male” (Kirk B, 2015).		
103.	“@sfujita55 You should never comment on a situation you know nothing about. To say the NFL doesn’t care about women is crazy” (ladiesman2452, 2014).	Perception	Apathetic—untrue
104.	<p>“Something would have to happen with the Bears [for me to stop watching football]. If Jay Cutler did what Ray Rice did, I would stop watching.</p> <p>Before this week I held the NFL in a different view. It seemed different - like <i>[sic]</i> families and communities were important to them. But I know it’s just a business now” (Nicole Larvick, 2014).</p>	Perception	<p>Fan—yes Fandom level—high</p> <p>Business first</p>
105.	“[...] I get very little sense that there is a will to correct this. Seems more like it’s someone else’s problem. [...]” (Winston Grey, 2014)	Perception	Apathetic—domestic violence
106.	“The NFL represents everything that is wrong in this country. I was a big fan, but I’m done. Done” (Leron Ray, 2016).	Perception	<p>Apathetic—women Fan—no Fandom level—diminished</p>
107.	“America <i>[sic]</i> you are sick on so many levels... Save the speech as your Old Money Network boys used the all seeing <i>[sic]</i> eyeball network for Roger’s lies & now this crap as they are promoting the poster child of women beaters Floyd Mayweather in a fight this	Perception	<p>Business—profit Deceitful—lied</p> <p>Image driven</p>

	weekend for how 2 players are still on active rosters after beating a woman.. FAKE as always, MONEY rules America so enjoy the fake speech & propaganda about how they give a shit..." (Levi DeSousa, 2014).		
108.	"Goddamn it, I know [the NFL messed up the Rice case]. And I can't stop watching my Pats. The self-loathing isn't fun" (LtCmndHipster, 2014).	Perception	Incompetent— mishandled domestic violence case Fan—yes Fandom level—high
109.	<p>"[...] The NFL was not, itself abusing women, but it was sending a message, loud and clear, that beating women isn't really that big of a deal. So while supporting the NFL, you may not be supporting the actual beating of women, but you are tacitly supporting their message that it's not as much of a problem as smoking pot or fighting dogs, and it's pretty much NBD [no big deal].</p> <p>Changing the policy after the fact was a step in the right direction, though I'm not entirely convinced that was anything more than a smokescreen at this point (Barry wrote a good article about it over on Deadspin [<i>sic</i>]). It will certainly be interesting to see how it plays out in the future. If the NFL changes its ways, then it will earn some measure of forgiveness for botching this one so badly. But until then, it continues to be the league who thought 2 games was a-ok [<i>sic</i>]</p>	Perception	<p>Apathetic—domestic violence</p> <p>Action: Suspension— approval of first offense penalty</p> <p>Action: Ban— approval of second offense penalty</p> <p>Incompetent— mishandled domestic violence case</p>

	for someone who knocked his fiancée out and drug her out of an elevator like she was a bag of trash” (LuckyMc44, 2014a).		
110.	“Does the NFL value women? [...] If you look at every DV [domestic violence] case the NFL has been very lenient when it come [<i>sic</i>] to suspen [<i>sic</i>]” (deemason85, 2014).	Perception	Apathetic—domestic violence
111.	“do [<i>sic</i>] NFL fans give a shit about women? Come on, don’t be like that. We all care about women. The question you meant to ask is: does the NFL give a shit about women?” (macanamera, 2014).	Perception	Apathetic—women
112.	“this [<i>sic</i>] speech is the reason I stopped watching NFL. WE AS MEN?? WTF. I never hit a woman u [<i>sic</i>] fucking pussified motherfucker. NFL has gone to the feminist [<i>sic</i>]” (koskesh, 2015).	Perception	Fan—yes Fandom level—diminished Apathetic—untrue
113.	“It doesn’t matter how great there [<i>sic</i>] relationship is now or who takes responsibility. The NFL is a business. Kids and Adults [<i>sic</i>] look up to people in this business, and if you do stuff like this in public, it make [<i>sic</i>] for bad publicity. Publicity goes down and the businesses [<i>sic</i>] income does down, therefore you fire the person responsible. It [<i>sic</i>] would had done the same thing” (MarineHover, 2015).	Perception	Business first Image driven Action: Ban
114.	“You can’t tell me that they did	Perception	Deceitful—cover-up

	not see the video. Sending the coach out there to be an escape goat repeatedly saying the something [sic] over and over speaks volumes to a cover up. I know for people that have never scene [sic] domestic violence and just hear about it, but to see it is on a whole another level. But what about the prosecutors [sic] this man does not even get charged. They did what was best because of public opinion [sic] they need to all be investigated” (Mike Dom, 2014).		Image driven
115.	“I guess that whole pink October thing is just a cash grab then—Hippocrates [sic]” (MiniBulldawgBru, 2014).	Perception	Apathetic—women Incompetent—hypocritical
116.	“[...] perhaps the most egregious part of the NFL’s ‘investigation’ was that Goodell interviewed Palmer for her version of the event...while she was sitting next to Rice!” (MoeMoeYa, 2014).	Perception	Incompetent—mishandled domestic violence case
117.	“[The two-game suspension is a] Baby step...” (Nancy Ann Babyak, 2014)	Action	Ban
118.	“Uh oh... now it’s hitting the Shield (er, their bank account). Time to protect the money (er, the Shield)” (sportsfan18, 2014).	Perception	Business first—profit
119.	“Oh and don’t underestimate the hypocrisy of talking the time to condemn a league on a website that wouldn’t exist if it weren’t for this awful league and people. Not to mention almost all the stories and enormous traffic it’s	Perception	Business first—profit

	getting right now is centered around this ‘awful’ league and it’s [<i>sic</i>] decisions. Nothing is going to change because the teams are owned by billionaires and making money hands over fists and will continue to do so. It all comes down to money and I’m positive while Radisson pulling out may get good press there are most likely a dozen other companies ready to take their place because the Vikings are in the NFL and right now everyone is watching. \$\$\$” (ericdre, 2014).		
120.	“And, as we all know, this is the only opinion that matters to the NFL” (lks311, 2014).	Perception	Business first—profit
121.	“Stop with all the b.s. [bullshit] If we watched football because of the character of the player and not the talent then Tim Tebow would have never been ridiculed for bowing in prayer and would still be playing. Anyone who has watched the game, bought tickets, or merchandise is as culpable as A.P. [Adrian Peterson] You can’t claim ignorance. Don’t teach your kids that these guys are heroes and don’t be surprised when a 29 year old [<i>sic</i>] man who has been sheltered from reality since he was in high school isn’t your belief of what a football player is. I love football but it does not guide my life” (vikingofny, 2014).	Perception	Business first—talent Fan—yes Fandom level—moderate
122.	“Days without an arrest tracker	Perception	Incompetent—weak

	should be changed to Days [<i>sic</i>] without an owner, GM, Commissioner, or player saying or doing something stupid. My guess is it would stay at 0 forever” (brownsmakemecrazy, 2014).		leadership
123.	“I guess we’ll find out what the Vikings value more: Winning or money. I don’t think the fans fit into the equation anywhere” (In Teddy We Trust, 2014).	Perception	Business first—profit Apathetic—fans
124.	“Nobody wants their name and trademark standing behind immoral fools fully and completely supporting child abuse and abusers” (bobnelsonjr, 2014).	Perception	Apathetic—domestic violence
125.	“[...] This is a problem bigger than the NFL. But is there a more prevalent organization that has taken numerous steps to hide? Used it’s [<i>sic</i>] media strength to blame victims? And succumbed to no pressure (except sponsors in the 11th hour) to change its systemic non-response?” (NFL Fans Against Domestic Violence, 2014b).	Perception	Powerful—popular Deceitful—cover-up Apathetic—domestic violence Business first—profit
126.	“We wish to draw attention to the lack of leadership by NFL ownership for the sake of on field performance. We aspire for dignity and positive action” (NFL Fans Against Domestic Violence, 2014c).	Perception	Incompetent—weak leadership Business first—talent
127.	“An alleged bounty system gets a year suspension. A videotaped assault on a female is only 2	Perception	Incompetent—hypocritical

	games.. Interesting” (nolasnativeson, 2014).		
128.	“What is new is revelations that owners and the league office seem to be callous about unacceptable behavior. Whereas domestic violence is a serious issue, the impact of the Rice case is enhanced and made potentially of greater significance because it comes after cases such as the New Orleans Saints case [intentionally hurting players on other teams], the Miami Dolphins case [doing nothing about racial abuse within a team] and other cases of violent acts in which a team and the league [were] slow to act or did not seriously punish the player. I suspect most fans realize that occasional bad acts by players are inevitable, but what they may be less willing to overlook is behavior by management that does not take bad behavior seriously” (Roger Noll, 2014).	Perception	Apathetic—players
129.	“[...] I feel compelled to comment on this after seeing the disgusting video of Ray Rice clobbering his wife like a boxer. Let me first say that I think the NFL is beyond hypocritical for waiting until the video came out to take actual disciplinary action. I mean what did they think he did in that elevator?” (Omar Suleiman, 2014).	Perception	Incompetent—hypocritical
130.	“Football player is ok [<i>sic</i>] beat your wife...thats [<i>sic</i>] why football is a disgrace,,,,, [<i>sic</i>] the	Perception	Apathetic—domestic violence

	real football is the best soccer. No animals play” (Paul Argotte, 2014).		
131.	“I’m going to become a football player so I can start murdering people and get off scot free” (Plaham, 2015).	Perception	Apathetic—players
132.	“Favre sends dick pics.. Rice beats his wife.. Roethlisburger rapes... Vick fights dogs.... I think we need to do a little [sic] more psychiatric evaluations before letting someone join the league... Just because they can run a 7 second 40 yard [sic] dash. DOES NOT MEAN THEY DESERVE TO GET PAID AS MUCH AS THEY DO AND GET AWAY WITH CRIMES!!!!” (PoopStinkPie, 2014).	Action	Screening Perception: Apathetic—domestic violence
133.	“As long as you keep that money flowing the @nflcommish will laugh his way to the bank even if he has 2step [sic] over @RayRice27 knocked out wife” (touque42, 2014).	Perception	Business first—profit
134.	“NFL Commissioner is a stooge.. [sic] he [sic] clearly lied in the Ray Rice case, and is making it up as he goes. He is setting the NFL up for a major lawsuit. Well [sic] see if the owners love him , [sic] when he starts costing them money” (PusherOfButtons, 2014).	Perception	Incompetent—weak leadership Deceitful—lied Business first—profit
135.	“Here’s the problem. The NFL is suppose [sic] to be about football. Not ex-players or commentators using someone	Perception	Responsibility—not responsible for players’ misconduct

	<p>else's issues to gain spotlight time. It's easy for them to demonize Ray Rice so their voices can continue to be heard on something they were never hired to do or comment on, on TV. It's amazing when it comes to something like this (Ray knocking out his girlfriend) these people think it's their place to teach the rest of us what they think WE should think. Guess what? NONE of us were in that elevator. Did she pull a knife or a gun, threaten to kill him? We don't know what led to the smack down. People who think that women can't be threatening or violent and should just walk away from them, are idiots. Women are equal enough to a man to go to war these days and become Marines, carry machine guns and kill in the name of war..." (Rob Fulco, 2015).</p>		
136.	<p>"If the NFL is getting an F on domestic violence, then what grade does the American Justice System get for doing even less than the NFL did?" (Rob, 2016).</p>	Perception	Incompetent—mishandled domestic violence case
137.	<p>"This has no place in professional sports. People tune in to see the game, not to be preached to. Not about masculinity, not about guns, not about offensive monikers, not about homosexuality. This will be the downfall of the NFL" (rowerskeeprowing, 2014).</p>	Action	None—separate policy from sport
138.	<p>"[CBS Sports Commentator James Brown] is just pandering</p>	Perception	Apathetic—domestic violence

	because people are starting to realize that maybe they shouldn't be watching a sport that thought stuff like this is ok [<i>sic</i>]" (ryancsmith2003, 2014).		
139.	"Yeah, that does not follow. So now I cannot support any entertainment that does not hold the exact same values as I do without being a hypocrite? Goodbye to literally ALL of the entertainment, then. No. Hypocrisy would require me to support THAT aspect of it. I don't. And the NFL no longer considers it [domestic violence] a negligible offense" (SaintClarence27, 2014a).	Perception	Fan—yes Fandom level—unclear Apathetic—untrue
140.	"Totally shameless by the NFL. How can we show them it's not right? I'll avoid the NFL package this year. 1,000 [<i>sic</i>] people x \$250=250k" (sburroughs40, 2014).	Perception	Apathetic—domestic violence
141.	"If its [<i>sic</i>] a problem across the U.S. its [<i>sic</i>] not just the nfl [<i>sic</i>] fault its [<i>sic</i>] the education system of America [<i>sic</i>]. Its [<i>sic</i>] clear there is major failure in the U.S to each [<i>sic</i>] young males about domestic violence [<i>sic</i>]. So the blame for the problem should firstly go on Obama before anyone else" (miles, 2014).	Perception	Responsibility—not responsible for players' misconduct
142.	"Enjoying the idiocy of the NFL leadership and their priorities... You're going to love this: The bullshit that is the NFL leadership.. [<i>sic</i>] Anquan Boldin was fined 8K for a head butt to	Perception	Incompetent—weak leadership Incompetent—hypocritical

	an opposing player and this guy was fined 11K for wearing the wrong color socks. Nice priorities NFL. Really.. well done.. A-holes..." (Boycott NFL Sponsors, 2014a).		
143.	<p>"Yet another example of the absurdity of the NFL's priorities.</p> <p>I grew up loving football. For the first 16 years of my life I watched the NFL all day on Sunday. Now, I will not allow my kids to watch any NFL games. Only college football for the foreseeable future. The entire leagues [<i>sic</i>] is a disgrace to the sport and the only way to hurt them is to boycott their sponsors.</p> <p>All the [<i>sic</i>] care about is the all mighty \$. Concern for player healthy [<i>sic</i>], providing role models for the community, basic moral values have no place in today's NFL and I will not watch!" (Justin Garrison, 2014).</p>	Perception	<p>Incompetent</p> <p>Fan—yes Fandom level—diminished</p> <p>Business first—profit</p> <p>Apathetic—players</p> <p>Apathetic—fans</p>
144.	"Time to tell the sponsors they're supporting abuse of women" (Jay R. Thacher, 2014).	Perception	Apathetic—domestic violence
145.	"[...] The NFL leadership including Commissioner Roger Goodell continues to demonstrate a severe lack of moral priorities and it is time for fans to step up and do something [...]" (Boycott NFL Sponsors, 2014b).	Perception	Incompetent—weak leadership
146.	"So... time to rant against my second favorite sport... Ray Rice was suspended for 2 [<i>sic</i>] games	Perception	Apathetic—domestic violence

	<p>today for beating the crap out of his fiancée, now wife, in a casino, [sic] on camera. Then while still unconscious taking her upstairs and dragging her out of an elevator, and it is all on video so there is no denying that it happened. 2 games for violent physical assault on a woman.</p> <p>Meanwhile, the #NFL suspends players who get caught smoking weed for the 2nd [sic] time for 4 [sic] games. 4 [sic] games for smoking weed. Now, I am no Rhodes scholar, but this ‘logic’ is well... [sic] let’s use an appropriate term.. [sic] BULLSHIT! There is never a reason to be physical with a [sic] another person, let alone a woman, and even crazier, a person you have asked to marry. I don’t get, [sic] I don't like it.</p> <p>The #NFL leadership has some really screwed up priorities and it is time for the fans to step up and do something. [...] The ONLY, ONLY way to send a message to thee [sic] NFL is financially. They see no other color than green. [...]” (Boycott NFL Sponsors, 2014c).</p>		<p>Incompetent—hypocritical</p> <p>Business—profit</p>
147.	<p>“This speaks volumes about the NFL. If you are a star you can do what you want with no fear of *real* repercussions. This truly is a Pacman Jones slap-on-the-wrist all over again.</p> <p>Furthermore [sic] you have Nigel Bradham who got caught with a</p>	Perception	<p>Apathetic—domestic violence</p> <p>Incompetent—hypocritical</p>

	<p>negligible amount of Marijuana who got two times the length of a suspension as Ray Rice who knocked his fiancée unconscious and dragged her in a Casino.</p> <p>It is no wonder the opinion network pegs the NFL as: Dangerous, Unappealing, and Hypocritical.</p> <p>There just seems to be a disconnect from reality with a clueless Goodell leading the show” (scruffy, 2014).</p>		<p>Violent—culture</p> <p>Incompetent—weak leadership</p>
148.	<p>“This is STUPID & here is why... [sic] If you are a female who is being or has been abused the first responsibility falls on parents. I have 2 daughters (young ladies) [sic], I don't need the NFL to tell me anything about DV [domestic violence]. [...]</p> <p>The NFL is a business... ‘Expect Nothing Else [sic]’ from them. [...]” (Sir Martin, 2015).</p>	Perception	<p>Responsibility—not responsible for players’ misconduct</p> <p>Business first—profit</p>
149.	<p>“My fandom has certainly faded.</p> <p>I think the Rice punishment, and then later cobbled together policy against domestic violence is all CYA [cover your ass]. [...]” (sportz.star, 2014).</p>	Perception	<p>Fan—no Fandom level—diminished</p> <p>Image driven</p>
150.	<p>“They won’t take the violence they perpetuate on men every week for the sake of some cash seriously so I can’t imagine them ever caring about women” (stacyinbean, 2014).</p>	Perception	<p>Apathetic—players</p> <p>Apathetic—women</p> <p>Business—profit</p>

151.	<p>“Fact of the matter is that they did try to cover it up, so ask Goodell and the Raven’s owner. Maybe to keep one of the premier running backs on your team, if you’re the ravens. Which in turn the NFL benefits from. Isn’t that obvious?</p> <p>And yea [<i>sic</i>] reputation matters because NFL is brand with an image and standards to uphold. They want it to go overseas like baseball and basketball.</p> <p>The revenue isn’t effected [<i>sic</i>] either way bc [because] we Americans love football no matter what. Sponsors love football. The Superbowl [<i>sic</i>] is the most watched [<i>sic</i>] event on TV year after year. Commercials pay multi million [<i>sic</i>] dollar amounts for 30sec [second] intervals of air time” (stayjammin, 2015).</p>	Perception	<p>Deceitful—cover-up</p> <p>Image driven</p> <p>Powerful—popular</p>
152.	<p>“What Peterson did was appalling and his lack of contrition has been conspicuous, but the NFL’s seemingly improvised, PR driven excuse for a policy has been so ham-handed and erratic that you wonder whether they aren’t intentionally screwing it up so his suspension gets overturned, he’s free to play, and Goodell says: ‘Gee, what can we do? We tried to discipline the guy. I guess he’ll just have to play and we are plenty upset about it, I’ll tell ya [<i>sic</i>]’” (stoa1, 2014).</p>	Perception	<p>Image driven</p> <p>Incompetent— mishandled domestic violence case</p>

153.	<p>“Goodell’s punishments were definitely initially a response to the perception that guys were getting away with things because of good lawyers - [sic] the Leonard Little one always comes to mind, and it did get pretty bad for a while around that time. But after a while it became a situation where A. even when the courts got it right Goodell was expected to pile something on top, just because; and B. again, he’s trying to play to an audience that isn’t too big on small details and sometimes wants blood when its [sic] unjustified.</p> <p>I trust the courts to make responsible decisions about complicated cases much better than an image-conscious commissioner or a sensationalist public” (Stoned Slacker, 2014).</p>	Perception	<p>Image driven</p> <p>Action: None—law enforcement punishes criminal activity</p>
154.	<p>“I begrudgingly agree with much of this and you’re right - the response to domestic violence in the NFL is atrocious and it is gross to support the organization. [...] The pass given to violent offenders in the NFL is horrific but I think that’s a larger problem with our society that requires addressing. I don’t think shutting off the TV will change that because it’s a mentality - they can change the rules (and very well might after this) but that does jack for the thought process behind it [...]” (SugarHil, 2014).</p>	Perception	Apathetic—domestic violence

155.	“It isn’t just him but he doesn’t get it. Unless it affects profits” (Susan Saleem, 2014).	Perception	Incompetent—weak leadership Business first—profit
156.	“[...] The NFL screwed up, the Ravens screwed up, but worst of all the legal system screwed up, and that disappoints me more than anything” (Tim, 2014).	Perception	Incompetent—mishandled domestic violence case
157.	<p>“Watched Goodell’s speech today & questions. Little on specifics, even about what or how much NFL is giving/helping domestic violence organizations etc.. It’s not rocket science when you have players KO [knock out] women and whipping 4yo’s [four year olds] yet he speaks with little specifics & in over arching [<i>sic</i>] general terms with little promises except to say hoping for changes by the Superbowl [<i>sic</i>].</p> <p>What a load of ... a speech by some PR firm and vetted by lawyers.</p> <p>It’s all about \$\$\$ - [<i>sic</i>] note the phrase ‘ZERO tolerance’ is avoided like the Ebola virus” (Tomas Lee, 2014).</p>	Perception	<p>Incompetent—weak leadership</p> <p>Image driven</p> <p>Business first—profit</p>
158.	“lol [laugh out loud] the nfl [<i>sic</i>] is so fucking full of shit. where [<i>sic</i>] was this reaction like over half a year ago when the incident actually happened? did [<i>sic</i>] the nfl [<i>sic</i>] give a fuck then? hell [<i>sic</i>] no [<i>sic</i>], he got suspended for like two weeks.	Perception	Apathetic—domestic violence

	But [<i>sic</i>] now that the video has gone viral and there's all this public out cry [<i>sic</i>], suddenly domestic violence is the nfl's [<i>sic</i>] top priority. fuck the nfl [<i>sic</i>] and fuck anyone who buys into this sensationalized bullshit" (Trevor Houdek, 2015).		Image driven
159.	"what [<i>sic</i>] does that mean... 'They took full responsibility'? If all Ray gets is a slap on the hand...then it tells all the little boy and girls that's it's no big thang to hit or even knock out each other. 'Domestic violence it [<i>sic</i>] how we do it. You wanna [<i>sic</i>] be like us? This is how we treat each other. NFL approves it. The fans approve it. Sponsors approve it. You can beat the shit out of each other.... whip your kids, with a stick, bust your son's nuts with a switch...that is totally OK, too. NFL will try to sweep it under the rug. Let's keep this sick culture going. Let's not learn from the past" (Tulips ontheorgan, 2015).	Perception	Apathetic—domestic violence Violent—culture Deceitful—cover-up
160.	"The message to my wife & 3 daughters today? The business that's been such a big part of your life, really doesn't give a f**k about you" (sfujita55, 2014).	Perception	Apathetic—women
161.	"NFL don't [<i>sic</i>] care about domestic violence cases...battered women are nothing more than interruption of damaged goods down an assembly line.	Perception	Apathetic—domestic violence Business first—profit

	All the NFL really cares about is LIVE WARM BODIES TO FEED THE MONEY MAKING MACHINE. [...]" (UrbanSipfly, 2016).		
162.	"@sfujita you [<i>sic</i>] might be suspended & fined for showing the hypocrisy of @nfl" (vegasbob1975, 2014).	Perception	Incompetent—hypocritical
163.	"The NFL is a disgrace to the human race... A money hungry morally corrupt monopoly played by millionaire wife/ child / animal abusers, rapist, steroid users, murderers and pretty boys who have hung up their jock straps for dresses while trying not to damage their petictures [<i>sic</i>]. The NFL (National Felons League) is a shameful role model for our youth. [...]" (Wayne Lester, 2014).	Perception	Business first—profit Violent—culture
164.	"[...] [If] You don't think the police and NFL security didn't have a copy of this video in their hands in Feb. [<i>sic</i>] think again. This was all part of a cover up by all parties. Little nerd finally decided to sell his copy to TMZ and the whole Goodell [<i>sic</i>] and Ravens cover up blew up today" (Www'SportsCashSystems'Com, 2014).	Perception	Deceitful—cover-up
165.	"This is dumb. Its [<i>sic</i>] not like Goodell is out there telling players to do this. He's just trying to sweep it under the rug" (Yuon Flemming, 2014).	Perception	Responsibility—not responsible for players' misconduct Deceitful—cover-up

166.	“Am I the only one who believes it should be a lifetime ban for the first time a player commits domestic violence? They should be done period” (3rd_Goal, 2014).	Action	Ban
167.	“Ravens have to waive Rice today or they are cowards. New video is appalling. I’d like to see someone in the NFL do the right thing for once” (BillSimmons, 2014).	Action	Ban Perception: Incompetent
168.	“NFL Players Association should demand that Ray Rice be banned from NFL. I’d be damned if I had to be associated with him” (CoyWire, 2014).	Action	Ban
169.	“So [<i>sic</i>] I just saw the Ray Rice video from inside of the elevator. If Roger Goodell doesn’t kick him out of the league for that then Goodell need [<i>sic</i>] 2 [<i>sic</i>] be fired” (derrickward32, 2014a).	Action	Ban Relieve leadership of duties—Goodell
170.	“[...] How the hell do you get suspended more games for smoking weed than u [<i>sic</i>] do for beating your wife? [...]” (derrickward32, 2014b).	Action	Code of conduct— equitable punishment depending on misconduct
171.	“[Rice’s] teammates that are the leaders should do just like Gerry Bertier did in Remember the Titans [<i>sic</i>] and tell Coach Harbaugh they don’t want him on the team anymore. [...]” (derrickward32, 2014c).	Action	Ban
172.	“[Rice] should not be allowed to play football. Period” (KahlilBell32, 2014).	Action	Ban

173.	“2 games?!?! His ass needs to be in jail. I don’t smoke weed but I’d rather have a weed head on my team than a Ray Rice. #Coward” (LeCharlesBent65, 2014a).	Action	Suspension—more than two games
174.	“NFL players want to stand up for some shat, [<i>sic</i>] don’t play against Ravens until Rice is suspended indefinitely. What if that was YOUR daughter?” (LeCharlesBent65, 2014b).	Action	Suspension— indefinite
175.	“No way I would attend a game with that young man playing the sport so many before us laid it all on the line for #StopDomesticViolence” (MarkMcMillian29, 2014c).	Action	Ban
176.	“You [<i>sic</i>] telling me if this was your Mom [<i>sic</i>] or daughter you wouldn’t be outraged [<i>sic</i>] this young man should be done #NFL WOW” (MarkMcMillian29, 2014d).	Action	Ban
177.	“I’d have a tough time, sitting in that locker room and being a teammate of ray [<i>sic</i>] rice [<i>sic</i>] after seeing the 1st [<i>sic</i>] clips but def [<i>sic</i>] after the full vid!” (Mr4thAndLong, 2014).	Action	Ban
178.	“Hey @nfl & @nflcommish, are you guys releasing more of that cool pink merchandise? Ya [<i>sic</i>] know, so women can get pumped for football? #2games” (MrKnighton2u, 2014b).	Action	Suspension—more than two games
179.	“As players [<i>sic</i>] we must speak up. Stand up for what’s right. I don’t give a damn who u [<i>sic</i>] are	Action	Ban

	or how much money you make. No place for this” (MrKnighton2u, 2014c).		
180.	“No football for me today. Fire Goodell and I may return. #BoycottNFL @nflcommish @nfl #FireGoodell” (WeShopLocalLLC, 2014).	Action	Relieve leadership of duties—Goodell Fan—yes Fandom level—diminished
181.	“You mean @TMZ_Sports could obtain damning evidence against Ray Rice that legal system, NFL couldn’t - [sic] or they chose to overlook?” (EdwerderRFA, 2014).	Perception	Deceitful—lied
182.	“NFL is not the police, so why the fuck NFL has to do something about it? GO TALK TO THE FUCKING POLICE [...]” (Abbon, 2014).	Perception	Responsibility—not responsible for players’ misconduct
183.	“When did it become the responsibility of an employer to ‘police’ its employees? Ray Rice and his now wife, [sic] need to reconcile this in privacy. It is their concern and should not be our business” (Amerigo Vespucci, 2015).	Action	None—law enforcement punishes criminal activity
184.	“Toss the big boss and all the mid managers fear for their jobs” (Amy Laird, 2014).	Action	Relieve leadership of duties
185.	“[...] I have not had any mixed feelings at all when it came to these domestic violence incidents because it’s not like it hasn’t been happening before and it happens to a lot of people, both celebrities and normal people and in every sport and any other occupation [...]” (Tiffany	Perception	Fan—yes Fandom level—high Violent—culture

	Anderson, 2016a).		
186.	“I’m not sure [what the NFL could do to combat domestic violence]” (Tiffany Anderson, 2016b).	Action	Unsure
187.	<p>“First of all, Goodall [<i>sic</i>] should be forced to resign.</p> <p>This jerk is responsible for it becoming the National Felony League. He has let convicted felons back in the NFL over and over, and these thugs know they can get away with anything.</p> <p>If [<i>sic</i>] the NFL knew about this tape and did nothing(2 games is nothing) [<i>sic</i>] then they should have Goodalls [<i>sic</i>] head on a platter. [...]” (Anonymous, 2014).</p>	Action	<p>Relieve leadership of duties—Goodell</p> <p>Perception: Violent—culture</p> <p>Suspension—more than two games</p>
188.	“Released a video that was private and it was something private between them and the courts. Not for the whole world to see! They Both [<i>sic</i>] got arrested for simple assault and went to counseling. So now he lost his job that was providing for his family. If she forgave him and married him that’s her business! If this is the case... [<i>sic</i>] Y’all [you all] should make Ben Roethlisberger lose his job [<i>sic</i>] he sexually assaulted 2 [<i>sic</i>] women but is still in the league” (Becca Grace, 2014).	Action	Code of conduct—equitable punishment depending on misconduct
189.	“I think the point is that you are indirectly supporting this bullshit by supporting the NFL, as are the rest of NFL fans. I don’t really	Perception	

	know what it means to say that you don't support them politically and yet continue to support them financially; they don't give a shit if you're a feminist and they won't change because they have your money and attention" (benjaminlover, 2014).		Business first—profit
190.	"Roger Goodell's position as Commissioner of the NFL is no longer tenable. Whether he saw the #RayRice video or he did not, he failed" (KeithOlbermann, 2014).	Action	Relieve leadership of duties—Goodell
191.	"[...] if Goodell's resignation is the ONLY result of our efforts, then the victory will have been merely symbolic. That said, I think his removal should absolutely be ONE of the objectives we're aiming for, as the man shows very little evidence of caring about anything except PR [public relations] and damage control... [sic] which, given the seriousness of the issues here, means he's incompetent" (Bill Girard, 2014a).	Action	Relieve leadership of duties—Goodell Perception: Image driven Perception: Incompetent—weak leadership
192.	"[...] the objective of demanding Goodell's resignation isn't to kill the NFL but to hold it and its leaders accountable, and to set a precedent that Goodell's replacements will likewise be held accountable, too" (Bill Girard, 2014b).	Action	Relieve leadership of duties—Goodell
193.	"The NFL should have zero tolerance for domestic violence.	Action	Code of conduct—zero tolerance

	There is never a reason for any man to be violent towards any woman” (ChrisHarrisJr, 2014).		
194.	“[...] Of course [<i>sic</i>] it isn’t just him. Of course [<i>sic</i>] more needs to be done. But getting Goodell fired would be a powerful [<i>sic</i>] symbolic step” (Bob Lamm, 2014).	Action	Relieve leadership of duties—Goodell
195.	“[...] Players need to be held to a higher standard because kids are watching. [...] As a mom I look at it all and say people need to be held more accountable. It bothers me because my kids are growing up watching this and somebody else’s kids are growing up watching this. I get a little disillusioned, but at the same time some players are out there going to children’s hospitals. Some players are doing amazing things so I try to focus on that more and [<i>sic</i>] as I teach my kids, there is good and bad in everything. We still have the power to do better as a society, and as a person we choose how we want to go and look at it” (Kris Calpin, 2014).	Action	Code of conduct— enforce stricter policies
196.	“I’m a die hard [<i>sic</i>] ravens [<i>sic</i>] fan and I believe ban was harsh especially if she already forgave him. Can’t we forgive him too? He was my favorite player what he did was wrong [<i>sic</i>] maybe out a season but ban from the nfl [<i>sic</i>] I don’t agree with that” (Chelsea Dawson, 2015b).	Action	Fan—yes Fandom level—high Suspension—one season Ban—too harsh
197.	“Educate? how [<i>sic</i>] about teach	Action	Education—

	<p>them that there are actually consequences to their actions rather than letting them off light?</p> <p>Goodell is an over paid [sic] idiot. Not only could I do his job for .01% of his salary, I could do it better” (Chris Farnsworth, 2014).</p>		<p>insufficient</p> <p>Code of conduct—enforce stricter policies</p> <p>Perception: Incompetent—weak leadership</p>
198.	<p>“[In response to the NFL’s updated domestic violence policy] Whoa!!! 👍” (Christine Kiessling Wolf, 2014)</p>	Action	<p>Suspension—approval of first offense penalty</p> <p>Ban—approval of second offense penalty</p>
199.	<p>“Really? They need to be ‘educated’ that beating the snot out of your spouse is not appropriate behavior. It is not a question of education. It is a question of a complete lack of morals and a society that treats them like demi-gods when most of them are illiterate knuckle draggers that play a child’s game for a living” (Clarissa Liverwurst, 2014).</p>	Action	<p>Education—insufficient</p> <p>Perception: violent—players</p>
200.	<p>“Should Ray Rice have to lose his career just because his domestic violence incident was caught on camera while other athletes who have had domestic violence incidents are still playing? That’s something the NFL will need to sort out. The only difference between Ray and the others seems to be the camera. I’m not saying that Ray shouldn’t get punished. My point is what about the others who have had domestic incidents but are still playing? How will the NFL determine who should and</p>	Action	<p>Code of conduct—equitable punishment depending on misconduct</p>

	shouldn't lose their careers over domestic violence? Will it only be those players caught on camera?" (CrowdPleeza, 2015a).		
201.	"Well the NFL can't fire all the players they suspect of hitting their wives. I'm sure you wouldn't want to lose your job based on the suspicions [<i>sic</i>] of your boss. You would ask for proof. So [<i>sic</i>] the video is proof enough" (ussanjacinto1, 2015).	Action	Code of conduct
202.	"I'm just curious about how consistent the NFL will be in dealing with players and domestic violence. Should Ray Rice be able to play in the NFL? Yes [<i>sic</i>] he should if other players involved in domestic violence are also allowed to continue playing" (CrowdPleeza, 2015b).	Action	Code of conduct—equitable punishment depending on misconduct
203.	<p>"If you want my opinion, it would be that ALL players proven to be domestically violent should be banned for life, the same as for any sport in any country. [...]</p> <p>When there's copious amounts of money and power involved, it's very likely morals will take a backseat in factoring in decision making when dealing with such matters.</p> <p>The NFL, the same as perhaps most large sports institutes [<i>sic</i>] today are extremely hypocritical and inconsistent, more concerned with appearing to be moral so as</p>	Action	<p>Ban</p> <p>Perception: Business first—profit Perception: Powerful—money</p> <p>Perception: Incompetent—hypocritical</p> <p>Perception: Image driven</p>

	to save face rather than <i>[sic]</i> actually holding a moral stand point <i>[sic]</i> in their culture” (Daniel Eden, 2015).		
204.	<p>“The problem here is twofold: the fact that the NFL has no clear system in place, and the trial by Facebook that seems to drive the NFL reactions <i>[sic]</i></p> <p>While it is acceptable to place people on administrative leave with or without pay pending criminal proceedings (many places including governments do that), and while it is ok to state that people with convictions will not be employed (this is many times the case), most companies have clear standards for this - <i>[sic]</i> it seems the NFL does not or is making the <i>[sic]</i> up as things develop.</p> <p>The NFL teams clearly have no issue with employing felons (a sceptic may say that they actively seek to employ them), so I do not understand what makes [Adrian] Peterson different (as opposed to say Vick, <i>[sic]</i> both have done so far what a court ordered them to do). [...]” (CTTaxpayer, 2014).</p>	Perception	<p>Incompetent</p> <p>Image driven</p> <p>Violent—players</p>
205.	“[In reference to the NFL’s updated domestic violence policy] About time!” (Daisy Dillon Haley, 2014).	Action	Ban
206.	“Fire Goodell” (Darth Divac, 2014).	Action	Relieve leadership of duties—Goodell
207.	“[...] I also think it was totally	Action	Suspension—

	right that he lost his job & was indefinitely suspended [...]" (David Keenan, 2015).		indefinite
208.	"Its [<i>sic</i>] the NFL ,if [<i>sic</i>] I wanted this guys [<i>sic</i>] thoughts I'd read his arrest record" (De Bigbear, 2014).	Action	None—law enforcement punishes criminal activity
209.	"It isn't just him [Goodell]!" (Diane Barkelew Wallace, 2014).	Perception	Violent—culture Action: Relieve leadership of duties
210.	"Can I care about the sport of football and still care about women? How about we go with what all NFL fans would agree with. Fuck Rodger [<i>sic</i>] Goodell. He's the <i>fuhrer</i> of the NFL. I'll be glad when he's gone. [...]" (Diesel, 2014).	Action	Fan—yes Fandom level—high Relieve leadership of duties—Goodell
211.	"Yes [<i>sic</i>] I just got out of a meeting and head [<i>sic</i>] the good news. Hate the players, not the game" (DonnaDraper, 2014b).	Action	Ban
212.	"[...] Goodell didn't need to see the tape, regardless of what happened the NFL domestic violence policy was set and he had to give Ray Rice a punishment that was consistent with other cases. The only reason Rice received another indefinite suspension was because you, TMZ, released a video six months after it happened, and it was so conveniently released after the first NFL Sunday. [...]" (DoublleChief, 2014).	Action	Suspension—two games sufficient
213.	"The problem is that any punishment by the NFL will	Action	

	result in delay of court punishment and treatment. Look what happens for DUIs and drug charges: the court proceedings get continued for over a year to after the NFL season is over. I would rather the NFL do some Domestic Violence Awareness month, as it is probably sorely needed, rather than <i>[sic]</i> increase or pretend to increase the punishment that results in delayed treatment” (Drewsterino, 2014).		Anti-domestic violence partnership
214.	“Goodell Gone” (EdWhoKnowsBest, 2014).	Action	Relieve leadership of duties - Goodell
215.	“i <i>[sic]</i> am a survivor. getting <i>[sic]</i> rid of him isnt <i>[sic]</i> going to do anything at all. it’s <i>[sic]</i> the whole attitude and culture of the NFL. AND its <i>[sic]</i> the culture of society at large. when <i>[sic]</i> you see a man hit a child or woman do you intervene or call the police, <i>[sic]</i> no <i>[sic]</i> , most people just turn their head and pretend they didn’t just see that. [...] we <i>[sic]</i> must normalize people to the culture of stepping in and not accepting the violence” (Elena Sophia Culver, 2014).	Perception	Violent—culture
216.	“Educate players. Sounds good. Tell players they should not be thugs, <i>[sic]</i> that ought to do it” (eroteme1, 2014).	Action	Education—insufficient Perception: Violent—players
217.	“@nflcommish, instead of pink jerseys, why not grow you female NFL fan base by not tolerating violence against	Perception	Apathetic—domestic violence Action: Suspension—

	women by players #2games” (JREncore, 2014).		more than two games
218.	“I’ve heard this call before, it’s absolutely one of the scariest things I can imagine. Glad that it got out on the Super Bowl with so many people watching” (FourThirteen, 2015).	Action	Anti-domestic violence ads
219.	“that’s [<i>sic</i>] some bull. Half a season at least. What a scumbag!” (gli2005, 2014)	Action	Suspension—half of one season
220.	“I’m not real clear on why we are putting the onus on the NFL to handle this instead of the criminal justice system” (Graby Sauce, 2014).	Action	None—law enforcement punishes criminal activity
221.	“Great!!! the [<i>sic</i>] better husbands Roger Goodell can make of these players; [<i>sic</i>] the more I will enjoy watching the NFL. Forget [<i>sic</i>] tackling and scoring. I want these guys to be monogamous and be good communicators with their spouses” (James_R, 2014).	Action	Education—insufficient
222.	“Why should the NFL or any business punish employees for being charged and/or arrested for domestic violence or any other crime. [<i>sic</i>] What happened to innocent until proven guilty. [<i>sic</i>] Let the legal system handle the case and the punishment. Then if the person is convicted of the crime the appropriate punishment should be determined by the legal system. After that, the NFL (or any other business) can decide whether additional suspension of [<i>sic</i>] termination is	Action	None—law enforcement punishes criminal activity

	appropriate” (James, 2016).		
223.	“i [<i>sic</i>] hope ray [<i>sic</i>] rice [<i>sic</i>] gets a second chance [<i>sic</i>] dont [<i>sic</i>] get me wrong [<i>sic</i>] what he did was wrong but everyone deserves a second chance [<i>sic</i>] just look at michael [<i>sic</i>] vick [<i>sic</i>] its [<i>sic</i>] not like ray [<i>sic</i>] rice [<i>sic</i>] is getting jail time for that incident” (Jason Schaumkel, 2015).	Action	Code of conduct
224.	“it’s [<i>sic</i>] too bad,I [<i>sic</i>] hoped Goodell would do what he did w/[with]Big [<i>sic</i>] Ben [i.e., suspending him for six games following allegations of sexual assault] and go above and beyond” (Jesus_Browns, 2014).	Action	Suspension—approval of first offense penalty
225.	“and [<i>sic</i>] this is a surprise? and YES..fire his @\$\$. of course he said he knew nothing about certain aspects of the investigation..effing [<i>sic</i>] Liar..” (jistet, 2014).	Action	Relieve leadership of duties—Goodell Perception: Deceitful—lied
226.	“if [<i>sic</i>] the NFL and The Giants allow Josh Brown to continue to play then Ray Rice should be able to play also. the [<i>sic</i>] NFL and the teams needs [<i>sic</i>] to be consistent in the handling of domestic abuse. what makes Brown;’s [<i>sic</i>] situation any different from Rice’s [<i>sic</i>]” (jlf, 2016)	Action	Code of conduct—equitable punishment depending on misconduct
227.	“I wish someone would educate Goodell on how to be a responsible NFL commissioner [<i>sic</i>]” (Joe Bafflitz, 2014).	Action	Education—all personnel Perception: Incompetent—weak leadership

228.	“How about asking nfl [sic] owners to publicly declare whether they would vote to oust mr [sic] cover-up [sic] – and if not, why not [sic]” (John Francis McAdams, 2014).	Action	Relieve leadership of duties—Goodell Perception: Deceitful—cover-up
229.	“No matter who hits who. [sic] Someone in the spot light [sic] never gets punish [sic]. When u [sic] do something wrong there has to be consequences for there [sic] actions. Not a slap on the wrist” (Julie David, 2015).	Action	Code of conduct— enforce stricter policies
230.	“Let me start with he should have been punished this way from the beginning. What bothers me now however is how it took people seeing the video to get this outraged. Yet as this article points out there are at LEAST 2 other players playing in the league right now who committed the same if not worse acts of violence towards women (both of which ended up in the hospital if I remember correctly) but there are no videos of that [sic] so I guess its [sic] out of sight out of mind. Too many hypocritical people in this world” (kat, 2014).	Action	Ban Perception: Incompetent— hypocritical
231.	“YES” (Kathleen C Barry, 2014).	Action	Suspension— indefinite
232.	“[...] I’m sick to my stomach....” (Boycott NFL Sponsors, 2014d).	Action	Suspension—more than two games
233.	“There’s all kinds of things. Aqib Talib with the shooting, I really don’t know what to think about	Action	Unsure

	<p>that. These guys are role models. Kids look up to them. People know their names. If it was my neighbor, you'd never hear about it, but because they are in the limelight, there's so much more pressure.</p> <p>But it'd never make me stop watching the game or pause to think I don't like the NFL" (Meredith Brannon, 2014).</p>		<p>Fan—yes Fandom level—high</p>
234.	<p>"This is what's needed!" (Lis Clark, 2014).</p>	Action	<p>Anti-domestic violence ads</p>
235.	<p>"[...] I don't own anything NFL related [<i>sic</i>] and have never been to an NFL game, and don't watch the NFL by myself (I'm a college football fan). But I often watch it with family or friends. But I also don't think that's really the point here.</p> <p>The point is more than people need to face facts, and consider this situation, as an NFL fan, as equivalent to the Chik-Fil-A one of any other listed, and not give it a pass because you support a TEAM and not the organization" (LuckyMc44, 2014b).</p>	Perception	<p>Fan—yes Fandom level—moderate</p> <p>Incompetent— mishandled domestic violence case</p>
236.	<p>"[...] The NFL has a lower rate of abuse than the national average. [...]</p> <p>I am not excusing these players, not at all, but from what I see Ray Rice and his wife are doing well. Should there be no checking in on them? I would say that effort to get them help and to make sure this never happens again is a better solution than keeping him from playing</p>	Action	<p>Perception: Violent—overstated</p> <p>Rehabilitation</p>

	<p>football.</p> <p>Get your political correctness out of the game of Football [<i>sic</i>] or it will loose [<i>sic</i>] alot [<i>sic</i>] of fans, and I am one of those who NEVER listen to idiots like Jim Brown and their pathetic pre-game shows. I also have looked through these comments, and 70% of what I see is saying the same thing I am!!” (Mark Wills, 2015).</p>		<p>Fan—yes</p> <p>Fandom level—moderate</p>
237.	<p>“Education is not enough, Mr. Goodell. Sports organizations, political parties and businesses must punish/banish abusers from their organizations – period. There must be concrete consequences for these criminal actions” (MarneyJones, 2014).</p>	Action	<p>Ban</p> <p>Education—insufficient</p> <p>Code of conduct—enforce stricter policies</p>
238.	<p>“why [<i>sic</i>] does the NFL have to rehabilitate anyone [<i>sic</i>]” (martin e, 2016).</p>	Action	<p>None—law enforcement punishes criminal activity</p>
239.	<p>“NFL = national felon league” (matt drudge, 2015).</p>	Perception	<p>Violent—culture</p>
240.	<p>“[...] The putting hands on women though, that’s not cool. I really do think they need to be harder on that if they can prove it. There are two sides to every story but if you can prove someone put hands on her, then I think they need to be punished. We did discuss the whole Hardy thing and the Adrian Peterson thing, but it doesn’t really steer anybody away from watching. If a player on my team put his hands on a woman or a child and he came back, I don’t know if I’d</p>	Action	<p>Code of conduct—enforce stricter policies</p> <p>Fan—yes</p> <p>Fandom level—moderate</p>

	want to support that team or player any longer. That's where we are. It hasn't happened with Seattle. It seems like our coaches up there, we don't put up with any of that. I hope it doesn't happen. If it does I might be a little reluctant" (Amanda McDonald, 2014).		
241.	"Thank you for the ad. We should all work together to stop domestic violence and sexual assault" (Michael Chwe, 2015).	Action	Anti-domestic violence ads
242.	<p>"[...] I'm a lifelong Patriots fan and I know that I am experiencing some cognitive dissonance with this, but Ray Rice, Roger Goodell, and a handful of the owners are worthless pieces of shit. When Aaron Hernandez was ARRESTED for murder, the Patriots cut him. IMMEDIATELY. The Baltimore Ravens are just a shitty organization filled with punks like Ray Rice and Terrell Suggs [...]</p> <p>You know what's awesome though? Seeing female refs on the field. Shit talking with my husband during fantasy drafting. Connecting with my dad over how lousy our secondary is. I agree with you, Donna, fuck a handful of these idiots, but I'm not going to burn my jerseys over the member of another team's indiscretions. It's crazy that in ANY league that a commissioner would have to define what DV [domestic</p>	Action	<p>Ban</p> <p>Fan—yes Fandom level—high</p> <p>Perception: Incompetent—weak leadership</p> <p>Education— insufficient</p>

	violence] is! Like, do we really need to create guidelines so you don't need to beat the shit out of your family members? Guess so. [...]" (MichaelaFB, 2014).		
243.	"Can we please keep politics out of football? [...]" (MLLRTYM, 2014).	Action	None—separate policy from sport
244.	"The real problem is that Ray Rice should have been held accountable from the very moment it happened. Anyone else would be in jail. [...] The focus is Ray Rice. The NFL did not throw the punch nor did Baltimore. [...] Let's deal with Ray Rice" (Nancy Beatty, 2014).	Action	Ban—immediate
245.	"Good. There should be a 'No Tolerance' rule for this kind of behavior" (Natalie Jane, 2014).	Action	Ban Code of conduct—zero tolerance
246.	"Good for them [Radisson]. At least someone has some brain because not too many do right now" (annes22, 2014).	Perception	Incompetent—mishandled domestic violence case
247.	"Kudos to Radisson. Peterson needs to be released immediately" (alshonbrandontandem, 2014).	Action	Ban—immediate
248.	"They need to stop beating on women and children. I'm glad the matter is being taken seriously. These jerks need to stop pollinating and getting involved in toxic relationships with no proper outlet and learn to take out their frustration on grown men on [sic] from the other side of the field. Hopefully this is a wake up [sic] call"	Action	Suspension—approval of first offense penalty Ban—approval of second offense penalty Perception: Violent—players

	(doggeatdogg, 2014).		
249.	“Thank you [<i>sic</i>] Radisson. That is how you get things done with these people: hit them in the wallet” (chinahand11, 2014).	Perception	Business first—profit
250.	“A Minnesota grown [<i>sic</i>] Carlson company pulling sponsorship is huge. Instead of absolutely banishing AP [Adrian Peterson], however, he should be given a chance to change and learn. Indefinite suspension until he demonstrates an ability to learn that this is not Texas 25 years ago” (publicteamforever, 2014).	Action	Suspension— indefinite
251.	“Hopefully this starts a domino affect [<i>sic</i>] and the Billionaire owners finally fire GODell [<i>sic</i>]” (chieffanforlifehelpme, 2014).	Action	Relieve leadership of duties—Goodell
252.	“Clearly just a marketing move on their part, [<i>sic</i>] you need to get a grip if you think this was for the ‘protection of children’” (ace81hotshot, 2014).	Perception	Image driven
253.	“[...] More of sponsors should follow in their footsteps and send a message to the clowns running the league, its team and the players association [<i>sic</i>]” (richrod12345, 2014).	Perception	Incompetent—weak leadership
254.	“Sponsors: the only people left that NFL teams actually have to answer to” (dickensbslim, 2014).	Perception	Business first—profit
255.	“I find it difficult to believe that there isn’t some way to shame the NFL into taking violence against women seriously without	Perception	Apathetic—domestic violence

	declaring every NFL fan to be a women-hating misogynist. I say this as someone who doesn't really give two shits about football, but understands why a lifelong fan might pause before creating a bonfire of Dallas Cowboy jerseys" (Jane, you ignorant slut, 2014).		Fan—no Fandom level— low/non-existent
256.	"I can't believe the Vikings are going to let him [Adrian Peterson] play Sunday. Shameful" (ilovefoolsball, 2014).	Action	Suspension
257.	"[...] the whole idea of companies passing judgment and imposing discipline for things that happen outside of work is getting ridiculous. This what the legal system is for" (dumplingsrbrown, 2014).	Action	None—law enforcement punishes criminal activity
258.	"[...] let the courts do their job, the Vikings do their job, and in 3 weeks it will be Adrian who?" (mzinck12014, 2014).	Action	None—law enforcement punishes criminal activity
259.	"Innocent until proven guilty?" (kane337, 2014).	Action	None—law enforcement punishes criminal activity
260.	"Peterson hasn't been convicted yet. Innocent until proven guilty" (hescominsoon, 2014).	Action	None—law enforcement punishes criminal activity
261.	"Phony 'no more' commercials. Commentators on ESPN, 11/30, now saying Rice should get another chance. They bend with the wind. Such hypocrites" (neanderthal586, 2014).	Action	Anti-domestic violence ads—insincere
262.	"Asking Roger Goodell to resign is akin to cutting the tail off a 32	Action	Relieve leadership of duties

	headed [<i>sic</i>] dragon” (NFL Fans Against Domestic Violence, 2014d).		
263.	“this [<i>sic</i>] is one of the most powerful and important commercials i’ve [<i>sic</i>] seen in i [<i>sic</i>] don’t know how long. I sincerely hope that it will become a jumping off point for future discussions, as well as the courage/power/boost what-have-you that people currently living through these circumstances need to reach out for help. Amazing!” (Olivia Falcone, 2015).	Action	Anti-domestic violence ads
264.	“[...] I think there are still some people who believe that a 6-game suspension for the first offense doesn’t take it far enough. Rice himself, at the beginning of all of this, said that he would have accepted up to an 8-game suspension without challenge. Several commentators have suggested that volunteer hours at domestic abuse charities should be mandatory as well. The upgraded suspension is a start, but more is needed” (olivianewtonjohn, 2014a).	Action	Suspension—eight games for first offense Anti-domestic violence partnership—mandatory volunteer hours
265.	“And...the Ravens just released Rice. Can we go back to watching football, now? (olivianewtonjohn, 2014b).	Action	Ban Fan—yes Fandom level—high
266.	“[...] I am an admitted NFL fan and I want those in power in the NFL to take a leadership role on moral issues. [...] As sad as it is kids	Action	Fan—yes Fandom level—high Code of conduct—enforce stricter policies

	idolize athletes and football players. They should be an example whether they like it or not. [...]” (Boycott NFL Sponsors, 2014e).		
267.	<p>“[...] Goodell has been in hiding since his last interview with news woman Nora O’Donnell who made him look disconnected, out of touch and foolish. Of course the NFL and Goodell’s office say he is hard at work regarding this matter. This is just not a tough one.</p> <p>Do the Right <i>[sic]</i> Thing <i>[sic]</i>! Certain player behaviors are unacceptable and they should be terminated from the NFL. This has been going on for years .. <i>[sic]</i> remember OJ Simpson. <i>[sic]</i> Do you think this pattern of domestic abuse started after he left the NFL?” (palmettosbest, 2014).</p>	Perception	<p>Incompetent—mishandled domestic violence case</p> <p>Action: Ban</p> <p>Violent—culture</p>
268.	“[...] I think it’s a great way to keep the issue of the NFL’s lack of care in the limelight” (Pam Jennelle, 2014).	Perception	Apathetic—domestic violence
269.	“Wow! I really didn’t expect this! So there ARE consequences! YES!” (Pat Zanger, 2014).	Action	<p>Suspension—approval of first offense penalty</p> <p>Ban—approval of second offense penalty</p>
270.	“A good and fair reaction to a monstrous act. About time!” (Patti Casey-Beardsley, 2014).	Action	<p>Suspension—approval of first offense penalty</p> <p>Ban—approval of second offense penalty</p>
271.	“If I got arrested for domestic violence while working at autozone <i>[sic]</i> , would they be responsible for my punishment	Action	None—law enforcement punishes criminal activity

	and rehabilitation? Didn't think so" (Philip, 2016).		
272.	<p>"[...] Rice deserves to be booted from the NFL, Goodell should face some type of discipline for the way he handled this, the Ravens should be fined for standing behind this &#\$\$^# [<i>sic</i>] of a human as well. The whole situation is disgusting" (PJ S, 2014).</p>	Action	Ban Relieve leadership of duties
273.	<p>"Mike Doocy in Dallas (sportscaster on Dallas Fox affiliate) summed it up pretty well that testimony that Rice hit her hard enough to knock her out was enough for a 2 game [<i>sic</i>] suspension, but video of the exact same thing you already knew happened was grounds for a lifetime suspension ... inconsistent much? [...]</p> <p>Honestly, I think it's time for Goodell to go. It's time to have someone in that role that is binary about discipline decisions.</p> <p>Get the evidence, levy the punishment ... be consistent. You don't suspend someone for 4 games for taking a recreational drug while on vacation and only suspend another player for admittingly [<i>sic</i>] hitting his fiance [<i>sic</i>] and knocking her out (even if the fiance [<i>sic</i>] thinks he's still a good guy)" (Prometheus, 2014).</p>	Action	<p>Perception: Incompetent—hypocritical</p> <p>Relieve leadership of duties—Goodell</p> <p>Code of conduct—equitable punishment depending on misconduct</p>
274.	"Why do they even have or need a domestic abuse policy? This is	Action	None—law enforcement punishes

	<p>why we have court systems. Would anyone want their employer convicted [<i>sic</i>] before they are convicted? [...] I hate wife beaters sa [<i>sic</i>] much as any person who's [<i>sic</i>] life has been affected by it, but there is a reason we have due process and don't ask companies to punish the accused" (Ragenstorm, 2016).</p>		criminal activity
275.	<p>"Astounding. Tony Sterling was banned from the NBA for life for his racist opinion and comments. He didn't hit anybody, no one was physically injured. But when a BLACK NFL player BEATS his wife and there is video proof of it, NOTHING is done for months and when it finally goes viral he get's [<i>sic</i>] suspended for 2 weeks then 6 weeks, and then indefinite [<i>sic</i>]. Which only means that the suspension lasts as long as the team and league feel is necessary to placate the fans. To me, that in itself is criminal and racist. Ray Rice should be arrested, tried and sent to prison. He should be banned from professional sports permanently. These dam [<i>sic</i>] gangsters get away with far too much" (RetreadedBear, 2014).</p>	Action	<p>Ban</p> <p>Perception: Violent—players</p>
276.	<p>"this could have been one of those times where @nflcommish could have been hard on a player an [<i>sic</i>] no one would have criticized him" (Anchorman30, 2014).</p>	Action	Suspension—more than two games

277.	<p>“There’s a difference between Roman Polanski and this. One, the NFL changed its policy. Two, even before they changed it, the NFL was not abusing women. Three, the NFL actively discouraged domestic abuse (though not enough). Roman Polanski, on the other hand, thought it was okay to sleep with a child, and watching his movies is supporting him *directly*” (SaintClarence27, 2014b).</p>	Action	<p>Suspension—approval of first offense penalty Ban—approval of second offense penalty</p>
278.	<p>“[...] Hypocrisy is about having standards to which you do not yourself confirm. I am against hitting women, I don’t hit women. I don’t support people who hit women. I *do* watch a league that issues punishments for people who hit women, though I think that those punishments have been too lenient. [...]” (SaintClarence27, 2014c).</p>	Action	<p>Fan—yes Fandom level—high</p> <p>Suspension—more than two games</p>
279.	<p>“the [<i>sic</i>] way they [NFL] treat women in general, from cheerleaders (little to no play, etc [<i>sic</i>]) to fans, is deplorable and a disgrace” (katespencer, 2014).</p>	Perception	Apathetic—women
280.	<p>“Good” (Sarah Camagna Jeske, 2014).</p>	Action	<p>Suspension—approval of first offense penalty Ban—approval of second offense penalty</p>
281.	<p>“[...] The NFL is trying to get messaging out there about DV [domestic violence] and I appreciate that. [...]” (Boycott NFL Sponsors, 2015f).</p>	Action	Anti-domestic violence ads
282.	<p>“In reality [<i>sic</i>] no job would fire</p>	Action	None—law

	a man for what he does to his wife unless it caused him to miss work. [...] It's not the NFL's job to enforce the law, it's the police's and he was already in jail for the incident therefor [sic] it does not concern the NFL at all" (Sarah Vega, 2014).		enforcement punishes criminal activity
283.	"I'm against domestic violence but it wasn't Roger Goodell's fault [sic] it was Ray Rice's fault go after the NFL exc. [executive] He kept the tape secret [sic] go after him" (Shawn Herrin, 2014a).	Action	Relieve leadership of duties
284.	"Roger Goodell must not go [sic] it wasn't his f***** [fucking] fault Ray Rice should have kept his hands to his f***** [fucking] self" (Shawn Herrin, 2014b).	Action	None—law enforcement punishes criminal activity
285.	"Roger Goodell should be fired" (Slayer27, 2015).	Action	Relieve leadership of duties—Goodell
286.	"What about men that can become victims too? Don't ignore that fact like others" (Starius2, 2015).	Action	Anti-domestic violence ads—male perspective
287.	"GOOD" (Tamika Thomas Mcclellion, 2014).	Action	Suspension—approval of first offense penalty Ban—approval of second offense penalty
288.	"No, I actually don't care what they do in their personal lives. I like football so I'm not going to judge them. Why should Ray Rice's punishment be more from the NFL than it is legally? I thought he should have been	Action	Fan—yes Fandom level—high None—law enforcement punishes criminal activity

	able to play for free and have all that money and publicity go to a good cause” (Kim Tangler, 2014).		Code of conduct
289.	<p>“The NFL had no business getting involved in a player’s private affairs. It is no different than, [<i>sic</i>] the company you work for firing you because of something you did while off work.</p> <p>Let me correct myself, [<i>sic</i>] there is a big different [<i>sic</i>] in that there is only one NFL and being banned for life is like losing your chosen field for life. I think that’s damn harsh and completely unconstitutional. An employer has no right to convict us of a crime and punish us for it [<i>sic</i>] especial [<i>sic</i>] when the crime in question had nothing to do with them.</p> <p>Now do I agree with football players knocking women out in elevators? No [<i>sic</i>] I don’t.</p> <p>Where is law enforcement? It is their job to handle that, not the NFL’s or any other employer” (The Amalekite, 2015).</p>	Action	<p>None—law enforcement punishes criminal activity</p> <p>Ban—too harsh</p>
290.	<p>“We would NOT even be having this discussion about violence if we eliminated all of these blacks from the sport! If the gorillas keep this shit up they’ll just eliminate themselves one by one till there’s [<i>sic</i>] none existing!” (The Professor of Race, 2015).</p>	Action	Ban—black players
291.	<p>“@Thedelux I feel the same way nfl [<i>sic</i>] is not the police and men stop putting on the cape to save</p>	Action	None—law enforcement punishes criminal activity

	these women [sic] half of bitches need there [sic] ass kicked specialy [sic] how they ruin. [sic] Men [sic] life's [sic] lieing [sic] on them [sic] accuseing [sic] them of rape [sic] specialy [sic] when they did not do it" (The Red Hood, 2015).		
292.	"The law gave the man anger management. If im [sic] the nfl [sic] why investigate?" (TheKiid810, 2015).	Action	None—law enforcement punishes criminal activity
293.	"A lot of these players have gone through middle school, high school and college, but still operate at an eighth grade [sic] level. So good luck educating them at anything other than football!!!" (TiredProgrammer, 2014).	Action	Education—insufficient
294.	"No big deal. Everybody is making more of this then [sic] they should. From her behavior, she dishes it out as much as she takes it. He was never charged with a crime and she married him. On top of that, Rice has been squeaky clean [sic] though out [sic] his career. I wish him luck" (Tony63909, 2015).	Perception	Apathetic—untrue
295.	"Going way overboard Keith [Olbermann]. Handing out suspensions is only a very small part of Goodell's responsibilities, [sic] he should not have to resign for this. Given the vocal public criticism any similar future offense will probably get a 2 year [sic] ban or perhaps worse. The backlash is enough that Rice has	Action	Rehabilitation—reinstate players who successfully complete rehabilitation

	not played a down in the NFL since the incident, I think after hes [<i>sic</i>] served his time he should probably be able to play in the league again, which of course he has now, but teams probably will not do so fearing bad PR [public relations]. [...] Noone [<i>sic</i>] besides RIce [<i>sic</i>] had anything to do with the incident. Ridiculous take just to raise eyebrows” (Troy Henway, 2017).		Perception: Image driven
296.	“instituting [<i>sic</i>] lifetime bans for offenders seems like a good start. Not sure what else you would expect them to do” (FlowingJuffowup, 2014).	Action	Ban
297.	“We [women] need to be included. I guarantee there wasn’t a woman involved in any of these decisions” (Leigh Ann Tuohy, 2014).	Action	Relieve leadership—include women in decision-making processes
298.	“If rooting for the team I grew up with and have fabulous childhood memories of makes me a ‘fucking hypocrite,’ then so be it. I’m not going around supporting the NFL or wearing NFL t-shirts or screaming ‘Go NFL!’ at the bar. Frankly, the NFL needs people who disagree with its policies watching so that we can continue to err our grievances and maybe they will continue to learn. While Goodell’s new policy of domestic violence isn’t particularly groundbreaking, it’s a tiptoe in the right direction” (tuxedocatherine, 2014).	Action	Fan—yes Fandom level—high Suspension—approval of first offense penalty Ban—approval of second offense penalty Education Anti-domestic violence partnership

299.	“Glad to see Goodell take a stand! AFTER THE FACT.....” (warhero70, 2014).	Action	<p>Suspension—approval of first offense penalty Ban—approval of second offense penalty Education Anti-domestic violence partnership</p> <p>Perception: Incompetent—mishandled domestic violence case</p>
300.	“It isn’t just him but they could start by ousting him” (Wendee Garton-Molano, 2014).	Action	Relieve leadership of duties—Goodell

Appendix H

The NFL's response to domestic violence and sexual assault (NFL.com, December 5, 2014)

In the late summer of 2014, the issue of domestic violence became a public focus among NFL fans and the media due to some high-profile cases involving NFL players. Since then, Commissioner Goodell and his team have worked hard to learn as much as they can about these issues and how best to address them.

Though no one can prevent these terrible crimes from being committed, the NFL can move forward to help those in its vast network of players, coaches, staff and their families who may need it and take steps towards preventing domestic violence and sexual assault before they happen.

This article is intended to provide both information and transparency as the league continues on what will be a very long journey towards making a real impact—inside and outside the NFL. Below is an outline of the league's work-to-date.

Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault: Equal Opportunity Problems

Domestic violence and sexual assault know no boundaries—not socio-economic, racial, religious, gender, age, sexual orientation or education. These issues affect every community across the nation. No one is immune.

Yet despite the astounding prevalence—1 in 4 U.S. women and 1 in 7 men (aged 18 and older) have been the victim of severe physical violence by an intimate partner in their lifetime, and 1 in 4 girls and 1 in 6 boys being sexually abused before the age of 18—domestic violence and sexual assault remain hidden and often misunderstood. When faced with these issues in the summer of 2014, it quickly became clear that the NFL needed to know and do more.

Taking a strategic but urgent approach, Commissioner Goodell and his team began meeting with and talking to as many experts, advocates, academics, law enforcement professionals and others as possible (more than 150 in all), seeking out many different points of view and putting together its own group of advisors.

The goals:

- Learn how to get help for those within the NFL (players, coaches, staff and their families) who are impacted by domestic violence and sexual assault and help to prevent it going forward;
- Use the NFL platform to work towards changing long-standing social norms that include shame, blame and a general unwillingness on the part of many to discuss these issues out in the open.
- Help fill gaps in service that resulted directly from the high-profile nature of the

domestic violence cases being dealt with in the NFL.

The information that follows gives a good sense of what the league has done thus far and where it plans to go in the future (long-term plans are still being determined).

Addressing Social Issues Inside the NFL: Domestic Violence, Sexual Assault, Child Abuse, Driving Under the Influence

Ongoing education between October and December 2014, nearly every man and woman in the NFL, including some family members (more than 6,000 in all), participated in broad-based domestic violence (DV), child abuse (CA), and sexual assault (SA) education. Mandatory for all league and club office personnel, owners, cheerleaders, coaches, and players and available to and highly encouraged for friends, family members, and loved ones, the education sessions were conducted in person at all 32 clubs and all league offices except China and Mexico. For those remote offices, new hires, and staff who were not present at the live sessions, an online version of the presentation is available and mandatory. Members of the public can also view it [here](#).

The initial education sessions were intended to help attendees not only understand the scope of behavior that constitutes domestic violence and sexual assault, but also the warning signs associated with these issues. Bystander intervention—how everyone can be part of addressing and therefore helping prevent this violence—was another very important focus area of the education.

The second round of league-wide education launched in July 2015, with players and football personnel attending sessions during Training Camp, and club and league personnel scheduling their sessions for this fall. Building on the 2014 sessions, the presentations are intended interactive and thought-provoking, using video testimonials to stimulate discussion. In their own words, a sexual assault survivor, a domestic violence survivor and a perpetrator of verbal abuse share their experiences, the impact not only on them but also on those around them, and how others either helped or could have helped them. In the room, attendees receive a quick refresher on each issue and then talk about warning signs and ways that bystanders can safely intervene.

Evolving to include other issues the NFL faces, the 2015 education sessions also address Driving Under the Influence (DUI). Here too, first person videos are used, though in this case both are members of the NFL family—current Tennessee Titans player Delanie Walker, whose aunt and uncle were killed by a drunk driver in 2013, and former player Donte Stallworth, who killed a man while driving under the influence in 2009. The result is a powerful message of accountability and responsibility for preventing what is a completely avoidable tragedy from occurring.

Individual Support

Critical Response Teams. To ensure it is ready to assist when called, the league has specially trained more than 200 league and club leaders to provide immediate and confidential crisis assistance—safety, medical, social services, and legal—to anyone in

the NFL family, including spouses, significant others, or other family members who experience abuse. The league's Critical Response Team (CRT) has been in place since late 2014, with CRTs planned for all 32 clubs by the end of 2015.

Updated Personal Conduct Policy. In consultation with leading experts throughout the country, the NFL has overhauled its approach to discipline and accountability for employees and players, both on and off the field. The new set of rules and processes are tough, fair, clear and consistent governing player conduct and discipline.

The revised policy lays out a clear series of steps to be taken when there is an incident that requires review. New measures include:

- Additional NFL-funded counseling and services for victims, families, and violators.
- A more extensive list of prohibited conduct.
- Independent investigative procedures.
- Specific criteria for paid leave for an individual formally charged with a crime of violence, including domestic violence, sexual assault and child abuse.
- An expert group of outside advisors to review and evaluate potential violations and consult on other elements of the policy.
- A baseline suspension of six games without pay for violations involving assault, battery, domestic violence, dating violence, child abuse, other forms of family violence, or sexual assault, with consideration given to possible mitigating or aggravating circumstances.

Also included in the Policy is the appointment by Commissioner Goodell of a new league Conduct Committee comprised of representatives of NFL ownership that will review the policy at least annually and recommend appropriate changes with advice from outside experts. The committee will ensure that the policy remains current and consistent with best practices and evolving legal and social standards. Members of the committee are Cardinals owner Michael Bidwill (committee chair), Falcons owner Arthur Blank, Chiefs owner Clark Hunt, Dee Haslam (wife of Browns owner Jimmy Haslam), Cowboys Executive Vice President and chair of The NFL Foundation Charlotte Jones Anderson, Bears owner George McCaskey, Texans owner Robert McNair, and two former NFL players that are part of NFL ownership, Warrick Dunn (Falcons) and John Stallworth (Steelers).

The commissioner also appointed two individuals to oversee investigations and conduct. Lisa Friel, a former New York District Attorney's office sex crimes prosecutor will oversee investigations as Special Counsel for Investigations and B. Todd Jones, the former head of the Bureau of Alcohol, Firearms, Tobacco and Explosives, was named Special Counsel for Conduct. These individuals will manage the NFL's investigatory procedures and determine discipline for violations of the Personal Conduct Policy. For players, this is consistent with past practice under the CBA, in which a member of the Commissioner's staff has generally issued discipline for off-field misconduct.

Subject matter experts will continue to advise the newly established Conduct Committee to ensure that the right voices are to be at the table to inform both educational and disciplinary work going forward.

A complete outline of the new Personal Conduct Policy can be found [here](#) and [here](#).

Addressing Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault in the Community

The NFL is also committed to using its platform to address domestic violence and sexual assault in society at large.

Supporting Leading Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault Awareness and Prevention Groups. The intense scrutiny of the NFL and the domestic violence/sexual assault issues it faced caused a dramatic increase in calls to national and local organizations working every day to support those in need. This increased outreach resulted in an increase, too, in the number of calls and texts that went unanswered. To help rectify that situation, the NFL made a multi-year, multi-million-dollar commitment to help reduce the incidence of DV/SA, increase services for victims and families, elevate the profile of sexual violence prevention and streamline access to resources. This includes multi-year partnerships with and support for the National Domestic Violence Hotline (NDVH) and the National Sexual Violence Resource Center (NSVRC). This financial support helped NDVH to add staff to answer more calls and open an office in Washington, DC to assist with policy work. The NSVRC is using the funding to provide resources to state sexual assault coalitions to assist with local hotline volume. It is also working to elevate awareness and improve understanding of the complexities surrounding sexual assault, and how it can be prevented. NSVRC, too, will be opening a Washington, DC office to work on policy issues.

Beyond the league, all 32 NFL clubs are working with local domestic violence and sexual assault organizations (more than 75 in total) on activities ranging from abuse intervention programs, crisis center fundraisers, high school healthy relationship assemblies, and local public service campaigns.

Driving the Conversation Around Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault. In collaboration with the NO MORE campaign and the Joyful Heart Foundation, the NFL is working to urge a national conversation on these pressing issues. Beginning in late September 2014, PSAs aired during nearly every game broadcast, including a new PSA featuring current and former NFL players. This marked the first time these issues had been raised and discussed during such a high-profile sporting event, disrupting the norm and sparking dialogue amongst fans and others. In an unprecedented move, the NFL also aired a DV/SA PSA during the Super Bowl—an ad that, in addition to the millions of viewers of the game, garnered more than 7 million views online. The PSAs can be viewed and shared at www.nomore.org.

Promoting Programs that Develop the Character of Young People. The NFL is expanding its awareness and educational efforts—including developing age-appropriate character

development, healthy relationship education and programming on dating/domestic violence, child abuse, and sexual assault—to those who play, coach, or manage the game (and other sports) in college, high school, and youth football programs. In mid-November 2014, the league released “A Call to Coaches,” a 17-minute video for high school, college and recreational coaches talking about respect, relationships and the role models that athletes can be. In addition to that outreach, the NFL is working on a statewide pilot program, currently underway in Texas and Colorado, to increase the reach and scale of character curriculum nationwide, focusing on high school coaches of all sports. In another initiative, select high schools that count Super Bowl alumni as graduates have been added to the Super Bowl High School Honor Roll and provided a special character-education curriculum.

On the philanthropic side, the NFL Foundation is also focusing on the development of character education programs that will reach youth footballs players, as well as girls and boys, athletes and non-athletes alike. For example, the NFL hosted a summit for more than 50 high school football coaches from around the country, including several former NFL players currently coaching high school football, in Orlando, Florida during the Pop Warner Super Bowl. This interactive event focused on the character development of high school football players and provided the NFL with an opportunity to hear directly from the coaches about the challenges they face on the ground each day. The Summit, which will be repeated in other locations throughout 2015 and 2016, also featured top experts in the field who helped motivate and educate these coaches and can provide important resources as well. Representatives from USA Football were also in attendance as part of the NFL’s ongoing partnership with them to help promote a better, safer game and provide coaches and players with opportunities to develop to their fullest potential off the field.

Together these initiatives have the potential to make a huge impact. But a year into this effort, it is still just a start.

The NFL has much to do inside the league and beyond to make real change in our society. But with the commitment, the drive, the right people in place and the support and participation of the full NFL family, fans and society-at-large, the league hopes that this year may mark the beginning of the end of domestic violence and sexual assault...once and for all.

For more information, [click here](#).

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