Spring 2018

Taking A Stand On One Knee: A Content Analysis Study of the San Francisco 49ers' National Anthem Protests

Jack Hunter
San Jose State University

Follow this and additional works at: https://scholarworks.sjsu.edu/etd_theses

Recommended Citation

Hunter, Jack, "Taking A Stand On One Knee: A Content Analysis Study of the San Francisco 49ers' National Anthem Protests" (2018). *Master's Theses*. 4909.
DOI: <https://doi.org/10.31979/etd.fk4z-359f>
https://scholarworks.sjsu.edu/etd_theses/4909

This Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by the Master's Theses and Graduate Research at SJSU ScholarWorks. It has been accepted for inclusion in Master's Theses by an authorized administrator of SJSU ScholarWorks. For more information, please contact scholarworks@sjsu.edu.

TAKING A STAND ON ONE KNEE: A CONTENT ANALYSIS OF MEDIA
COVERAGE OF THE SAN FRANCISCO 49ERS' NATIONAL ANTHEM PROTESTS

A Thesis

Presented to

The Faculty of the School of Journalism and Mass Communications

San José State University

In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Master of Arts

By Jack Hunter

May 2018

©2018

Jack Hunter

ALL RIGHTS RESERVED

The Designated Thesis Committee Approves the Thesis Titled

TAKING A STAND ON ONE KNEE: A CONTENT ANALYSIS OF MEDIA
COVERAGE OF THE SAN FRANCISCO 49ERS' NATIONAL ANTHEM PROTESTS

By

Jack Hunter

APPROVED FOR THE SCHOOL OF JOURNALISM & MASS COMMUNICATIONS

SAN JOSÉ STATE UNIVERSITY

May 2018

Dr. Zongchao Li, Ph.D.	School of Journalism and Mass Communications
Dr. Matt Cabot, Ph.D.	School of Journalism and Mass Communications
Professor Bob Rucker	School of Journalism and Mass Communications

ABSTRACT

Previous communication studies have examined media bias in the coverage of social protest movements and issues of race in sports, but until now there has not been an opportunity to combine the two topics. This study examined media bias in coverage of the San Francisco 49ers' national anthem protests, from August 2016 to February 2018. Utilizing articles from eight different publications, four from local San Francisco Bay Area outlets, and four from nationally syndicated outlets, a content analysis was conducted to determine whether coverage of the protests exhibited bias against the players and whether local sources were more supportive of the protests than nationally sourced publications. Results indicated that while coverage of the protests did highlight their underlying messages, they were overshadowed by coverage of opposition to the protest and central figures such as Donald Trump and Colin Kaepernick. Furthermore, few differences were found in support for the protests among local and national sources. Local sources were found, however, to have offered a narrower lens through which readers could view the issues and debates surrounding the protests than national sources. These results imply that progress has been made in media coverage of these types of events, yet it can still be altered by forces that are not related to the cause of the protest. Finally, the results of this study also provide impetus for further studies on media coverage of protests on race related issues, social movements in sports, and the NFL national anthem protest movement.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This thesis would not have been possible without the help and support of a great many people. I would like to first thank all my committee members. Without the help and guidance of my committee chair, Dr. Li, this thesis would likely not have been possible. Her experience in the field, patience, and suggestions have been invaluable. Thank you to Dr. Cabot, whose edits and feedback have been tremendously helpful. I would also like to thank him for helping me navigate the administrative side of this entire process. To Professor Rucker, I thank you for the many lengthy and passionate discussions we had on everything from which type of Master's path to take to sports. Without those talks, I would not have arrived here. Finally, I would also like to thank my family and friends for all their support during this process.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

List of Tables.....	VII
Introduction.....	1
Literature Review.....	4
Overview.....	4
The NFL, Race, and the Emergence of Social Movement.....	5
Police Brutality, the Media & Public Reaction.....	10
Framing Race in Sports Media Coverage.....	13
Framing Media Coverage of Protests and Social Justice Movements.....	16
Methodology.....	18
Sampling.....	18
Pretest and Research Design.....	19
Intercoder Reliability.....	22
Results.....	27
RQ 1.....	27
RQ 2.....	31
Discussion.....	33
Implications.....	37
Limitations and Suggestions for Further Research.....	38
References.....	40
Appendix A: Coding Sheet.....	45
Appendix B: Code Book.....	49

LIST OF TABLES

Table 1	Reliability test results are shown	24
Table 2	Approval of the protests from within the 49ers organization.....	28
Table 3	His statements on the protests	29
Table 4	He was found more in articles published in 2017 than 2016.....	30
Table 5	Of total Colin Kaepernick mentions.....	31
Table 6	45.8% of local source articles featured approval.....	32

INTRODUCTION

Despite another offseason mired in some form of controversy, the latest being about former San Francisco 49ers' quarterback Colin Kaepernick's lack of a job, the first few weeks of the 2017 NFL season were relatively quiet in terms of widespread media coverage of issues not pertaining to football. While a few players on various teams still took a knee, raised a fist, or protested in some manner, coverage of these events was anecdotal to the action on the field. However, on September 22, 2017, at a campaign style rally in Huntsville, Alabama, President Donald J. Trump re-lit the flames of discussion and debate on one of the most polarizing events in the history of American sports. About halfway into his speech, the President launched into a several-minutes-long rant against the NFL. After discussing the disrespect that players were showing to the flag by protesting, and how the referees were ruining the game by penalizing big hits, Trump posed a question to the audience:

"Wouldn't you love to see one of these NFL owners, when somebody disrespects our flag, to say, 'Get that son of a bitch off the field right now! Out! He's fired!'" (Altman et. al 2017)

The President's outburst drew loud cheers from the crowd, but also drew an even louder response from the media and the NFL itself. Just two days later, Week 3 of the 2017 NFL season saw teams across the country engage in forms of protest and solidarity during the pre-game playing of the national anthem. Some had multiple players take knees or raise fists, others linked arms on the sideline while standing, and others, like the Tennessee Titans and Pittsburgh Steelers, chose to stay in the locker room during the

playing of the national anthem. In the weeks that followed, multiple teams continued to see players engage in forms of protest. Outside the NFL, the country was thrown into the arena of debate on an issue that many had forgotten about or did not realize existed. On one side were those who saw the President's involvement in the affairs of the NFL as another in a string of wrongs he had committed; they supported the players' right to voice their opinion and believed in the cause for which the players were demonstrating. On the other side were those who agreed with the President's belief that not standing for the national anthem was an affront to military and service men and women who had sacrificed their lives for their country. Some said they would not watch another NFL game as long as these protests continued. Battle lines were drawn as the debate raged across airwaves, message boards, Twitter feeds, and newspaper headlines.

To the casual observer, it may seem the NFL itself is at the center of this issue. But at the root of this protest movement is one team: the San Francisco 49ers. From the first time Colin Kaepernick was photographed sitting for the anthem during the third preseason game of 2016 until now, the 49ers have had at least one or more players engaging in one form of protest or another. In multiple games during the 2017 season, at least a dozen or more 49ers players took a knee in protest. The team also found itself at the center of the second public spat between the NFL and the Trump administration when Vice President Mike Pence tweeted that he had left a game between the 49ers and Indianapolis Colts after seeing players kneel during the anthem.

Media coverage of the NFL protests has been extensive. Coverage of the third and fourth weeks of the NFL season from non-sports media outlets has not been about the

games but about the protests. But has that coverage been fair, in the sense that readers are simply getting the facts about the protests and not the opinion(s) of the author? Are consumers of news media getting the who, what, where, when, and why behind these protests, or are they only getting one side of the story? Where media bias exists, does that differ from publication to publication, no matter their location, audience, and area of coverage? Or, can these publications be grouped together by similar biases they present in their coverage of the protests?

These questions form the rationale for this thesis, which presents a content analysis of media coverage on the San Francisco 49ers' national anthem protests. The 49ers were the team examined in the research due to their centrality to the entire NFL protest movement, which began while Colin Kaepernick played for them. The following literature illustrate a few key points that call for a study of this type. First, the NFL has had a questionable history when it comes to matters of race, specifically with regards to African-Americans. Second, studies on media coverage of African-American players have shown that they were discussed, analyzed, and referenced in different ways when compared to their white counterparts. Recently, relations between African-American communities and the police have been shaken because of multiple, highly publicized killings of unarmed African-American men. Athletes both in and outside of the NFL have responded to these incidents in a variety of ways including public protest and commentary on social media. Research has shown that the ways in which incidents like these have been presented by the media influence the ways in which they are perceived by the public. Finally, studies indicate that media coverage of protest movements tends

to be of a biased nature; the most common is a negative bias towards the protesters and the movements they are a part of.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Overview

Given that the NFL national anthem protest movement is relatively new, developing the theoretical framework for this study requires examining literature that cover sections of this movement. The methodology of the study is based upon prior framing work as originated by Goffman (1974) in *Frame analysis: An essay on the origination of experience*. Further framework references included Matthes (2009) and Schefuele (1999). Coombs, Lambert, & Humphries (2017), whose work on examining the frames in which Colin Kaepernick's original protest was presented in the media, serve as the inspiration for the study and will be discussed later. Thus, given the multi-faceted nature of this study and the movement which it examines, the literature presented has been divided into the following sections. First, I present a brief overview of the NFL's history with matters of race and social justice, and the ongoing reaction of the league and its power players to the national anthem protest movement. Second, I present an overview of how police brutality is portrayed in the media and how public reaction is affected by that coverage. Frames by which the media present the police and those they interact with are examined, in addition to how public reaction to these recent incidents have fueled actions undertaken by NFL players. The framing of media coverage in regards to discussions of race in sports is examined, with the final section detailing how the media frames discussion of protest movements. An opportunity can be seen for new

applications of these types of studies. The NFL national anthem protests are a type of movement that has never been seen before. It is a movement in which well-known, public figures peacefully demonstrate in a public setting, both against a mode of systemic racism and later in defiance to the President of the United States. The media, in turn, has covered these events in a way atypical to the norms of journalism, by providing the bare facts on the protests coupled with opinionated, editorial type coverage. An examination of the literature leads to the formation of two research questions: Is local coverage of the San Francisco 49ers' national anthem protest biased in favor of the team and the cause compared to national coverage? Are the 49ers mentioned in a different way than other teams in coverage of the protests, and if so, is Colin Kaepernick's association with them a primary cause?

The NFL, Race, and the Emergence of Social Movement

Through its 97-year history, the National Football League has had a complicated history with both race and embracing social justice movements. While baseball is colloquially known as "America's Pastime," football has been America's favorite sport since 1985 (Shannon-Missal 2016). The 2016 edition of The Harris Poll showed that 33% of Americans reported that football was their favorite sport, with only 15% of Americans saying the same about baseball (Shannon-Missal). Furthermore, football is also the most "American" of the four major North American professional sports leagues. A 2017 *Washington Post* article highlighted that 97.45% of NFL players, all-time, were born in the U.S., compared to just 15.5% of NHL players, all-time (Borchers 2017).

Founded on August 20, 1920, the National Football League initially featured a few African-American players. Fred “Duke” Slater, Paul Roberson, and Fritz Pollard were just a few African-Americans who graced the gridiron in the years 1920-1933 (Smith 1988). However, beginning in 1933, not a single African-American played in the NFL for over a dozen years (Smith 1988). Prominent owners including George Halas of the Chicago Bears, and the Pittsburgh Steelers’ Art Rooney denied the existence of a racial ban (Smith 1988). Possible reasons for this racial exclusion included attributing it to the racial climate in the U.S. during the 1930s and ‘40s, a “lack of quality college players,” and/or the logistical problems of having African-American players who would face many instances of discrimination while travelling around the country (Smith 1988). The NFL was reintegrated in 1946 when the Los Angeles Rams signed African-American player Kenny Washington, a running back (Smith 1988). The league then began a slow process towards full reintegration, with no real controversy surrounding the issue until 1961. By then, the Washington Redskins were the only team in the NFL to not have a single African-American player on their roster (Smith 1987). This was not surprising given rhetoric coming from the team’s front-office:

“We’ll start signing negroes,” Washington Redskins owner George P. Marshall once quipped, “when the Harlem Globetrotters start signing whites” (Smith 1987).

The Kennedy Administration became involved in the matter with Secretary of the Interior Stuart L. Undall calling for the Redskins to sign an African-A/merican player or their stadium lease would be revoked with possible criminal prosecution to follow (Smith 1987). The team eventually signed an African-American player in addition to drafting

two in the 1962 offseason (Smith 1987). Following this incident, the NFL remained a league mostly devoid of racial controversy.

The league discourages freedom of expression on the field and in the locker room. *Please Don't Fine Me Again: Black Athletic Defiance in the NFL and NBA* (Cunningham 2009) examines how restrictions on celebrations and dress were targeted towards African-American athletes. Their relationship with the Hip-Hop industry and pre-conceived racist notions of the African-American athlete as a criminal contributed to the enactment of these rules (Cunningham 2009). In regards to the NFL, multiple gun-related incidents in the mid-2000s like the shooting deaths of Sean Taylor and Darrent Williams, coupled with backlash from popular conservative critics like Rush Limbaugh, are argued to have fueled the notion of this relationship (Cunningham 2009). The 2005, owner-approved rule change on penalizing “excessive celebration” is cited by Cunningham as an example of the league limiting player expression, of whom over 70% were African-American (Cunningham 2009), even though the rule applies to all players, no matter their race. The NFL’s uniform policy has also come into contact with athletes attempting to openly express their religious beliefs. In 2014, Washington Redskins quarterback Robert Griffin III arrived at a post-game press conference wearing a shirt with the words “Know Jesus Know Peace” on the front but turned the shirt inside out before appearing on camera (Schwab 2014). In 2015, a unique case emerged when Pittsburgh Steelers running back DeAngelo Williams was fined \$5,757 for wearing eye-black with messages supporting breast cancer awareness (Rohrbach 2015). This came even though NFL players are allowed to wear pink equipment during the month of

October as part of the league's breast cancer awareness campaign (Rohrback 2015). [how is his name spelled?] This concept can be found not only in attitudes towards current players, but also towards former players attempting to reenter the league. In a survey study done on the case of quarterback Michael Vick, who served 21 months in jail for dogfighting, only 52% of white individuals surveyed agreed that Vick should be reinstated to the league, compared with over 70% of nonwhite individuals (Piqueuro et al 2011). Additionally, the study indicated that white people were more likely to view Vick's sentence as "too soft" or "just right" whereas 31% of nonwhite people indicated it as "too harsh" (Piquero et al 2011). The NFL has also faced criticism for its handling of various instances of domestic violence by its players. In 2014, after a video that showed then Baltimore Ravens running back Ray Rice punching his fiancée in an elevator surfaced, the NFL was criticized for suspending Rice two games (*ESPN* 2014). In 2016, New York Giants kicker Josh Brown was suspended for one game following an NFL investigation that showed he had been arrested the year prior for abusing his wife (Waldron 2016). However, documents surfaced showing that Brown had admitted to a history of abusing his wife, which resulted in massive public outcry towards the league's policy in dealing with issues of domestic violence (Waldron 2016).

Institutional discrimination is not limited to players, as coaching in the NFL remains a field where upward mobility is difficult for African-Americans (Braddock et al 2012; Kahn 1991). In football, the coaching positions of power on a team include the offensive/defensive coordinators, and the head coach. Positional coaches, such as those for the running back or wide receiver units, do not carry as much clout with overall team

decisions or in interactions with front-office staff. Braddock, Henry, Smith, and Dawkins (2012) found that African-Americans were significantly underrepresented at the offensive coordinator and head coach positions. Additionally, African-American assistant coaches were 63% less likely to be promoted to either coordinator position and 60% less likely to be promoted to head coach than their white counterparts (Braddock et al, 2012). Further sentiments were found with Kahn (1991).

Throughout its history, the NFL, like other major North American sports leagues, had not seen major social movement take hold among its players. This comes even though sports can serve as a possible venue for social activism and change. After in-depth interviews with 21 athletes involved in activism, Kauffman and Wolf (2010) concluded that various efforts of activism within sport carry similar themes of social consciousness, meritocracy, responsible citizenship, and interdependency. They said, “We hope to both legitimize and give voice to [athletes’] experiences while simultaneously demonstrating to other athletes and non-athletes alike that there are mutual reinforcing dimensions of pursuing sport and pursuing social change” (Kauffman et al 2010). With the emergence of Colin Kaepernick’s protest by taking a knee during the national anthem, the NFL had experienced something new: an athlete engaging in a prolonged social protest movement. While athletes in other sports may have engaged in similar action, such as the Miami Heat’s demonstration in support of Trayvon Martin (Marston 2017), this was new for the NFL. Rorke and Copeland (2017) examine Kaepernick’s protest considering other acts of athlete’s engaging in civil disobedience, and cite that unlike protests such as that of Tommy Smith and John Carlos at the 1968 Olympics, Kaepernick’s is not a singular

event. Kaepernick's stand is also seen as a part of the revitalization of African-American athletes as social activists, with LeBron James being one of many prominent African-American superstars to loudly, and publicly voice their opinions on issues like police brutality and declare support for a presidential candidate (Marston 2017). At the root of Kaepernick and the other 49ers' protest is a dissatisfaction with the treatment of African-Americans by law enforcement, which is a sentiment shared by many and possibly influenced by media portrayal of police on minority violence.

Police Brutality, the Media & Public Reaction

In recent years, the United States has been rocked by a series of controversial, highly publicized shootings of unarmed, African-American, men. The names Michael Brown, Trayvon Martin, Philando Castille, and Eric Garner became symbolic of a community that perceives itself to be singled out by police across the United States (Rembert et al 2015). Claims like these are not unsupported, as studies show minorities do tend to face more instances of police profiling than white people (Rembert et al 2015). In interviewing Chicago youth on their interactions with police in the community, Shedd (2015) finds that there exists a lack of trust between the community and the police: “[youths] recognize that police are supposed to be there to protect and serve them and their families, but they learn soon enough not to count on them-especially if they live in a neighborhood that is Black, Hispanic, or poor” (Shedd 2015 p. 156). Dottolo and Stewart (2008) discuss how discrimination, especially that at the hands of the police, plays a role in racial identity amongst African-American men. They discuss how over half of the middle-aged African American men they interviewed expressed “an anxious expectation

of unfair and risky encounters with law enforcement, particularly for their sons” (Dottolo et al 2008 p. 360-361).

Various communities across the United States had different reactions to these events, with each reaction having some effect or another on public and media perception of the issue. One of the last, and most polarizing effects of public reaction to these shootings was the formation of the Black Lives Matter movement. As examined in *Ferguson and the Death of Michael Brown on twitter: #BlackLivesMatter, #TCOT, and the evolution of collective identities*, Black Lives Matter (BLM) originated from a hashtag on Twitter and morphed into the symbolic center of the national debate on police violence against minorities. Over the course of the shooting of Michael Brown, the non-indictment of the officer involved, and the Justice Department report on the incident, #BlackLivesMatter grew from a Twitter trend to boots on the ground social justice movement (Ray et al 2017). The group organized around protests of police brutality, and direct opposition even emerged in the form of #TCOT (Top Conservatives on Twitter) (Ray et al 2017). In the wake of the Trayvon Martin shooting, NFL players on various teams engaged in a similar form of social media activism, albeit not under an organized movement, in voicing their views on the not-guilty verdict for Martin’s killer, George Zimmerman (Schmitt et al 2015). Player discussion of the incident fell under the themes of anticipation and disbelief at the verdict, critical of the American justice system, social commentary, condolences and support for the Martin family, direct engagement with fans, and arguments on freedom of speech (Schmitt et al 2015). Through analysis, Schmitt and Sanderson concluded that “results suggested that Twitter is a viable

mechanism for African-American and other minority athletes to engage in activism and initiate appropriate conversations about social justice issues” (Schimittel et al 2015).

These public responses to incidents of excessive use of force by the police may be, in part, influenced by how the media has covered them. Highly publicized incidents involving excessive use of police force, in which the event was caught on video and released to the public (via official outlets, social media, etc.) have been shown to alter media coverage. In the six years leading up to the Rodney King beating, discussions of police use of excessive force rose in the *Los Angeles Times* (Lawrence 1996). Yet in those six years, talk of those incidents mostly came from official voices like the LAPD (Lawrence 1996). Following Rodney King, though, discussion of police brutality in the *Los Angeles Times* came more from non-official voices (lawyers, scholars etc.) (Lawrence 1996). Lawrence also discovered that individuals who made claims against the police for excessive force, and their lawyers, face more media scrutiny than the accused officers (Lawrence 1996). Hirschfield and Simon (2010) echo these findings in an examination of coverage of police shootings from 23 major daily newspapers from 1997-2000. Articles examined tended to follow a similar formula in which the victim is framed as a threat to the officer, who responds appropriately (Hirschfield et al 2010). In the surveyed sample, 92% of articles featured a claim that legitimized the shooting while 50% challenged the legitimacy of the shooting (Hirschfield et al 2010). The researchers concluded that officers were presented as faceless manifestations acting within an institutional norm (i. e., police work) that we are conditioned to believe as inherently right (Hirschfield et al 2010).

The ways in which an interaction between officers and a citizen is presented in its coverage has been shown to alter perception of the event. In a study of a 2014 incident involving a female, African-American university professor and a white, male police officer, Fridkin, Courey and Thompson (2017) found a link between the incident's framing and views on it. After the professor jaywalked across a street, the officer confronted her and an argument ensued, during which the officer then body-slammed the woman to the ground. In a content analysis on coverage of the incident, the officer was mainly framed in a negative light (Fridkin et al 2017). Forty-eight percent of coverage placed blame on the officer for escalating the situation, 51% viewed his actions as aggressive, and 48% presented the woman as a victim (Fridkin et al 2017). The researchers then tested four different presentations of the event, in which participants read a framed, prepared statement before viewing the incident on video. Under the law and order frame, in which the officer's actions were presented as part of a routine, by the book arrest, participants showed majority support for the officer (Fridkin et al 2017). In the police brutality frame that presented the officer as going far beyond an acceptable use of force, overwhelming support was shown for the professor (Fridkin et al 2017). A frame in which both individual's race was mentioned showed no significant favoring of either side (Fridkin et al 2017).

Framing Race in Sports Media Coverage

In examining literature on discussions of race in sports media, common themes were found. The first being that there were in fact differences in how athletes of different races were covered, specifically between white and African-American athletes. The

second theme found was that in discussing white and African-American athletes, similar descriptors were found across different sports and different types of events. Billings (2003) examined media portrayals of Tiger Woods, who for most his career was the only prominent African-American golfer on the PGA tour. Citing that white golfers were referred to more for their cerebral qualities, Woods athleticism was his overwhelmingly primary positive descriptor (Billings 2003). However, commentators would also comment on his “golf IQ” and mental qualities during his wins but would discuss a lack of them when he would lose (Billings 2003). The same themes have been found in analysis of coverage of football about white and African-American quarterbacks. In another study, Billings (2004) found athleticism was also used as the predominant positive descriptor for African-American quarterbacks in print media coverage. Athleticism, referenced as an uncontrollable attribute, was not used for white quarterbacks, who praised for their hard work (a controllable attribute) to overcome a lacking of athleticism (Billings 2004). In terms of positive mental qualities, Billings did not find a noticeable difference in how print media talked about white and African-American quarterbacks (Billings 2004). Byrd and Utsler (2007) found similar discrepancies in coverage of African-American vs white quarterbacks, noting the bias was improving. An examination of *Sports Illustrated’s* coverage of the NFL Draft from 1998-2007, also found the same bias present for descriptions of African-American vs. white quarterbacks (Mercurio et al 2010).

Additional biases have been shown in media coverage of African-American athletes in the NFL. One infamous case occurred in 2003 when Rush Limbaugh derided the

media for showing increased interest in the success of African-American quarterbacks and coaches, specifically mentioning the Philadelphia Eagles' quarterback Donovan McNabb (Hartmann 2007). Limbaugh was working for ESPN at the time, and promptly resigned after making those comments (Hartmann 2007). In 2014, Richard Sherman of the Seattle Seahawks delivered an impassioned post-game interview in which lambasted the San Francisco 49ers offense and declared himself one of the league's best cornerbacks (Tompkins 2016). Following that interview, dueling narratives emerged in reaction to it; the first was an eruption of racist remarks aimed at Sherman on Twitter. The second came from the media, which ran multiple stories on Sherman's rise from being a kid growing up in Compton to a Stanford graduate and All-Pro NFL cornerback (Tompkins 2016). The author cites these dueling narratives as a prime example of the dichotomy of African-American sports celebrity in the United States (Tompkins 2016).

The basis for this study emerged prior work done on the framing of Colin Kaepernick's original protest during the 2016 season. Unlike previous research done on media coverage of race in sports and social issues, Coombs, Lambert and Humphries (2017) identify unique themes within coverage of the national anthem protest. Those six frames include: virality (the rate at which the protest virally spread across the internet), power and influence, individual action, professional risk, Kaepernick himself, and deflection/distraction (Coombs et al 2017). News of the protest spread fast, with other prominent athletes commenting on it, with fellow NFL players and athletes in other sports participating as well (Coombs et al 2017). Coverage additionally focused on the opinions of prominent politicians and power players on the protest, with conservative

politicians using the common theme of it being disrespectful to the military (Coombs et al 2017). Additionally, coverage centered on Kaepernick himself, ranging from what his motivations for taking such an action were, his background, the risk it posed to his career, and on him as a football player (Coombs et al 2017). The final frame found was one of deflection and distraction by which coverage of the protest focused mostly on the act itself, and not the larger issue of excessive use of force by police against minorities (Coombs et al 2017).

Framing Media Coverage of Protests and Social Justice Movements

Similar to how the media covers race in sports and matters of excessive use of force by police against minorities, common themes are found in how the media cover protests and social justice movements. Across research utilized for this study, it was found that the media often portrayed protests and social justice movements in unfavorable ways. In a study examining how viewers reacted to different framings of anarchist protests during the late 80's, researchers found that a "status quo" was established by the coverage presented (McLeod et al 1999). How the media presented the stories on the protests made viewers more critical of protesters and less likely to identify with them, less critical of the police, and less likely to support the protester's rights (McLeod et al 1999). These biases can differ slightly across print and television media as well. In a study of protest events in Washington D.C., Smith, McCarthy, McPhail, and Augustyn (2001) found that when protest groups seeking media recognition achieve their goal, they are often presented in unfavorable ways. The study hypothesizes that this may be in part due to a selection bias, in which the media must choose which protests to cover and which ones to

not, and a description bias in which various constraints (time, staff, resources, etc.,) limit the extent of coverage the media can give to a protest (McCarthy et al 2001). Smith et al. found that television sources were eight times as likely cover protests in a more thematic way than print, with print media a third as likely to emphasize the issues the protest was behind compared to what occurred during the actual protest (McCarthy et al 2001). Furthermore, any instances of violence and counter-protesting overshadowed coverage of the protest and issues behind it (McCarthy et al 2001).

Further studies into coverage of protest/social justice movements revealed themes like coverage of protests. Research into coverage of the global justice movement done in 2006 revealed that media coverage of protesters was favorable if the protest, the issues behind, and way in which it was being carried out aligned with the outlet's leanings (Boykoff 2006). In addition to framing the protesters in unfavorable ways, the most common frame found was commentary on violence or a lack thereof (Boykoff 2006). If it occurred, coverage of protest violence took over coverage while if no violence occurred, the lack of it was mentioned whenever possible (Boykoff 2006). In examining coverage of the Occupy Wall Street movement, Cissel (2012) observed differences in how the movement was covered between mainstream and independent media outlets. Mainstream outlets like Fox News, *The Wall St Journal*, and the *New York Post* found the movement to be disorganized and confusing in their intent, while independent sources like *Mother Jones* and Democracy Now praised the strength and diversity of the protesters and the motives behind their demonstrations (Cissel 2012). Attributions to the

cause of violence at the protests differed as well, with mainstream sources placing the blame on protesters while independent outlets blamed the police (Cissel 2012).

RQ1: Does coverage of the national anthem protests show evidence of bias against the players?

RQ2: Is local coverage more supportive of the protests than national coverage?

METHODOLOGY

This study examined media coverage on the San Francisco 49ers' national anthem protests and determined whether bias existed against the players, and if local publications showed more support of the protests than national ones.

Sampling

The framing study done by Coombs, Lambert, Cassilo & Humphries (2017) served as the primary inspiration for this thesis. While the results of their study served to back the need for a broader study of the 49ers, the framing method offers a broader interpretation of how events are covered than was desired. Content analysis offered a way to examine the themes behind coverage of the 49ers' protests in addition to providing hard data on what was written about them. A content analysis is a type of communications study in which text is interpreted and coded, with a combination of qualitative and quantitative data being used (McQuail, 2010). For this study, articles from The Bay Area News Group (a combination of *The San Jose Mercury News* and the *Easy Bay Times*), *The San Francisco Chronicle*, *SFGate*, *The Ringer*, *Rolling Stone*, *The New York Times*, and *The Wall Street Journal* were utilized. Conceptually, these sources were broken down into two categories, local and national. The local sources were chosen because they represent

the three largest news publications in the San Francisco Bay Area. The “Bay Area News Group” label was used as it is the company under which the *Mercury News* and *Easy Bay Times* are published. Smaller publications were not chosen due to concerns about access and sample size. Of the four nationally syndicated publications, two (*Rolling Stone* and *The Ringer*) are pop-culture publications that talk a great deal about sports and the larger issues around it. These two were chosen because of their size, popularity, and ease of access. Finally, *The New York Times* and *The Wall Street Journal* are two of the more popular, nationally syndicated newspapers in the country, and provide broader coverage of an issue like this one, thus lending another unique perspective. From those seven outlets, articles were searched for using a combination of key terms: Colin Kaepernick, San Francisco 49ers, national anthem, and protest. All articles referencing the national anthem protest, Colin Kaepernick and/or the San Francisco 49ers from August 2016-February 2018 were chosen. The initial number of articles found meeting the criteria was 668 articles. The number of qualifying articles per source varied, with a significant gap between the largest source (*The San Francisco Chronicle* at 252 articles) and the smallest source (*The Ringer* at 18 articles). For the final sample, I used three tiers of systematic sampling. For *The Ringer* and *Rolling Stone* and *The Wall Street Journal* I chose every 2nd article, every 3rd for *SF Gate*, and every 4th for the Bay Area News Group, *San Francisco Chronicle* and *The New York Times*. This resulted in 188 articles.

Pretest and Research Design

The design of the initial coding sheet took influence was influenced by previous content analysis studies within the field (Kian 2009 & Pedersen 2002) and Coombs et al.

(2017). The initial sheet was examined by the thesis committee chair, a communications professional herself, and suggestions were considered to further improve it. A second coding sheet was created based on suggested edits, with an accompanying code book created as well.

The final coding sheet was divided into three sections. First, the coder's name and article's title were recorded in the upper-right corner of the sheet for identification purposes during data entry. Section 1 coded the article source, date, section published under, and first three tags nominally. Article section was designed as a "choose all that apply" question, but was coded with the first (numerically) selected being the section coded. Section 2 coded the headline (not including the byline) of the article. The headline contents were examined for several terms and phrases and were entered in a range of 1-6, and asked the coder to check all that apply. If none of the listed terms were found, the number 6 was checked. The tone of the headline towards the national anthem protests was coded on a scale of 1-4, with 1 being for the protests, 2 for neutral, 3 for against them, and 4 as uncertain about the headline's tone. Section 3 coded the main text of the article, with questions being coded in three ways. A yes or no (1 for yes, 2 for no) scale was used for questions dealing with mentions of various variables such as 49ers players (not including Colin Kaepernick), Donald Trump, and approval of the protests from within the 49ers organization. Questions dealing with specific mentions (i.e. reasons behind the protests, sources/themes of approval/disapproval, consequences of protesting as mentioned by players) were coded in a range from 1 to various numbers. For each question, the final number was the selection "other," with space for the coder to

write down the selected choice. For questions 9, 10, and 17, each coder was instructed to write “none” in the “other” category if an acceptable selection was not found. This additional variable was accounted for in SPSS and entered separately from additional “other” selections. Finally, article tone was coded on the same 1-4 scale as headline tone. For data entry, headline and article tone, date, and source were entered as coded in the sheet. All “yes or no” questions were entered singularly. All in Section 3 that coded in a range were broken down as individual variables per possible selection, and coded as either “selected” or “no.” For further details, please reference Appendix B.

For the pre-test, I chose 12% of the articles from the final sample, which amounted to 23 articles. Five were used from the three largest sources while only 1 from the two smallest. These 23 were coded by myself; however, the second coder was only able to code 14 before scheduling and time constraints forced progression to the next part of the study. Additionally, during data entry for the final sample, two *SF Gate* articles were found to be duplicates of *San Francisco Chronicle* articles and were removed from the sample. The final number of coded articles was 163.

There was one additional coder, a university linguistics and language development lecturer. An undergraduate student was initially chosen as the original second coder, and began coding training. However, the student had to remove herself from the project due to scheduling issues. The lecturer replaced the student during the pre-test phase. The second coder participated in an hour-long training session and was given the codebook to read. Following acceptable time to read the code book and the answering of questions regarding it, the pre-test began. As mentioned earlier, time constraints (a combination of

the second coder's schedule and concerns about completing the study within the deadline) forced the pre-test to be cut down from 22 to 14 articles. Additionally, the time constraints only permitted the running of one pre-test. Fourteen articles were coded independently, with data entered into IBM SPSS Statistics version 22.

Intercoder Reliability

Intercoder reliability was evaluated using Cohen's Kappa in SPSS. Cohen's Kappa was chosen as the sole reliability statistic because it accounts for chance agreement and is used mostly with nominal variables (Lombard et al 2002).

The reliability test revealed acceptable reliability values for most objective variables (i.e. NinersPlayerMentions), and some subjective variables (i.e. OutsideApprovalTheme2: right to protest injustice). However, reliability for other subjective (headline/article tone) and some objective (i.e. OutsideApproval/DisapprovalSource4) variables varied. Four questions provided low reliability across most possible selections: headline/article tone and outside disapproval sources/themes. Discussions between the researcher and additional coder contributed low reliability amongst questions with intangible variables (i.e. headline tone) to their inherently subjective nature. Low reliability within outside disapproval source was attributed to disagreement as to whether certain statements or reported actions by selections outside of the President and other government officials constituted disapproval of the protests. For example, the Vice President tweeting about leaving a 49ers game due to perceived disrespect of the US flag was a clear show of disapproval. NFL commissioner Roger Goodell's quote in which he said that he preferred players would stand for the anthem but

respected their right to speak, however, went either way. Additional low reliability scores, such as that of OutsideDisapprovalTheme1, were attributed to coder error. Finally, KaepernickMention4 was a constant, meaning one coder selected one answer for every article. The researcher scored every article as a “no” while the additional coder had varied responses. Discussion amongst the coders highlighted this variable as highly contentious, as the code book defines Kaepernick’s political opinion as it related to his views on the election, whereas the additional coder felt it should extend to his protest. The variable was removed from the study.

After consultation with the committee chair, most variables with a reliability below .700 were removed from the study apart from OutsideApproval and TeamProtestReasons4. OutsideApproval’s score of .696 and relevance to the study deemed it acceptable. TeamProtestReason4’s score was agreed to be an SPSS error after examination of the raw scores. For the final research, coders were instructed to completely disregard questions 16 and 17, and all other excluded variables. If excluded variables were checked, they were disregarded in the final data collection. Reliability test results are shown in Table 1.

Table 1

Intercoder Reliability

Variable	Cohen's Kappa
Source	1.000
DateMonth	1.000
DateDay	1.000
DateYear	1.000
ArticleSection	1.000
Tags1	1.000
Tags2	1.000
Tags3	1.000
Headline1	1.000
Headline2	1.000
Headline3:	1.000
Headline4:	1.000
Headline5:	1.000
Headline6:	1.000
HeadlineTone:	.604
NinersPlayerMentions:	.837
TeamProtestReasons1:	.811
TeamProtestReasons2:	.576
TeamProtestReasons3:	1.000
TeamProtestReasons4:	-.105
TeamProtestReasons5:	1.000
PlayerConsequences1:	1.000

PlayerConsequences2:	1.000
PlayerConsequences3:	1.000
PlayerConsequences4:	1.000
PlayerConsequences5:	1.000
PlayerConsequences6:	-.077
NinerDisapproval:	1.000
NinerDisapprovalSource1:	1.000
NinerDisapprovalSource2:	1.000
NinerDisapprovalSource3:	1.000
NinerDisapprovalSource4:	1.000
NinerDisapprovalSource5:	1.000
NinerDisapprovalSource6:	1.000
NinerApproval:	.851
NinerApprovalSource1:	.851
NinerApprovalSource2:	1.000
NinerApprovalSource3:	1.000
NinerApprovalSource4:	1.000
NinerApprovalSource5:	1.000
NinerApprovalSource6:	1.000
OutsideDisapproval:	.759
OutsideDisapprovalSource1	.720
OutsideDisapprovalSource2	1.000
OutsideDisapprovalSource3	.429
OutsideDisapprovalSource4:	.286
OutsideDisapprovalSource5:	-.105
OutsideDisapprovalSource6:	1.000
OutsideDisapprovalSource7:	-.077
OutsideDisapprovalTheme1:	.512
OutsideDisapprovalTheme2:	.462

OutsideDisapprovalTheme3:	1.000
OutsideDisapprovalTheme4:	1.000
OutsideDisapprovalTheme5:	.222
OutsideDisapprovalTheme6:	1.000
OutsideApproval:	.696
OutsideApprovalSource1:	1.000
OutsideApprovalSource2:	.837
OutsideApprovalSource3:	1.000
OutsideApprovalSource4:	.632
OutsideApprovalSource5:	.759
OutsideApprovalSource6:	1.000
OutsideApprovalSource7:	1.000
OutsideApprovalTheme1:	1.000
OutsideApprovalTheme2:	.759
OutsideApprovalTheme3:	1.000
OutsideApprovalTheme4:	1.000
OutsideApprovalTheme5:	.417
TrumpMention:	1.000
TrumpMentionType1:	.759
TrumpMentionType2:	1.000
TrumpMentionType3:	.837
TrumpMetnionType4:	1.000
ColinKaepernickMention:	1.000
KaepernickMentionType1:	.851
KaepernickMentionType2:	1.000
KaepernickMentionType3:	.759
KaepernickMentionType4:	Constant
KaepernickMentionType5:	.837
ArticleTone:	.456

RESULTS

All data were collected and entered into IBM SPSS Statistics version 22. Descriptive statistics were used to answer the research questions and examine additional findings.

RQ 1: Does coverage of the national anthem protests show evidence of bias against the players?

The first research question examined whether coverage of the national anthem protests shows evidence of bias against the players. Eighty-six (52.8%) articles featured mentions of 49er players other than Colin Kaepernick protesting, while 77 (47.6%) did not. Of those 86 articles, 26 featured no reasons mentioned behind the 49er protests. Of reasons that were given behind the 49ers protests, “protesting racial injustice/police brutality” was found in 42 articles, and “responding to the President’s statements on the protest” in 6. Of articles that mentioned 49er players other than Kaepernick protesting and the possible consequences faced by those players, 7 articles featured talk of a “decline in television ratings” for the NFL and “other” possible consequences, 6 brought up “public backlash” and “potential risk to future employment by other teams”, and 5 had talk of “loss of endorsement and/or other financial loss.” Seven articles (4.3%) mentioned disapproval of the protests from within the 49ers organization, with 4 mentions coming from current players and 1 each from former players, owner/management, and the coaching staff. Approval of the protests from within the 49ers organization was found in 64 articles with 39 mentions from current players, 31 from owner/management, 13 from coaching staff, and 1 from former players (see Table 2).

Table 2

Sources of Approval of The Protests Within the 49ers' Organization

Sources	# of Articles	% of Sample
Current Players	39	45.3%
Former players	1	1.2%
Owner/management	31	36.0%
Coaching Staff	13	15.1%
Team Affiliated	1	1.2%
Other	1	1.2%
Total	86	100.0%

Disapproval of the protests from sources outside the 49ers organization was found in 118 or 72.4% of articles coded. Comparatively, 104 or 63.8% of articles coded featured mentions of approval of the protests from outside sources. NFL players were a source of approval in 66 articles, with public figures (athletes, celebrities, media, etc.) being the second highest source of approval, at 33 articles. The article author was a source of approval in only 7 articles.

President Donald Trump, perhaps the most prominent figure in opposition to the National Anthem protests, was mentioned just slightly less often than he wasn't. Trump was brought up in 80 articles and not found in 83, a 49.1% to 50.9% split. A cross-tabulation of Trump mentions and article publication year revealed 93.8% of total mentions coming from articles published in 2017. His statements on the protests from the September 22nd Alabama campaign rally were found in 58 articles, with tweets about the protests, NFL, or anthem were in 38 articles, and comments on him from non-politically involved individuals found in 34 articles (see Table 3)

Table 3

Types of Donald Trump Mentions

Trump Mentions	# of Articles	% of Sample
His statements regarding the protests from the September 22 rally	58	41.7%
Tweets commenting about the protests, the NFL, or the national anthem	38	27.3%
Comments on the President from outside, non-politically involved individuals (athletes, executives, media figures, etc.)	34	24.5%
Other	9	6.5%
Total	139	100.0%

Colin Kaepernick, the originator of the national anthem protests, figured heavily in the coded articles. The former 49ers quarterback was mentioned in 145 or 89% of articles, and not mentioned in 18 or 11% of articles. He was found more in articles published in 2017 than 2016. However, percentage-wise, Kaepernick was mentioned in 100% of 2016 articles compared with 86.7% of 2017 articles (see Table 4).

Table 4

Colin Kaepernick Mentions Broken Down By Year

Year	Mentions		Total
	Yes	No	
2016			
# of Kaepernick mentions	39	0	39
% of 2016 mentions	100%	0%	100%
% of total mentions (yes or no)	26.9%	0%	23.9%
2017			
# of Kaepernick mentions	104	16	120
% of 2016 mentions	86.7%	13.3%	100%
% of total mentions (yes or no)	71.7%	88.9%	73.6%
2018			
# of Kaepernick mentions	2	2	4
% of 2016 mentions	50%	50%	100%
% of total mentions (yes or no)	1.4%	11.1%	2.5%

Of total Colin Kaepernick mentions, 108 brought up the origins of his protest and/meeting with Green Beret Nate Boyer, 45 discussed his status as a free agent having not been signed by any teams, while 15 mentioned his philanthropic efforts outside of football, and 5 brought up his career statistics compared with those of current starting NFL QBs (see Table 5).

Table 5

Colin Kaepernick Mentions Broken Down By Type

Kaepernick Mention Type	Total	Percentage
That he was not signed as a free agent by any other NFL teams	45	19.3%
His philanthropic efforts outside of football	15	6.4%
His career statistics in comparison to other starting NFL QBs	5	2.1%
His political opinions	60	25.8%
His meeting with Green Beret Nate Boyer and/or the origins of his protest	108	46.4%

RQ 2: Is local coverage more supportive of the protests than national coverage?

Research question two asked if local coverage is more supportive of the protests than national coverage. Cross-tabulation was used to how approval related variables compared between the national and local sources used for this study. Local sources mentioned 49ers players other than Colin Kaepernick protesting more than national sources, at a percentage difference of 59.8% to 39.3% with a p value of .012.

Disapproval of the protests was mentioned more in local sources than national ones, but at a Pearson chi-square value of .253, thus nulling the significance of the result. 45.8% of local source articles featured approval of the protests from within the 49ers organization at a p value of .000. 91.1% of articles from national sources featured disapproval of the protests from outside sources compared to 62.6% of local source article, a significant

different at a p value of .000 (see Table 6).

Table 6

Disapproval of the Protests Broken Down by Source

		Was Outside Disapproval of Protests found?		
		Yes	No	Total
National Source				
	Count	51	5	56
	% within National Source	91.1%	8.9%	100%
	% within total Outside Disapproval of Protests	43.2%	11.1%	34.4%
Local Source				
	Count	67	40	107
	% within Local Source	62.6%	37.4%	100%
	% within total Outside Disapproval of Protests	56.8%	88.9%	65.6%
Total				
	Count	118	45	163

However, 82% of national source articles featured outside approval of the protests compared to 54.2% of local source articles. This was also a significant result with a p value of .000. President Trump was also mentioned more in national sources compared to local ones, at 73.2% to 36.4% and a p value of .000. National sources also mentioned Colin Kaepernick slightly more than local sources, but the p value of .533 marks it as a difference of no significance.

National and local sources offered varying results in the more thematic variables. “Protesting racial injustice/police brutality” was the top reason given for the protests amongst both sources, being found 57% of national articles and 46% of local articles. However, local sources featured more articles that mentioned the protests but did not contain a reason behind them. 33.8% of local articles coded for no reason behind the protests to 19% of national articles. NFL players were the top source of outside approval in both types of sources, at 74.4% for national sources and 66.7% for local, while more local article authors expressed support for the protests than national ones. Additionally, “right to protest injustice” was the top theme of outside approval for both types of source, with the variable being found in 63% of national articles and 51.7% of local ones.

DISCUSSION

The goal of this study was to examine how the media covered the national anthem protests of the San Francisco 49ers during the 2016 and 2017 seasons and to determine whether bias, either in favor of or against the protest, existed. In concurrence with previous research on media coverage of protest movements, race in sports, and instances of alleged police mistreatment of minorities, this study sought to answer two questions: (1) whether coverage was biased against the players, and (2) whether local coverage was more supportive of the 49ers protests than national coverage.

For research question 1, research showed that coverage of the protests featured more disapproval of the protests than approval. The bias evidently present, however, is not simply a case of coverage of the 49ers’ protests presenting an uneven balance of opposition to them versus support. Examination of the data of both the subjective and

objective variables of this study revealed the bias to be a distortion of the protests' underlying message and of their key events, most noticeably in coverage from 2017. President Trump was mentioned in just under half (49.1%) of the articles, with almost all mentions coming in articles from 2017 (93.8%). While this was due to his comments during his September rally and his continued involvement in the protests through Twitter, further data showed him as a focal point of coverage during the protest's second year. Protesting 49er players other than Kaepernick were only mentioned in 60% of articles from 2017, approval from within the 49ers organization in 42.5%, and outside approval in 66.7%. From September 22nd, onward, the President became an ever-present figure in any discussion of the protests. Outside disapproval within the sample study was found the most in articles from October 2017.

Besides supporting the protests as a right to protest injustice, the second most common theme of outside approval was the view that the protests were a proper response to the President. Except for two mentions, one each in November and December of 2017, all mentions of this theme of outside approval occurred in the months of September and October. Furthermore, Vice President Pence's actions during the October 9 49ers game against the Indianapolis Colts entwined the 49ers with the President's take on the protests as just over half (52%) of Trump mentions came during the month of October. Data show that the President became a focal point of coverage on the protests and shifted coverage towards talking more about those against the protests than about those participating in them.

Colin Kaepernick, albeit unintentionally, was also a singular focus of protest coverage much like Trump. Results showed he was mentioned in 89% of all articles sampled, a not so surprising figure given his role as the originator of the protests. However, his prominence in coverage of the 49er protests only took a slight dip even after he was no longer a part of the roster. Kaepernick figured in 100% of articles published in 2016 and still in 86.7% of the 2017 articles. “Continuing what Kaepernick started” was given as a theme of outside approval more in 2017 than 2016. While mentions of the origins of his protest and/or meeting with Green Beret Nate Boyer were the most common type of Kaepernick reference found, the second most was talk of the former 49er quarterback’s status as a free agent. Comparatively, 49ers players other than Kaepernick were mentioned in just over half (52.8%) of all articles and 60% of 2017 articles. Kaepernick’s dominant inclusion in media coverage does not suggest bias against the protests, but rather a lack of exploration into the true meaning behind them.

The strong presence of President Donald Trump and Colin Kaepernick in media coverage of the anthem protests does not diminish the fact that the media got the themes of the protest right. “Protesting racial injustice” was the most mentioned reason given for the protests, and “right to protest injustice” was the most mentioned theme of outside approval. Additionally, NFL players were the largest source of approval of the protests. These results suggest a slight change in how the media covered this protest movement compared to those of the past. The intended message behind the protests was not left out and was featured more than other reasons crafted by outside sources. This marks a divergence from past research (McLeod et al, 1999), and confirmation of print

journalism's focus on thematic coverage (McCarthy et al, 2001). However, public figures decidedly dominated coverage of the protests in spite of the debate they tried to foster. As mentioned in McCarthy (2001), counter-protesting began to dominate coverage as outside disapproval overshadowed. No more was this evident than in articles from October 2017, which featured a heavy dose of President Trump.

The second research question sought to discover whether local sources were more supportive of the protests than national ones. Despite more articles in the sample being from the three local sources than the four national ones, local sources and national forces were relatively equal in their mentions of support for the protests on a percentage basis. Local sources mentioned players other than Kaepernick protesting, and approval of the protests from within the 49ers organization more. More local authors were also found expressing support for the protests than their national counterparts. These figures coincide with local attitudes towards both the team and protests and how the 49ers are covered in local papers. National sources also overwhelmingly featured more mentions of outside disapproval. Interestingly though, they also featured more mentions of outside approval than local sources with a difference of 82% to 54.2%. These figures show that national coverage of the protests sought to consider the broader scope of debate while local coverage focused more on how the 49ers' perspective. Coincidentally, President Trump was mentioned more in national sources as well.

The results of testing the differences in occurrence of subjective variables also highlighted interesting facts about coverage between local and national sources. Both types of sources featured similar themes in their coverage. The top reasons given for the

protests and theme of outside approval in either source were both related to protesting injustice. Local sources did also feature more mentions of the protests unaccompanied by a reason than national sources. This can be possibly justified by audience familiarity with the issue in the Bay Area, and lack of knowledge about the protests on a national scale.

With similarities in occurrences of subjective and thematic variables between local and national sources, differences in coverage of the protests are few. One difference that can be extrapolated is that local coverage offered a narrower view of the protests. Instead of focusing on the broad spectrum of debate surrounding the protests, local coverage presented things from the 49ers point of view.

Implications

The results extracted from this study offer a bevy of implications both for how the media covers race and social issues in sports, and as to how communications scholars study that coverage. This study is one of the first to examine media coverage of the NFL national anthem protests through the prism of content analysis.

For media professionals, the results show that either intentionally or not, protest movements in sports are still covered with certain biases. In this study, it was shown that counter-protesting yet again took over coverage of a protest. With future coverage, media professionals should be wary of how coverage of opposition to a protest dilutes public perception of that protest. In cases like this one, journalists can ponder what sort of contributions does the opposition add to the conversation about the issue at hand. This

does not suggest that coverage of opposing movements be entirely eradicated, but rather that a balance in coverage be considered.

Additionally, questions about how different sources effect how much information media consumers receive are brought up by these results. Does local coverage limit one's understanding of broader issues like race? Or does national coverage offer too broad a picture for an individual to form their own opinion? This study does not suggest one answer or the other to be the right one, but that questions like these be considered.

Limitations and Suggestions for Further Research

Several limitations exist in this study. The first of which is inter-coder reliability. Low inter-coder reliability amongst several variables forced the removal of two questions and certain responses from others. The two questions that were removed dealt with the sources and themes of outside disapproval. The inclusion of both questions would have provided added enrichment to the study and would shed light on who disapproved of the protests and why. Additionally, the inclusion of other removed responses would have enriched the study as well. Low reliability amongst these variables was attributed to disagreement on what constituted disapproval of the protests, and lack of understanding of the meaning of the responses themselves. Additional research should set clearer parameters as to what constitutes disapproval.

Additionally, certain variables could have been more precisely constructed. For example, one variable dealing with types of Colin Kaepernick references was "his meeting with Green Beret Nate Boyer and/or the origins of his protest." This variable could have either been split up into two responses, or the reference to Nate Boyer entirely

removed as it constituted a small part of the origin of the protest. Question 10, which dealt with potential consequences of the protests, was vaguely written and could have also been trimmed down.

Finally, this study shows evidence previous communications theory is changing. Issues of race in sports media, and coverage of protest movements still follows many of the same themes discovered in prior works but some have also dissipated. Coverage of events like Charlottesville or protests after the election of Donald Trump are ideal ways to examine existing theory. Further content analysis studies on media coverage of the protests would also contribute immensely to the field. Other studies could tackle specific themes like the Vice President leaving an October 8 49er game or broad themes such as visual media coverage of the protests. Individual factors of this study, like Donald Trump or outside disapproval would also make excellent studies across a broader range of sources.

REFERENCES

- Altman, Alex, et al. "Trump's Offensive Playbook." *Time*, vol. 190, no. 14, 2017, pp. 32-39,
- Billings, Andrew C. "Depicting the Quarterback in Black and White: A Content Analysis of College and Professional Football Broadcast Commentary."
- . "Portraying Tiger Woods: Characterizations of a "Black" Athlete in a "White" Sport." *Howard Journal of Communication*, vol. 14, no. 1, 2003, pp. 29-37.
- Borchers, Callum. "The NFL has the most Protests. it is also the most American Sports League." *The Washington Post*, October 13, 2017, 2017.
- Boykoff, Jules. "Framing Dissent: Mass-Media Coverage of the Global Justice Movement." *New Political Science*, vol. 28, no. 2, 2006, pp. 201-228.
- Braddock, Jomills Henry, II, Eryka Smith, and Marvin P. Dawkins. "Race and Pathways to Power in the National Football League." *American Behavioral Scientist*, vol. 56, no. 5, 2012, pp. 711-727.
- Byrd, Jennifer, and Max Utsler. "Is Stereotypical Coverage of African-American Athletes as "Dead as Disco"?: An Analysis of NFL Quarterbacks in the Pages of Sports Illustrated." *Journal of Sports Media*, vol. 2, no. 1, 2007, pp. 1-28.
- Cissel, Margaret. "Media Framing: A Comparative Content Analysis on Mainstream and Alternative News Coverage of Occupy Wall Street." *The Elon Journal of Undergraduate Research in Communications*, vol. 3, no. 1, 2012, pp. 67-77.
- Coombs, Danielle Sarver, et al. "Kap takes a knee: A media framing analysis of Colin Kaepernick's anthem protest." *20TH INTERNATIONAL PUBLIC RELATIONS RESEARCH CONFERENCE*. 2017.
- Cunningham, Phillip L. "'Please Don't Fine Me again!!!!' Black Athletic Defiance in the NBA and NFL." *Journal of Sport and Social Issues*, vol. 33, no. 1, 2009, pp. 39-58.
- Dottolo, Andrea L., and Abigail J. Stewart. "'Don't Ever Forget Now, you're a Black Man in America': Intersections of Race, Class and Gender in Encounters with the Police." *Sex Roles*, vol. 59, no. 5-6, 2008, pp. 350-364.

- ESPN.com news services. "Ray Rice Suspended 2 Games." *ESPN*, 25 Jul. 2014, espn.com/nfl/story/_/id/11257692/ray-rice-baltimore-ravens-suspended-2-games. Accessed 10 Nov 2017.
- Fridkin, Kim, et al. "Race and Police Brutality: The Importance of Media Framing." *International Journal of Communication*, vol. 11, 2017, pp. 3394-3414.
- Goffman, Erving. *Frame analysis: An essay on the organization of experience*. Cambridge, MA, US: Harvard University Press, 1974.
- Hartmann, Douglas. "Rush Limbaugh, Donovan McNabb, and "A Little Social Concern" Reflections on the Problems of Whiteness in Contemporary American Sport." *Journal of Sport and Social Issues*, vol. 31, no. 1, 2007, pp. 45-60.
- Hirschfield, Paul J., and Daniella Simon. "Legitimizing Police Violence Newspaper Narratives of Deadly Force." *Theoretical Criminology*, vol. 14, no. 2, 2010, pp. 155-182, doi:10.1177/1362480609351545.
- Kahn, Lawrence M. "Discrimination in Professional Sports: A Survey of the Literature." *ILR Review*, vol. 44, no. 3, 1991, pp. 395-418.
- Kaiser, Kent, Dylan Williams, and Dawn Norwood. "Beyond Stacking in American Football Towards an Understanding of Cultural Transmission, Social Identity and Self-Categorization." *Sport in Society*, vol. 19, no. 10, 2016, pp. 1573-1595, doi:10.1080/17430437.2016.1159195.
- Kane, Daniel, Bonnie Tiell, and Intercollegiate A. In. "Application of Normative Ethics to Explain Colin Kaepernick's Silent Protest in the NFL." *Sport Journal*, 2017.
- Kaufman, Peter, and Eli A. Wolff. "Playing and Protesting: Sport as a Vehicle for Social Change." *Journal of Sport and Social Issues*, vol. 34, no. 2, 2010, pp. 154-175.
- Kensicki, Linda J. "Deaf President Now! Positive Media Framing of a Social Movement within a Hegemonic Political Environment." *Journal of Communication Inquiry*, vol. 25, no. 2, 2001, pp. 147-166.
- Kian, Edward T. M., Michael Mondello, and John Vincent. "ESPN—The Women's Sports Network? A Content Analysis of Internet Coverage of March Madness." *Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media*, vol. 53, no. 3, 2009, pp. 477-495.
- Lawrence, RG. "Accidents, Icons, and Indexing: The Dynamics of News Coverage of Police use of Force." *Political Communication*, vol. 13, no. 4, 1996, pp. 437-454.

- Lombard, Matthew, Jennifer Snyder-Duch, and Cheryl C. Bracken. "Content Analysis in Mass Communication: Assessment and Reporting of Intercoder Reliability." *Human Communication Research*, vol. 28, no. 4, 2002, pp. 587-604.
- Marston, Steve. "The Revival of Athlete Activism (s): Divergent Black Politics in the 2016 Presidential Election Engagements of LeBron James and Colin Kaepernick." *FairPlay, Revista De Filosofía, Ética y Derecho Del Deporte*, no. 10, 2017, pp. 45-68.
- Matthes, Jörg. "What's in a Frame? A Content Analysis of Media Framing Studies in the World's Leading Communication Journals, 1990-2005." *Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly*, vol. 86, no. 2, 2009, pp. 349-367.
- McLeod, Douglas M., and Benjamin H. Detenber. "Framing Effects of Television News Coverage of Social Protest." *Journal of Communication*, vol. 49, no. 3, 1999, pp. 3-23.
- McQuail, Denis. *Mcquail's Mass Communication Theory*. London: Sage Publications, 2010. Print
- Mercurio, Eugenio, and Vincent F. Filak. "Roughing the Passer: The Framing of Black and White Quarterbacks Prior to the NFL Draft." *Howard Journal of Communications*, vol. 21, no. 1, 2010, pp. 56-71,
[http://libaccess.sjlibrary.org/login?url=http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=ufh&AN=47760533&site=ehost-live&scope=site,](http://libaccess.sjlibrary.org/login?url=http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=ufh&AN=47760533&site=ehost-live&scope=site,doi:10.1080/10646170903501328)
 doi:10.1080/10646170903501328.
- Pedersen, Paul M. "Examining Equity in Newspaper Photographs: A Content Analysis of the Print Media Photographic Coverage of Interscholastic Athletics." *International Review for the Sociology of Sport*, vol. 37, no. 3-4, 2002, pp. 303-318.
- Piquero, Alex R., et al. "Race, Punishment, and the Michael Vick Experience." *Social Science Quarterly*, vol. 92, no. 2, 2011, pp. 535-551, *JSTOR*,
<http://www.jstor.org.libaccess.sjlibrary.org/stable/42956499>.
- Ray, Rashawn, et al. "Ferguson and the Death of Michael Brown on Twitter: #BlackLivesMatter, #TCOT, and the Evolution of Collective Identities." *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, vol. 40, no. 11, 2017, pp. 1797-1813,
 doi:10.1080/01419870.2017.1335422.
- Rembert, David A., Jerry Watson, and Rickey Hill. "A Trilogy of Trepidation: Diverse Perspectives on Police Violence Targeting African American Males." *Journal of Human Behavior in the Social Environment*, vol. 26, no. 2, 2016, pp. 227-235,
 doi:10.1080/10911359.2015.1083506.

- Rohrback, Ben. "NFL Fines DeAngelo Williams for Raising Breast Cancer Awareness during Breast Cancer Awareness Month." *Yahoo! Sports*, 28 Oct. 2015, ca.sports.yahoo.com/blogs/nfl-shutdown-corner/nfl-fines-deangelo-williams-for-raising-breast-cancer-awareness-during-breast-cancer-awareness-month. Accessed 10 Nov 2017.
- Rorke, Tom, and Adam Copeland. "Athletic Disobedience: Providing a Context for Analysis of Colin Kaepernick's Protest." *FairPlay, Revista De Filosofía, Ética y Derecho Del Deporte*, no. 10, 2017, pp. 83-107.
- Scheufele, Dietram A. "Framing as a Theory of Media Effects." *Journal of Communication*, vol. 49, no. 1, 1999, pp. 103-122.
- Schmittel, Annelie, and Jimmy Sanderson. "Talking about Trayvon in 140 Characters: Exploring NFL Players' Tweets about the George Zimmerman Verdict." *Journal of Sport and Social Issues*, vol. 39, no. 4, 2015, pp. 332-345.
- Schwab, Frank. "RG3 Turned 'Know Jesus Know Peace' T-Shirt Inside Out for News Conference." *Yahoo! Sports*, 15 Sept. 2014, sports.yahoo.com/blogs/shutdown-corner/rg3-turned--know-jesus-know-peace--shirt-inside-out-for-press-conference. Accessed 9 Nov 2017.
- Shannon-Missal, Larry. "Pro Football is Still American's Favorite Sport: Pro Baseball and College Football Continue to Round Out the Top Three." *The Harris Poll*, no. 7, 2016.
- Shedd, Carla. "To Serve and Protect?" *Unequal City: Race, Schools, and Perceptions of Injustice*, Russell Sage Foundation, 2015, pp. 120-156. *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/10.7758/9781610448529.10.
- Smith, Jackie, et al. "From Protest to Agenda Building: Description Bias in Media Coverage of Protest Events in Washington, DC." *Social Forces*, vol. 79, no. 4, 2001, pp. 1397-1423.
- Smith, Thomas G. "Civil Rights on the Gridiron: The Kennedy Administration and the Desegregation of the Washington Redskins." *Journal of Sport History*, vol. 14, no. 2, 1987, pp. 189-208, *JSTOR*, <http://www.jstor.org.libaccess.sjlibrary.org/stable/43610150>.
- . "Outside the Pale: The Exclusion of Blacks from the National Football League, 1934-1946." *Journal of Sport History*, vol. 15, no. 3, 1988, pp. 255-281, *JSTOR*, <http://www.jstor.org.libaccess.sjlibrary.org/stable/43609225>.

Tompkins, Joe. "'A Postgame Interview for the Ages': Richard Sherman and the Dialectical Rhetoric of Racial Neoliberalism." *Journal of Sport & Social Issues*, vol. 40, no. 4, 2016, pp. 291-314.

Van Sterkenburg, Jacco, Annelies Knoppers, and Sonja De Leeuw. "Race, Ethnicity, and Content Analysis of the Sports Media: A Critical Reflection." *Media, Culture & Society*, vol. 32, no. 5, 2010, pp. 819-839.

Waldron, Travis. "The NFL's Domestic Violence Policy Isn't Working because it Wasn't Designed to." *Huffington Post*, 21 Oct. 2016, huffingtonpost.com/entry/nfl-josh-brown-domestic-violence-giants_us_. Accessed 11 Nov 2017.

Appendix A: Coding Sheet

Coding Sheet

NFL Player Protests Media Study

Coder: _____

Article No: _____

Section I

1. **Source:** ☐ 1 *BA News Group* ☐ 2 *SF Chronicle* ☐ 3 *SF Gate* ☐ 4 *The Ringer*
☐ 5 *Rolling Stone* ☐ 6 *The New York Times* ☐ 7 *The Wall Street Journal*
2. **Date:** Month _____ Day _____ Year _____
3. **Article Length:** _____ words
4. **Section Article Published Under (If applicable, choose all that apply):** ☐ 1 Sports ☐ 2 Politics ☐ 3 National Affairs ☐ 4 News (current or breaking) ☐ 5 Opinion ☐ 6 Business ☐ 7 US & World ☐ 8 San Francisco 49ers/49ers ☐ 9 Life ☐ 10 Technology ☐ 11 Other: _____
5. **Are the first 3 tags (usually found at end of the article) used for the article any of the following (if applicable, check all that apply):** ☐ 1 San Francisco 49ers ☐ 2 Colin Kaepernick ☐ 3 Donald Trump ☐ 4 NFL ☐ 5 Protest ☐ 6 No tags found

Section II

6. **Does the article headline contain any of the following (Check All That Apply):**
☐ 1 San Francisco 49ers/ 49ers ☐ 2 Colin Kaepernick/Kap/Kaepernick ☐ 3 Donald Trump/ President Trump/ Trump ☐ 4 NFL ☐ 5 National Anthem/ Protest/Taking A Knee ☐ 6 None
7. **Headline tone (in regards to National Anthem Protests):**
☐ 1 For ☐ 2 Neutral ☐ 3 Against ☐ 4 Uncertain

Section III

8. **Does article mention 49ers player protests (i.e. multiple players besides Colin Kaepernick protesting):** ☐ 1 Yes ☐ 2 No *(If "No," go to question # 11)*

- 9. If yes, does the article mention any of the following reasons behind team protests (check all that apply):**
☐ 1 Protesting racial injustice/police brutality ☐ 2 Solidarity with Colin Kaepernick
☐ 3 Responding to the President's statements on the protests ☐ 4 Other: _____
- 10. Does the article mention any of the following "consequences" of players (not including Colin Kaepernick) protesting (choose all that apply):** ☐ 1 Loss of endorsements and/or other financial loss ☐ 2 Decline in television ratings ☐ 3 Potential risk to future employment by other teams ☐ 4 Public backlash (boos, death threats, etc) ☐ 5 Other: _____
- 11. Does the article mention disapproval of the protests from sources within or affiliated with the 49ers organization (i.e. current or former players, owner/management, coaching staff, etc.). If "No", go to question #13:** ☐ 1 Yes ☐ 2 No
- 12. If yes, does disapproval of the protests come from any of the following sources (choose all that apply):** ☐ 1 Current players
☐ 2 Former players
☐ 3 Owner/Management ☐ 4 Coaching Staff ☐ 5 Team affiliated media
☐ 6 Other: _____
- 13. Does the article mention approval of the protests from sources within or affiliated with the 49ers organization (i.e. current or former players, owner/management, coaching staff, etc.). If "No", go to question #15:** ☐ 1 Yes ☐ 2 No
- 14. If yes, does approval of the protests come from any of the following sources (choose all that apply):** ☐ 1 Current players
☐ 2 Former players
☐ 3 Owner/Management ☐ 4 Coaching Staff ☐ 5 Team affiliated media
☐ 6 Other: _____
- 15. Does the article mention disapproval of the protests from sources outside of the 49ers organization (i.e. the President/Administration, general public, other NFL players/management, public figures, etc.). If "No", go to question #18:**
☐ 1 Yes ☐ 2 No
- 16. If yes, does disapproval of the protests come from any of the following sources (choose all that apply):** ☐ 1 The President/Other Government Officials

- ☐ 2 NFL Players
☐ 3 NFL Owners/Management ☐ 4 General Public ☐ 5 Public Figures (Athletes, Celebrities, Media, etc.) ☐ 6 The author ☐ 7 Other: _____

17. Does disapproval of the protests fall under any of the following themes (choose all that apply):

- ☐ 1 Disrespect to the US/ flag/National Anthem ☐ 2 Disrespect to the military/service members (police, firefighters, etc.)
☐ 3 Players are too wealthy to protest ☐ 4 "Liberalization" of American athletes
☐ 5 Other: _____

18. Does the article mention approval of the protests from sources outside of the 49ers organization (i.e. Government Officials, the general public, other NFL players/management, public figures, etc.). If "No", go to question #21:

- ☐ 1 Yes ☐ 2 No

19. If yes, does approval of the protests come from any of the following sources (choose all that apply):

- ☐ 1 Government Officials ☐ 2 NFL Players
☐ 3 NFL Owners/Management ☐ 4 General Public ☐ 5 Public Figures (Athletes, celebrities, Media, etc.) ☐ 6 The author ☐ 7 Other: _____

20. Does approval of the protests fall under any of the following themes (choose all that apply):

- ☐ 1 Bravery for taking a stand ☐ 2 Right to protest injustice ☐ 3 Proper response to the President ☐ 4 Continuing what Kaepernick started
☐ 5 Other: _____

21. Does the article mention President Trump (If "No," go to question #23):

- ☐ 1 Yes ☐ 2 No

22. If yes, does article contain any of the following mentions about the President (check all that apply):

- ☐ 1 His statements regarding the protests from the September 22 rally
☐ 2 Tweets commenting on the protests, the NFL, or the national anthem
☐ 3 Comments on the President from outside, non-politically involved individuals (athletes, executives, media figures, etc.) ☐ 4 Other: _____

23. Does the article mention Colin Kaepernick (If "No," go to question #25):

- ☐ 1 Yes ☐ 2 No

24. If yes, does the article contain any of the following mentions about Colin

- Kaepernick (check all that apply)** ☐ 1 That he was not signed as a free agent by

any other NFL teams ☐ 2 His philanthropic efforts outside of football ☐ 3 His career statistics in comparison to other starting NFL QBs ☐ 4 His political opinions ☐ 5 His meeting with Green Beret Nate Boyer and/or the origins of his protest

25. Overall Article Tone (about the protests): ☐ 1 Supportive ☐ 2 Neutral ☐ 3 Against ☐ 4 Uncertain

Appendix B: Code Book

NFL Protests Media Study Codebook

Section I

- 1) SOURCE: Name of newspaper/publication analyzed
- 2) DATE: Date in which article was published (i.e. 11/4)
- 3) ARTICLE LENGTH: Number of words in the article (i.e. 2,140)
- 4) SECTION: Section of the paper or publication under which the article is posted (i.e. "Sports", "Politics" or "San Francisco 49ers"). If article is under multiple sections, say "Politics" followed by "US", choose the first one it was published under. If it is not found in any of the sections listed, choose "other" and list the section.
- 5) 3 TAGS: At the bottom of an online article, tags are usually found to aid in SEO (search engine optimization, or how someone finds the article on an internet search engine). An example would be for an article about football to be "NFL" or "NCAA". If there are tags listed, select the listed choices if they are one of the first three.

Section II

- 6) ARTICLE HEADLINE: The primary subject of the headline in either the exact terms listed, or related terms (i.e. for "NFL", a phrase like "League should..." or "The league..." may be used). If none of the listed terms are found, choose "none."
- 7) HEADLINE TONE: The tone of the headline in regards to the national anthem protests

For: The headline is for the protests, and presents the idea that the article will be one that discusses the positives of the protest,

and praises the players involved. An example might read “NFL Players Kneel for Justice in Face of Criticism from the President.”

Neutral: The headline is neither for nor against the protests, and presents the idea that the article will simply report the facts of the events that occurred. An example might read, “Players Kneel at Start of 49ers Game”.

Against: The headline is hostile towards the protests and presents the idea that the article will be critical of the protests. An example might read “49ers Players Disrespect Flag in Kneeling During Anthem Before Game”.

Uncertain: The tone of the headline cannot be made out. It does seem to have an opinion, but may also seem like it is presenting a neutral article.

SECTION III

8) 49ER PLAYERS: Does the article talk about other 49ers players besides Colin Kaepernick protesting? This does not include any discussion of the protests by outside sources. For example, if the article mentions the President talking about the protests, but not the actual events themselves, then check “No”. An example of a “Yes,” would be if the article says something along the lines of “Last week, a dozen 49ers players took a knee before the start of their game versus the Colts.” If yes, check the box, if not, skip until question #11.

9) PROTEST REASONS: Are any of the listed reasons behind the 49er player protests listed? These can be written by the author or discussed in a quote within the article. The exact terminology will likely not be used, so related terminology is excepted.

- 1) “Protesting racial injustice/inequality” describes the protests as responses to recent events of police brutality against African-Americans or other forms of racial inequality.
- 2) “Solidarity with Kaepernick” describes any reason for kneeling to be about standing with or following the example of the former 49ers quarterback.

3) "Responding to Trump" describes players taking a knee as a protest against the President's remarks about the NFL anthem protests as a whole.

4) If a reason other than the listed three is mentioned, such as protesting another individuals' comments, check "other" and list the reason.

10) Consequences:

Check any of the following consequences players besides Colin Kaepernick may have faced by taking a knee during the Anthem. Text written by the author or quotes are both permissible. Similar to the previous question, related terminology may be used to reference one of the choices.

1) If a player has lost an endorsement deal or something similar, select this option.

2) "Decline in television ratings" describes if protests are offered or discussed as a reason for the decline in NFL TV ratings.

3) If a player may face trouble signing with other teams because of participating in the protests, select this option.

4) "Public backlash" describes if protesting players have faced anything from boos during the game to actual death threats.

5) If another consequence not listed is mentioned, select "other" and list the consequence.

11) 49ERS DISAPPROVAL

If the author discusses or quotes any disapproval of the protests from someone within or affiliated with the San Francisco 49ers, check "yes". Individuals within the organization would include players, the owner, management (GM or General Manager, CFO, CEO, etc.), and members of the coaching staff. Individuals affiliated with the team would include former players/management, or team media (local radio or TV announcers). If "No," skip to question #13.

12) 49ERS DISAPPROVAL SOURCE

Select all the following choices that disapprove of the 49ers' national anthem protests within the article. For clear references, see question #11 above. If an individual not listed, but one who is still affiliated with the 49ers, voices their disapproval in the article, choose "other" and list

them. Fans, whether random members of the public or celebrities, would be an example of an “other” choice.

- 13) 49ERS APPROVAL If the author discusses or quotes any approval of the protests from someone within or affiliated with the San Francisco 49ers, check “yes”. Individuals within the organization would include players, the owner, management (GM or General Manager, CFO, CEO, etc.), and members of the coaching staff. Individuals affiliated with the team would include former players/management, or team media (local radio or TV announcers). If “No,” skip to question #15.
- 14) 49ERS APPROVAL SOURCE Select all the following choices that approve of the 49ers’ national anthem protests within the article. For clear references, see question #13 above. If an individual not listed, but one who is still affiliated with the 49ers, voices their approval in the article, choose “other” and list them. Fans, whether random members of the public or celebrities, would be an example of an “other” choice.
- 15) PUBLIC DISAPPROVAL If the author explicitly states their disapproval of the protests or a quoted source does so, select “yes”. An example statement from the author or a source may read “By taking a knee, the players are not standing up for anything, they’re merely disrespecting a moment that means much more to many others.” If statements like these are not found, select “no”. Outside sources include anyone not affiliated with the San Francisco 49ers. These range from members of the public to the President. If “No,” skip to question #18.
- 16) DISAPPROVAL SOURCE Select all the following choices that show disapproval for the national anthem protests as presented in the article. If a source outside of the list voices disapproval, select “other” and list the source.
- 17) DISAPPROVAL THEME Select all the following themes if disapproval of the national anthem protests is found in the article:

1) The protests are described as being disrespectful to the US Flag or the National Anthem. Related language used could include players being labeled “traitors” or “un-patriotic.”

2) By taking a knee, the players are dishonoring the military, police, firefighters and other service members by kneeling during the national anthem.

3) Any mention of the players’ status as wealthy individuals disqualifying them from being able to protest or voice an opinion. 4) Mention of American athletes becoming too liberal or politically left leaning.

5) Any other description used. If there are multiple, list the first two.

18) PUBLIC APPROVAL

Does the author or any non-49ers affiliated source quoted within the article state explicitly state approval for the protests? An example from the author could read as “In a league like the NFL, players taking a stand for something they believe in comes as a very welcome and much needed surprise.” A quote from a person outside of the 49ers organization like the afore mentioned statement would merit a “yes” as well. If neither of these types of statements are found, select “no”. If “No,” skip to question #21.

19) APPROVAL SOURCE

Select all the following choices that show approval for the national anthem protests as presented in the article. If a source outside of the list voices approval, select “other” and list the source.

20) APPROVAL THEME

Select all the following themes that approval for the protests fall under:

1) If players are described as brave for taking a stand on an issue they see affect their communities, or any reference of that nature.

2) If their right as Americans to protest is mentioned, especially when witnessing a injustice being done. Protesting issues of race may also be mentioned, and would fall under this category.

3) Taking a knee is an appropriate response to the President/Administration’s views on the protest.

Responding to members of the Administration besides Trump would also fall under this category.

4) The protests are viewed as a noble continuation of a movement started by Colin Kaepernick. The author or source(s) views the protests as a good product of what Kap started.

5) Any other reason given behind approval. If there are multiple other reasons, list the first two

- 21) PRESIDENT TRUMP If President Donald Trump is mentioned at all in the article, by either name or title, select “yes”. If not, select “no” and skip to question #23.
- 22) TRUMP STATEMENTS Select all the listed mentions if they are found in the article, either as original text from the author or via quote.
- 1) Any mention of his remarks during the September 22nd rally in Alabama in which he denounced the NFL players for taking a knee, and at one point called them “sons of bitches.”
 - 2) If any tweets of the Presidents are posted or quoted, select this choice.
 - 3) If any quoted source, who is not a politician, discusses the President or his remarks on the protests, select his box. These individuals can be members of the media, other players, team management, celebrities, etc.
 - 4) If Trump is mentioned in any other way, an example being his previous attempts to purchase an NFL team back in the 1980s, choose “other”.
- 23) KAEPERNICK If Colin Kaepernick is mentioned at all by the author or a quote, and by name or title (i.e. “former 49ers quarterback”), select “yes.” If he is not mentioned, select “no” and skip to question #25.
- 24) KAEPERNICK MENTIONS Select all the listed mentions if they are found in the article, either in original text or quotes from sources:
- 1) Any mention of Kaerpernick not being signed by an NFL team during the 2017-2018 season.

- 2) Any mention of his philanthropic efforts outside of football, an example would be his pledge to donate \$1 million to social justice organizations/causes.
- 3) Any mentions comparing his statistics to that of another QB currently active on an NFL roster.
- 4) Any mention of his political opinions towards the President, statements on race in the United States, etc.
- 5) Any mention of the origins of his protest and/or the meeting he had with former Green Beret Nate Boyer.

25) ARTICLE TONE

Upon reading the article, choose one of the following selections that best describe its overall tone about the protests:

Supportive: The article was in favor of the protests and/or discussed them in a positive, non-critical way.

Neutral: The article showed no bias either for or against the protests. It presented facts and events as they happened with no opinion, and used quotes to add context to the article and not in an opinionated way.

Against: The article was against the protests and/or discussed them in a negative, critical way.

Uncertain: The article's tone cannot be categorized. It used a combination of the previous three tones, or used none of them at all.