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Advocating for Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion: A Study of the NHL's #HockeyIsForEveryone Campaign on Twitter

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Advocating for Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion:
A Study of the NHL's #HockeyIsForEveryone Campaign on Twitter

by

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A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
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ABSTRACT

With more than 6.8 million followers on Twitter (as of Feb. 2023), the National Hockey League (NHL) has a large platform that has the potential to influence societal change not only in the United States and Canada, but also globally. This study aims to understand how corporate social responsibility initiatives pair with diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) programs. Furthermore, this research seeks to understand how organizations communicate these messages with their publics through social media. This study specifically examines news frames and charity support behaviors implemented by the NHL in messages about its DEI campaign, “Hockey Is For Everyone,” and analyze fans’ reactions to understand which posts either resonate well or spark backlash. The results of the study aim to provide insightful data for the NHL, as well as other professional sports leagues and organizations, in how to approach corporate social responsibility campaign messaging that is received with positive reactions online.

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Although diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) initiatives were developed in the 1960s due to the Equal Pay Act of 1963, Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, and the Age Discrimination in Employment Act of 1967, it became an increasingly important and highly discussed topic after the murder of George Floyd in May 2020 (Gaudiano, 2022; Williams, 2020). Diversity, equity, and inclusion promotes representation of all races, genders, religions, sexual orientations, ethnicities, nationalities, socioeconomic status, languages, abilities, age, and political affiliations, and works to ensure these individuals are treated fairly and feel welcomed in society (*Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion – a Professional Development Offering of the eXtension Foundation Impact Collaborative*, n.d.). Many organizations, from restaurant chains to technology companies to sports organizations, have worked to develop best practices to showcase diversity through not only their workforce initiatives but also through their mission and values, business practices, products, and more, which are often embedded into their corporate social responsibility programs (Hughes, 2022). These programs seek to help organizations to make a positive difference in their surrounding communities by using their platform.

The National Hockey League (NHL), a professional ice hockey league in the United States and Canada, has adopted DEI initiatives to encourage players, employees, and fans of varying demographic backgrounds feel represented and seen, but its efforts have been met with mixed feedback from its key stakeholders (Doyle, 2020). Social media, which is defined as

“internet-based platforms that allow the creation and exchange of user-generated content,” is an important tool for organizations, including the NHL, to not only communicate their initiatives but also receive instant feedback and interaction from its followers (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010, p. 61). This two-way communication tool provides followers with a platform to share their unfiltered thoughts, whether positive and negative. As the NHL communicates its messages of inclusivity through these platforms, it’s critical to analyze and understand which tactics resonate best with its audiences and determine the kinds of posts that cause backlash, in order to have an effective, and especially positive, societal impact.

The National Hockey League’s “Hockey Is For Everyone” Campaign

The National Hockey League was created more than a century ago, in 1917, in response to the National Hockey Association of Canada Limited (NHA) permanently suspending its operations. Since its establishment, the league has greatly expanded from four teams playing only 22 games in its inaugural season to now 32 teams, located in cities across the United States and Canada. In a normal season, the teams compete in 82 games, and 16 qualifying teams play additional games in the Stanley Cup Playoffs to win the coveted Stanley Cup championship trophy. In its more than 100-year history, the league has needed to adapt to current world events and standards, developing relevant diversity and inclusion initiatives over time.

In Feb. 2017, the NHL, in partnership with the “You Can Play Project,” an organization whose mission is to fight homophobia in sports, launched the “Hockey Is For Everyone™” campaign to promote diversity and inclusion of all sexual orientation, gender, ethnicity, race, abilities, and socioeconomic status in sports, but mostly focused on the game of hockey (Comitor, 2017). As part of this initiative, the NHL and its partners work to “drive positive social change and foster more inclusive communities” (*Hockey Is for Everyone*, n.d.). Despite

launching the “Hockey Is For Everyone” initiative more than six years ago and actively promoting diversity, equity, and inclusion through robust programming, research has shown that there is heightened sensitivity to mixing “race talk” with leisure-based activities such as sports, as fans believe that it is an intrusion of a sacred space (McGovern, 2015). This sensitivity has caused mixed reactions to the NHL’s DEI initiatives, as some applaud the effort while others would rather the league not participate in these conversations as it is seen as discriminatory towards those who do not fit within a minority group (Smith, 2023).

In September 2017, the league unveiled a “Declaration of Principles,” only a few short months after the launch of the “Hockey Is For Everyone” campaign, which introduced eight key principles that aim to establish core values and beliefs, with one directly emphasizing the “Hockey Is For Everyone” initiative:

“All hockey programs should provide a safe, positive, and inclusive environment for players and families regardless of race, color, religion, national origin, gender, age, disability, sexual orientation, and socio-economic status. Simply put, hockey is for everyone” (National Hockey League, 2017, para. 16).

The “Declaration of Principles” also state that the NHL’s stakeholders, such as organizations, players, parents, siblings, coaches, referees, volunteers, and rink operators, all play a role in upholding these principles.

The campaign has many tactics that are implemented throughout the season, with some being themed game nights such as “Pride Night” or “Black History Night,” rainbow hockey stick tape used by the players on Pride Night, themed warm up jerseys worn by the players prior to the game of a respective theme night, which are then auctioned off to contribute funds to support various organizations that advocate for social justice causes, and social media posts from the NHL and its 32 clubs containing #HockeyIsForEveryone. Yet, the league continues to receive a mix of positive and negative responses on the NHL’s and its clubs’ social media posts, which

may indicate that many people do not believe that the league should have a role in promoting social justice issues, in spite of its large platform that is capable of influencing such societal change (Gentile, 2022; Smith, 2023).

Although the NHL has not directly taken a stand or shown attention to negative comments, they have the ability to ban comments that contains discriminatory or hateful language from being shared on their social media posts, a response tactic to cyberbullying that many social media platforms, such as Twitter, have implemented to prevent hate speech (*Twitter's Policy on Hateful Conduct*, 2022). With mixed reactions from the hockey community through these two-way communication platforms, it is fair to say that not all people are in favor of a professional sports league openly advocating for social justice and change. Other professional sports leagues, such as the National Basketball Association (NBA) also emphasize diversity and inclusion initiatives through its own campaign called "NBA Voices," which shows that the NHL is not the only sports organization that has a social justice-related cause promotion campaign (*About — NBA Voices*, n.d.).

Using Kolter and Lee's (2004) Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) initiative typology as the theoretical foundation, this study focuses on better understanding how the NHL uses news frames and charity support behaviors to communicate its CSR campaign, "Hockey Is For Everyone," through social media, in addition to analyzing how hockey fans react to these efforts. As there is a deep-rooted history of racism and the expectation of masculinity in sports, including the game of ice hockey (Bains & Szto, 2020; Kidd, 2013; Phillips, 1997), it is imperative to collect data to see individuals' real-time and unfiltered reactions to the NHL's work to advocate for diversity, equity, and inclusion not just within the league, but throughout local and global communities as well.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

Corporate Social Responsibility

The sports industry has greatly expanded towards adding a social responsibility component into their business operations in the 21st century (Hansen et al., 2022; Walker & Kent, 2009). According to Kotler and Lee (2005), corporate social responsibility (CSR) is a commitment to improve the community well-being through discretionary business practices and contributions of corporate practices. In addition to CSR being a voluntary practice, corporations have the ability to choose which cause to support, whether it affects community health, safety, education, employment, the environment, community and economic development, and other basic human needs and desires (Kotler & Lee, 2005). Many studies have sought to determine how stakeholders feel about organizations promoting CSR efforts (Jeon & An, 2019; Maiorescu-Murphy, 2020; Wang & Huang, 2018; Yang et al., 2021). These studies have found that CSR is a delicate area to navigate, as these efforts have been increasingly met with negativity and skepticism in recent years, often stemming from distrust in corporate motives (Du, Bhattacharya, & Sen, 2010; Skarmeas & Leonidou, 2013). For this reason, it is critical to create a mutually beneficial relationship for both the cause as well as the organization itself. While launching a corporate social responsibility program may also have positive benefits for an organization, two important factors for an organization to consider when selecting a cause are fit and motivation to help determine how consumers will react to a CSR campaign (Elving, 2013).

Fit, defined as the “perceived link between a cause and a company’s product line, brand image, position, and/or target market,” takes consumer perceptions into account when aligning with a cause (Elving, 2013, p.5). A low fit initiative may lead consumers to become skeptical of company’s intentions and spark negative reactions, as motives are called into question (Becker-Olsen et al., 2006). On the other hand, a high fit initiative may be more favored by the consumer, as they are seen to be consistent with the organization’s mission, which therefore strengthens the relationship and decreases skepticism (Becker-Olsen et al., 2006). LensCrafters’ “Give the Gift of Sight” campaign is a great model for choosing a high fit CSR initiative. The “Give the Gift of Sight” campaign is a “family of charitable vision care programs providing free eye care and glasses to people in need in North American communities and in developing countries” (Kotler & Lee, 2005, p. 74). By providing free eye care and glasses, these efforts directly correlate to the company’s overall mission to provide vision solutions (*About LensCrafters*, n.d.). Employees are also participating in these initiatives as they administer these free eye exams and work directly with these families in need firsthand. There is very little room for criticism from external stakeholders as the company is striving to do good in the community, while also continuing to conduct high quality business practices.

Elving (2013) adds that there are mixed results surrounding the effects of fit, as there have been studies that have indicated both positive and negative influence on consumer attitude (Becker-Olsen et al., 2006; Forehand & Grier, 2003; Sen & Bhattacharya, 2001; Yoon et al., 2006). Ben and Jerry’s, one of the fastest-growing global ice cream brand, provides an example of a low fit initiative with a mixed effect on consumer reactions. In 2016, the company announced support for the “Black Lives Matter” movement on its Facebook page, sparking an influx of responses — a mix of supportive messages to severe backlash (Ciszek & Logan, 2018).

Many consumers called for a boycott of the popular ice cream company, while others recommended that Ben & Jerry's stick to making ice cream and stay out of politics: "You are an ice cream company, not a politician. Leave your personal views and beliefs out of making ice cream" (Ciszek & Logan, 2018, p. 122). On the side of support, consumers praised Ben & Jerry's commitment to advocating for social justice issues and vowed to purchase additional product to counteract the boycotters. While Ben & Jerry's has other CSR initiatives that might be seen as having a higher level of fit in relation to its industry, such as fair trade, sustainable sourcing, transparent food labeling, and more, choosing to publicly show support for the Black Lives Matter movement indicates the company's willingness to take risks in order to advocate for a cause that is important to the founders, which may reflect sincerity (Ciszek & Logan, 2018). Regardless, previous studies indicate that fit does have an overall effect, whether positive or negative, on consumers and therefore, must be taken into consideration when determining a cause to align with (Elving, 2013).

In the NHL's case, choosing to launch "Hockey Is For Everyone" can be seen as either a low fit or high fit, depending on how its publics decide to classify it. Similar to Ben and Jerry's, the NHL is choosing to advocate for social justice, which may affect players, employees, fans, and other stakeholders who identify as a member of a minority group. On the other hand, the NHL's primary reason for existence is to conduct the game of hockey at a professional level, which may prompt its audience to disagree with its action of speaking out on social issues such as diversity, equity, and inclusion. What many might not realize is that there are a myriad of programs within the "Hockey Is For Everyone" campaign that support causes that do not only relate to a person's race or sexuality, which may be considered as the most polarizing. There are programs that focus on lifting up children who are located in low-income areas and providing

them with the opportunity to participate in hockey training camps or building rinks for them to practice, whereas they might not otherwise have the chance to do so based on their family's financial circumstances (NHL Public Relations, 2022). These programs might resonate better with fans as there is an obvious connection to why the National Hockey League is providing opportunities for the next generation to have access to the sport.

In addition to fit, the two primary types of corporate motivation, firm self-serving and public serving, may also influence how consumers view an organization's intention as it relates to CSR (Becker-Olsen et al., 2006). Firm self-serving motivation indicates that a CSR initiative is only being established to increase profits or brand reputation, whereas public serving motivation works to help citizens in need or raise awareness for a cause (Becker-Olsen et al., 2006). Consumers are able to form attitudes towards an organization, and subsequently, its CSR initiative based on whether or not the efforts seem genuine. Becker-Olsen et al. (2006) suggests that when motivations are self-serving or profit-related, positive attitudes towards the organization are likely to decrease, and when motivations are considered socially motivated, attitudes are likely to be enhanced. Additionally, the selected cause should also be engaging for not only external stakeholders but also internal stakeholders to create motivation to support the initiative and add to the credibility of the organization's motives (Kotler & Lee, 2005). These are factors to consider when analyzing the NHL's motives in launching a campaign that would potentially spark backlash, as has been experienced by other organizations with similar initiatives.

Kotler and Lee (2005) also provide six social initiatives that allow for the categorization of different corporate social responsibility practices: cause promotions, cause-related marketing, corporate social marketing, corporate philanthropy, community volunteering, and socially

responsible business practices (p. 23-24). Each of these initiatives have varying practices that allow an organization to showcase its CSR involvement to its stakeholders and surrounding community. As it relates to the National Hockey League's "Hockey Is For Everyone" campaign, Kotler and Lee's (2005) six social initiatives are present throughout the numerous tactics that have been implemented since the launch of the program such as donations to and volunteering for DEI-related non-profits and marketing to raise awareness about inequities that are present throughout the league and community. The overall "Hockey Is For Everyone" program could be classified as a cause-promotions campaign as it is using the previously mentioned tactics to not only raise awareness for diversity, equity, and inclusion, but also to persuade the NHL's stakeholders to also place importance on these issues. Furthermore, in order to persuade an audience, the NHL has to create effective messaging that will convey the importance of advocating for DEI. To compartmentalize and understand each aspect of the "Hockey Is For Everyone" initiative, it is helpful to refer to Pelozo and Hassay's (2007) charity support behaviors to provide specific examples of how an organization, in this case the NHL, supports a cause. Some of these behaviors involve donations, volunteering, call to actions, and others (Devlin & Sheehan, 2014). Utilizing Semetko and Valkenburg's (2000) news frames provide organizations with the necessary tools to efficiently communicate messages that allow "individuals to convey, interpret, and evaluate information," which may be used by the National Hockey League to share information surrounding their CSR program and CSBs (p. 94). Attribution of responsibility, conflict, human interest, economic, and morality are the five news frames that have been identified to categorize various approaches to promoting a particular issue (Semetko & Valkenburg, 2000). According to Devlin and Sheehan (2014), there is uncertainty as to how audiences respond to different communications strategies, especially when an

organization is promoting their charity support behaviors. It is critical to have an understanding of how audiences prefer to be communicated with as this might lead them to support an organization's efforts or trigger criticism.

Corporate Social Advocacy

The National Hockey League's establishment of the "Hockey Is For Everyone" campaign connects Kotler and Lee's (2005) corporate social responsibility typology with Dodd and Supa's (2014) concept of corporate social advocacy (CSA) as it focuses on bringing awareness to its diversity, equity, and inclusion efforts through community involvement. Corporate social advocacy specifically categorizes the involvement that organizations take in publicly affirming a stance on social or political issues (Dodd & Supa, 2014), whereas CSR is how an organization demonstrates their commitment to the community's well-being through their business practices (Kotler & Lee, 2005). A prominent example of CSA dates back to July 2012, when Chick-fil-A CEO Dick Cathy made controversial comments regarding gay marriage. Cathy stated that he was unsupportive of gay marriage legislation as he views a "traditional family" as one that involves a married man and woman, while also supporting anti-gay marriage advocacy groups through company funding (Dodd & Supa, 2014). Chick-fil-A received major backlash and even experienced protests at locations throughout the nation (Dodd & Supa, 2014). Participation in CSA may be risky for organizations as it is seen as going against traditional business practices, which advise them to remain neutral on issues that may be viewed as controversial (Korschun et al., 2016). As previously discussed, Ben and Jerry's decision to publicly support the "Black Lives Matter" movement falls under the CSR/CSA umbrellas, yet this case differs from the Chick-fil-A controversy because Ben and Jerry's is showing support for a cause and speaking up for a marginalized group rather than openly opposing a community. Even so, Ben and Jerry's

still received backlash for advocating on behalf of the Black community, which indicates that even showing support for a cause can be polarizing when focuses on social issues as it is seen as “woke washing” or attempts to use these issues to make a profit (Austin et al., 2019). Austin et al.’s (2019) research findings revealed that there was general support for CSA, but opinions largely varied based on a participant’s demographics, specifically, with liberal and younger participants in favor of supporting organizations’ involvement in CSA and conservatives and older participants feeling as if organizations should only discuss issues that are directly related to their business practices. Similar to CSR, there is opportunity to further understand how CSA practices resonate with an organization’s stakeholders and how that affects its reputation and bottom line.

Twitter and Sports

Over the last two decades, social media sites have exponentially grown and become integrated into the average person’s daily routine with roughly 70 percent of Americans using at least one social media site (Auxier & Anderson, 2022). These platforms, such as Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, Snapchat, TikTok, and others, have drastically changed the way that people communicate and share information, both positive and negative. Launched in 2006, Twitter has grown to be one of the largest social media platforms with 237.8 million monetizable daily active users globally, a 15 percent increase from 2021 (Statista, 2022). The platform allows users to share their mostly unfiltered thoughts through a 280-character post called a “tweet.” Users can connect with other people and organizations by following the account’s username, preceded with an at sign “@,” and will see their tweets appear in the home timeline. Through retweets, users are able to share content to their followers’ timelines and replies are used to respond to another user’s tweet and are able to add their thoughts by using the “quote tweet” function. Users

are also able to engage with a tweet by pressing the “like” button, an action that allows them to show interest in the content of the tweet. Another way users can see content is through hashtags, which are used to categorize tweets and link conversations of strangers together by proceeding a specific word or group of words with the hashtag symbol “#” (Murthy, 2011, pg. 3). For example, while watching the 2022 NHL Stanley Cup Playoffs, users from around the world tweeted their reactions using #StanleyCup to connect with other fans who were also discussing this topic, from their favorite teams qualifying to play in the postseason to the Colorado Avalanche hoisting the Stanley Cup as the 2021-2022 season champions.

Not only do social media sites allow users to connect with friends and family around the world, but organizations have also adopted these platforms to create a two-way open communication line with their customers, fans, volunteers, donors, and other stakeholders. According to a survey conducted by Pew Research Center, 97 percent of respondents said their organizations have a social media page, with 74 percent of those organizations having a Twitter account (Wormald, 2013). Through their involvement on social media platforms like Twitter, organizations have allowed their followers to share their unfiltered opinions through replies, quote retweets, and private messages. Unfortunately, this has also opened a gateway for the phenomenon of “cyberbullying,” an act of aggression by an individual towards another on social media, which has become a public health concern due to its high level of occurrence (Garrett, Lord, & Young, 2016). Many social media sites, including Twitter, have taken action to prevent users from publishing hateful or violent language on posts as well as providing users the option to mute tweets that contain particular words, phrases, usernames, emojis, or hashtags to better moderate the content they see on their timelines (*How to Use Advanced Muting Options*, 2022). According to Twitter’s hateful conduct policy, users may not promote violence or directly attack

or threaten other people based on their race, ethnicity, gender, etc. (*Twitter's Policy on Hateful Conduct*, 2022). Although these rules and options are in place, this still does not fully prevent users from publishing hateful comments and others seeing them appear on their timelines.

Twitter has also largely become a place for sports fans to have real-time conversations about games, trades, scandals, and many other aspects of sports that spark discussion. Not only can fans access these discussions at any chosen moment, especially if they use a particular hashtag, but a vast number of professional teams have Twitter accounts, including the National Hockey League, National Basketball Association, Major League Baseball, and National Football League's franchises, in addition to the many athletes who are also active online (Wertheim, 2011). By being an active user on Twitter, teams and athletes can post updates and engage with fans, creating connections even outside of arenas. Many sporting events create specific hashtags that correspond with major events such as #StanleyCup, #NBAFinals, #WorldSeries, and #SuperBowl that create a sense of togetherness for fans in a virtual environment. In this digital world, it is imperative for organizations to have an engaging online presence as this helps strengthen the relationship with its stakeholders.

Underlying Stereotypes in Ice Hockey

To understand the NHL's reasoning for creating a campaign surrounding diversity, equity, and inclusion, it is first important to consider the underlying stereotypes that have existed in the sport of ice hockey for generations. Traditionally thought of as a "White man's sport," the game of ice hockey has felt the long-lasting effects of racism and color-blindness for more than a century (Bains & Szto, 2020). Additionally, there are misconceptions about the origin of ice hockey as it is largely believed to have been created by White men due to its correlation with Canada's hegemonic "Whiteness" (Adams, 2006). However, Fosty and Fosty (2008) argue that

Canadian hockey originates with the North American Indigenous people, with influences from African Canadian hockey. In the 19th century, these players created the Colored Hockey League (CHL), but as White leagues began to monopolize arenas and playing schedules, and the CHL began to feel strained after the establishment of the NHL, the league was dissolved (Fosty & Fosty, 2008).

Today, players of color remain largely underrepresented in the National Hockey League as the game continues to be dominated by White athletes. Since 2003, the National Hockey League has opted-out of participating in the Institute for Diversity and Ethics in Sport's (TIDES) Racial and Gender Report Card, which assesses the racial and gender makeup of players, coaches, and front office/athletic department employees in the country's leading sports organizations in an annual report (Lapchick, 2003; Kaida et al., 2021). Due to the NHL's lack of participation in the TIDES' report card, there are no official statistics available for the racial composition of the league's employees, including players. Although recent research suggests that in the 2006-2007 to 2019-2020 seasons, the percentage of non-White NHL players was between five to seven percent (Hooper, 2020; NHL.com, 2007; Powers, 2014; Radnofsky, 2019; Thomas, 2018; WSBTV, 2011). This lack of transparency only further highlights the league's century-long struggle with DEI.

Additionally, the history of the sport shows that players have had major barriers to entry when it comes to making it on a minor or major hockey league team and play without fans and fellow players mocking their differences or even sending hateful messages through social media. In fact, it wasn't until 1958 that the NHL's first Black player, Willie O'Ree, joined the league — more than four decades after its establishment in 1917. Even now in the 21st century, players continue to experience racism from fellow players and fans. On Oct. 7, 2017, J.T. Brown, a then-

forward for the Tampa Bay Lightning and only one of 30 Black players in the NHL at the time, raised his fist during the U.S. national anthem to protest police brutality and racism before a game against the Florida Panthers. Although the NHL does not have written rules on what players must do during the anthem, his actions went viral on social media, and Brown immediately began receiving death threats online, including Twitter mentions saying that they wanted to hang him, and even racist comments towards his infant daughter (*Brown Raises Fist During Anthem*, 2017; Brown, 2020). Brown recently made history again as he was hired by the NHL to join its first all-Black television broadcast team, along with Everett Fitzhugh, for its newest team, the Seattle Kraken. With Fitzhugh as the Kraken's radio play-by-play voice and Brown as the team's television analyst, they are filling a void and addressing a critical need for representation in not only the game of ice hockey but also in sports broadcasting (Douglas, 2022). Through the "Hockey Is For Everyone" campaign, a bright light is being shone on these inequities and unjust treatment, providing a platform for the league to publicly discuss some of these issues with its fanbase — but it has not necessarily been widely accepted by this audience.

Along with a sense of "Whiteness" in the game of ice hockey, there is also the underlying expectation in sports that male athletes should be heterosexual and masculine (McKay, 2017). There have been very few NHL players, either former or active, who have come out as LGBTQIA+. In July 2021, Nashville Predators prospect Luke Prokop made NHL history by becoming the first player under contract to come out as gay (Benjamin, 2021). To share Prokop's announcement, the league published a press release on their website and a statement from the player himself on social media. While he received great support from the hockey community and acknowledgment for his bravery to come out during his career rather than after, he also received backlash and comments on the Facebook post, many of which expressed concern about him

sharing a locker room with other male players (*Luke Prokop comes out as gay*, 2021). Brown and Prokop's experiences, in addition to the many other stories of racism and homophobia that exist within the NHL (Ketko, 2022; Strang, 2011; Wyshynski, 2022), indicate that the league and the hockey community might be weary of accepting those who do not fit the traditional mold of a hockey player or fan, which is why the "Hockey Is For Everyone" program aims to unite these communities based on their shared passion for hockey.

Discussing Sensitive Topics in Sports

Because sports fans become emotionally attached to their favorite teams, there is heightened sensitivity towards any irrelevant or controversial discussions that may redirect focus from the fun environment that is attending or viewing a game (McGovern, 2015). Moreover, societal norms typically shy away from openly discussing racial issues (McGovern, 2015). These findings might provide insight as to why fans would react negatively to social media posts that are focused on the topic of race, sexuality, gender equality, and others. McGovern's (2015) study of online Major League Baseball blogs found that only four out of 332 online blog posts mentioned racial themes, with three of the posts being connected to celebrations of Jackie Robinson and Civil Rights Weekend. Hartmann (2000) adds that although there has been a history of racial exclusion, sports have become popular because of its ability to bring communities together, regardless of race or ethnicity. As many of these fan interactions and conversations shift from in-person to social media sites, societal norms may be ignored as there is a sense of anonymity online and individuals feel a greater sense of freedom to openly discuss controversial social issues (McGovern, 2015). Not only do some individuals feel more comfortable talking about controversial topics online, but others may also feel just as comfortable responding negatively with hateful language (Bargh & McKenna, 2004). As the

National Hockey League begins these conversations through its #HockeyIsForEveryone posts on social media, the many opinions of those who either support or disapprove of this initiative, and the causes it advocates for, are unleashed.

A prominent example of racial discussions in sports causing controversy is the one of former San Francisco 49ers quarterback Colin Kaepernick's infamous series of protests during the national anthem before several NFL games in 2016. This national event gone global brought the topic of mixing sports with corporate social responsibility and advocacy to the forefront. Kaepernick's decision to take such a public stand against police brutality and social injustice led to not only national outrage, but the end of his professional football career with the NFL in 2017 (Boren, 2020). Years later, in honor of its 30th anniversary, Nike launched a "Just Do It" campaign featuring Kaepernick as its spokesperson, with the message "Believe in something. Even if it means sacrificing everything" (Kim et al., 2020). This campaign, as expected, ignited a polarized public response, questioning the role that companies should take when engaging in political topics, such as social justice and freedom of speech, and the politicization of sports (Kim et al., 2020). The findings in Kim et al.'s study (2020) determined that people who identified as Democrats with higher levels of education approve of the politicization of sports, whereas White older male Republicans had lower approval levels. Through this campaign, Nike demonstrated that taking a calculated risk may still pay off as long as it had a solid understanding of its target audience, two-thirds of which are under 35 years old. Not only did Nike take a stand on the issue of police brutality, but it also earned \$6 billion, despite a boycott (Abad-Santos, 2018; Kim et al., 2020). The National Football League and National Hockey League are similar in the fact that they both have large platforms that provide them with the opportunity to share influential messages with a large fanbase. In Kaepernick's case, the NFL had to implement a

reactive communications plan as this was an unplanned event sparking global conversations regarding race and police brutality. Additionally, the NFL's move to release Kaepernick from the league spoke volumes as it showed that speaking up for what you believe in could have negative repercussions. In proactively establishing the "Hockey Is For Everyone" campaign, the NHL was able to demonstrate that it is taking initiative to make a difference by advocating for diversity, equity, and inclusion throughout the league and in surrounding communities.

Of course, there have been instances of crisis within the league, such as a gay NHL player being sexually assaulted by a coach (Diaz, 2021), a former head coach being accused of using racial slurs towards a player (Fortin, 2019), a player refusing to participate in "LGBTQ+ Pride Night" by wearing the themed warm up jersey (Wyshynski, 2023), and others, which diminish the NHL's credibility to speak on such a heavy-weighting topic that is DEI, but nevertheless, the conversations and programs surrounding the NHL's commitment to the "Hockey is For Everyone" campaign continue in spite of these issues.

Similar Studies

In 2018, the English Premier League (EPL) launched a partnership with a UK-based LGBT+ advocacy organization called Stonewall to promote its annual "Rainbow Laces" campaign, which shows support for those who identify as LGBT+ within the league and throughout the community (Hansen et al., 2022). Through this CSR initiative, the EPL publicly showed its support for the program by posting on its Twitter account that has a following of 26 million users. Hansen et al. (2022) conducted a content analysis of the 407 relevant responses to the EPL's four tweets that focused on its partnership with Stonewall to identify outstanding themes of either support or criticism. It was found that many of the responses aimed to deflect attention from the campaign as to minimize its importance; however Hansen et al. (2022) argues

that the reactions were not necessarily made in disapproval of the LGBT+ community as it has been normalized in Western countries. Furthermore, the low number of discriminatory comments were surprising to the researchers as Twitter allows for a sense of anonymity when creating an account that could shield users when posting their true sentiments online. Many of the negative responses also questioned the EPL's CSR agenda it was seen as a commercial play by the league and demonstrated a sense of distrust in organizations to follow through on CSR programming.

Additionally, Devlin and Sheehan (2017) studied the National Football League's (NFL) annual campaign, "A Crucial Catch," which every October aims to raise money towards breast cancer research through donations and merchandise sales. In partnership with the American Cancer Society, this campaign also includes several activities such as featuring pink imagery in the stadium honoring survivors and hosting fundraisers (Devlin & Sheehan, 2017; NFL, 2016). Although the NFL is promoting a worthy cause, some fans may feel negatively towards the overuse of the "pink campaign," which may be referred to as "pink-washing," and that the organization is only using this cause to sell merchandise that will benefit the company, rather than the cause itself (Elliott, 2007; Sulik, 2010). This indicates that fans might perceive the campaign as profit motivated, rather than socially motivated, and therefore would not engage with the tactics that are being put forth by the organization. Additionally, the study found that losing NFL teams who promote CSR initiatives on their social media, receive backlash from followers because they perceive it as a distraction or disingenuous, in addition to financial posts being questioned as to how and where the funds are used (Devlin & Sheehan, 2017). Although the campaign did receive positive comments on volunteer-themed posts, the overall recommendation from the researchers was for the NFL to avoid certain charity support behavior posts on social media (Devlin & Sheehan, 2017).

Furthermore, because the “Crucial Catch” campaign is proactive, instead of reactive, it works in favor of the NFL because the organization is willingly promoting this cause to make a positive impact for cancer research. Additionally, Devlin and Sheehan (2017) explain that by the NFL using Facebook as a means of communication for this campaign, it is choosing to use a low-control channel, versus a high-control channel such as a television ad, to make this CSR information accessible to the public. These low-control, proactive messages are tested through the categorization of charity support behaviors (CSBs) and specific news frames (Devlin & Sheehan, 2017). CSBs are how an organization shares a message with its audience to motivate them to support a cause alongside them (Peloza & Hassay, 2007). These actions can include selling merchandise, setting up events, creating volunteer opportunities, and more to benefit a cause. Additionally, the organization will use specific messaging tactics to garner interest and motivation to get behind a cause, which is called a news frame. Both of these categories provide clarity on the types of messaging an organization is implementing in order to most effectively create awareness and action around its corporate social responsibility initiatives and programs. Strategically selecting which news frames and CSBs to use while communicating certain messages with its audiences are both in the organization’s favor as there are many factors that play a role in the initiative being received well by the public or, in some cases, in a negative light. The human-interest news frame, for example, might soften the context of the message as people often react well to heartfelt stories rather than pressure to accept a lifestyle that they do not approve of. These factors were further analyzed in this study as the methodology for this thesis is partially based on Devlin and Sheehan’s study of the NFL’s “Crucial Catch” campaign (2017).

Purpose of Study and Research Questions

By analyzing how the National Hockey League implements various news frames and charity support behaviors to communicate its DEI campaign, #HockeyIsForEveryone, via Twitter, this study was conducted to understand the best practices for CSR messaging. Additionally, this study measured fans' reactions to the NHL's tweets featuring initiatives that are part of the campaign to determine how these certain news frames and CSBs resonate with the audience. These reactions will also provide context as to how fans feel about the NHL's motives to engage in CSA efforts, and whether or not this program is a low or high fit for this type of corporation. Through the content analysis, the following research questions were answered:

RQ1: Which type of news frames and charity support behavior messages are most frequently used by the NHL in #HockeyIsForEveryone tweets?

RQ2: Which type of news frames and charity support behavior messages receive higher levels of engagement on #HockeyIsForEveryone tweets?

RQ3: Which type of news frames and charity support behavior messages receive the most positive comments on #HockeyIsForEveryone tweets?

RQ4: Which type of news frames and charity support behavior messages receive the most negative comments on #HockeyIsForEveryone tweets?

CHAPTER THREE:

METHOD

To gather data to answer the research questions posited in this study, a content analysis of the National Hockey League's #HockeyIsForEveryone tweets during the 2021-222 regular season (October 13, 2021 – April 29, 2022) was conducted (NHL Public Relations, 2021). This method was chosen because it would provide several key insights regarding the “Hockey Is For Everyone” campaign messaging on social media as the NHL works to advocate for DEI throughout communities in the U.S. and Canada. For this study, Riffe, Lacy, and Fico's (2005) definition of a content analysis will guide the procedures for the chosen methodology:

“Quantitative content analysis is the systematic and replicable examination of symbols of communication, which have been assigned numeric values according to valid measurement rules, and the analysis of relationships involving those values using statistical methods, in order to describe the communication, draw inferences about its meaning, or infer from the communication to its context, both of production and consumption” (p. 20).

Based on the stated definition, the posed research questions would be best answered through conducting a content analysis as it allows for the examination of social media messaging previously implemented by the National Hockey League and how they were received by fans at the time the posts were published. As mentioned previously, there is sensitivity when discussing topics surrounding race, sexuality, gender equality, disability, and more, in sports, so it is crucial to develop best practices in how to effectively communicate the program's efforts. Semetko and Valkenburg's (2000) five news frames provide context as to how an organization might choose to communicate various messages with its publics to capture their attention but also gain

approval. Additionally, because the NHL has chosen to launch this campaign as part of its CSR programming, Peloza and Hassay's (2007) charity support behaviors help understand how the NHL specifically is asking its fans to engage with the campaign.

Twitter was selected as the platform for this study as it has been found to be the preferred social media channel by sports fans to communicate (Boehmer, 2017; Ramon & Rojas-Torrijos, 2021). Tweets that contained the hashtag #HockeyIsForEveryone were included in the dataset. Each tweet was coded based on news frame, charity support behavior, and social media engagement. The levels of social media engagement was operationalized by the total number of likes, retweets, quote tweets, and replies. Furthermore, all replies that are directly relevant to the #HockeyIsForEveryone tweet content were coded based on positive or negative sentiment; any comments that did not meet this criterion was omitted from this analysis.

Procedures and Sampling

Using the Advanced Search function on Twitter, the following criteria was used to find relevant content: tweets published by the @NHL Twitter account, containing #HockeyIsForEveryone, and posted during the 2021-2022 regular season, excluding playoffs (Oct. 13, 2021 – April 29, 2022). A total of 50 tweets met the required criteria (N = 50) with 299 total replies (N = 299) respectively. Text Au, a growth automation toolbox, was used to extract the tweets and their corresponding replies. The tweets were coded twice, first by news frame and then charity support behavior. The number of replies were also attributed to each news frame and CSB depending on how its original tweet was coded. If a reply was not directly relevant to the original tweet content, it was omitted from the data and noted as such. To protect the identities of the replies' authors, their usernames remain confidential. The researcher and assigned coders reported no conflicts of interest or biases that would affect the results of this study.

To answer the research questions posit by this study, the data was first analyzed by calculating the frequencies and percentages of the various news frames and CSBs for each tweet. Social media engagement, including likes, retweets, quote retweets, and number of replies, was also summed to understand how fans react to the NHL’s “Hockey Is For Everyone” campaign messaging, varying by news frame or CSB. Due to the fact that the number of news frames and CSBs will vary, the mean values of the total social media engagement metrics will also be calculated. The percentage of positive and negative replies were also attributed to each CSB and news frame to better understand how fans feel about a “Hockey Is For Everyone” initiative is communicated via Twitter.

Coding Procedures

The codes for the types of #HockeyIsForEveryone tweets are based on Semetko and Valkenburg’s (2000) five prominent news frames, including attribution of responsibility, conflict, economic consequences, human interest, and morality. The type of charity support behavior, outlined by Pelozo and Hassay (2007), will be taken into account to measure the various actionable steps the NHL is asking their fans/followers to take in support of its corporate social responsibility/DEI initiatives. In addition to the news frames and charity support behaviors being coded for each tweet, the social media engagement of fans will be analyzed based on number of likes, retweets, quote tweets, and replies. The sentiment of relevant replies will also be noted, specifically if it is either positive or negative. The codebook provides a description and example for each of the codes listed below.

Attribution of responsibility. By using the attribution of responsibility frame to communicate with audiences, the messenger aims to convey that they have a duty to solve key social problems.

In the case of the #HockeyIsForEveryone campaign, the NHL pleads that its fans be inclusive of all races, genders, sexuality preferences, or abilities.

Conflict frame. In using the conflict frame as a means of communicating about a problem, an organization seeks to band people together for/against a cause, which helps to capture interest.

Economic consequences frame. This frame is used by organizations to caution its audiences of any monetary issues that a problem or event might cause.

Human interest frame. As it relates to corporate social responsibility initiatives, the human interest frame correlates the “human face” or “emotional angle” with an event, issue or problem (Semetko & Valkenburg, 2000). This approach is used to try and capture the empathy of an audience.

Morality frame. In addressing issues of diversity, equity, and inclusion, the morality frame may be attributed to an organization pleading for its audience to understand or accept the personal beliefs behind a problem or issue.

There is a possibility that the tweet does not fit the description of the codes above and in this case, it would receive the “none” code.

Charity Support Behavior (CSB). The other coding scheme for this study is based on Peloza and Hassay’s (2007) charity support behaviors, which will be used to analyze the NHL’s calls to

action for fans through the #HockeyIsForEveryone campaign. This typology is being utilized in this study to better understand which aspects of the NHL's DEI campaign tactics are being communicated its stakeholders and how they are being asked to engage with them. The nine CSBs that will be coded for each of the 50 tweets are as follows: general awareness posts, team donations, team volunteering, NHL non-athlete employee volunteer, call to action for fans, e-commerce call to action, information about themed games related to the campaign, or "other," which is assigned if a post does not fit into one of the previous eight categories or if a tweet contains multiple CSBs.

Social Media Engagement. A tweet's social media engagement will be operationalized by the total number of likes, retweets, quote tweets, and relevant replies will provide insight as higher levels of engagement indicate that the audience is interested in a featured aspect of the National Hockey League's #HockeyIsForEveryone campaign or in the initiative as a whole. These metrics will be summed in order to view the total amount of engagement that each type of post is receiving, based on the assigned news frame or charity support behavior. In summing the number of likes, retweets, quote tweets, and comments, this will provide great insight as to which posts perform better than others in terms of overall social media engagement. In addition, the mean values will be calculated to account for the fact that some news frames/CSBs that will have more correlating posts than others.

Sentiment of Replies. Additionally, the sentiment of all relevant replies will be coded as either positive or negative. Sentiment is defined as "an attitude, thought, or judgment prompted by feeling," which provides indication as to how a user is feeling towards a tweet, as it will specify

whether or not they approve of these initiatives (“Definition of Sentiment,” 2023). For the purpose of this study, positive replies will be determined by pleasant expressions or gratitude/appreciate towards the NHL or featured team, such as “you love to see it” or “keep up the great work @NHL.” On the other hand, negative replies will be deemed as those that express disapproval, are dismissive, question the intentions of the initiative, or are racist/homophobic/sexist/etc. comments, such as “what a joke” or “you can’t celebrate what doesn’t exist.” Only replies that are deemed as relevant to the original post topic will be counted for this study.

Intercoder Reliability

A coding sheet (see appendices A-C) was created with the information above, and two coders were trained to assign the respective codes to each data set. In accordance with Cohen’s kappa (1960), a sample of the data was coded by both of the coders to ensure intercoder reliability. Intercoder reliability ensures that the two coders are perceiving the data in the same way, with the percent of agreement being greater than 70 percent ($K = 0.70$) (Wrench, 2019). To ensure that the levels of agreement were strong for the news frame and charity support behavior codebook, 50 percent of the posts ($n = 25$) were randomly selected and coded by both coders to test the sample. For this study, the two coders achieved intercoder reliability for news frames ($K = 0.88$) and charity support behavior ($K = 0.84$). Lastly, 10 percent of the replies ($N = 299$) received for each tweet in the data set ($N = 50$) were coded based on positive or negative sentiment. The coders reached intercoder reliability ($K = 0.90$). The two coders discussed any discrepancies to ensure that the code book and assigned codes were accurate and reliable.

CHAPTER FOUR: RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

News Frames and Charity Support Behavior Frequency

The first research question aimed to determine which news frames and CSBs are most frequently used by the NHL to communicate about the Hockey Is For Everyone campaign via Twitter. The results shown in Table 1 demonstrate the frequency of each news frame utilized in the data sample (N = 50). Beginning with the most frequently implemented news frame, the NHL consistently chose the human interest frame (n = 28) to highlight various individuals across the league and the sport of hockey, from players to management to up-and-coming hockey players in other countries, making up more than half of the data sample at 56 percent. Based on the results, it was also determined that the NHL did not use a news frame in 20 percent of the data sample. Interestingly, the economic news frame (n = 0) was not utilized once within the sample.

These findings indicate that the National Hockey League has placed a heavy emphasis on sharing the personal stories of individuals who may capture the empathy of its audience by connecting a face with the sensitive topic of DEI. Semetko and Valkenburg's (2000) study also found that the human interest frame was more frequently used in softer news programs, rather than harder, more serious programs, which in this case could also support the NHL's motives to gain approval from its fanbase. Throughout the data sample, numerous stories were shared about players, former players, international hockey players, and many more. A notable story that was

shared in the sample was that of Fatima Al Ali, a female ice hockey player who played on the United Arab Emirates (UAE) Women's National Team in 2013, and later went on to become a coach, referee, and photographer in the sport (National Hockey League [@NHL], 2022c).

Although only a short paragraph and photo was shared of Ali (see Appendix D), her story could inspire other women, not only in the UAE but also globally, to put aside the stereotype of a traditional male hockey player and participate in the sport. Moreover, the use of the human interest news frame allows for people to see others who may look similar to themselves or come from a comparable upbringing and view them as a role model. The human interest frame also provides a softer context in which to share messages, especially those that might seem controversial. Sharing personal and heartwarming stories of individuals who belong to minority groups, rather than sharing economically focused posts, shows the audience that the NHL's motivations are set on advocating for diversity, equity, and inclusion within the league instead of making a profit on jerseys or game tickets. Of the coded sample, 20% of the posts did not contain an obvious news frame (n =10), which shows news frames are not necessarily required to be implemented when communicating a message with an audience. One tweet that was coded as not having a news frame contained three photos of St. Louis Blues players donning their "Pride Night" warm up jerseys, with a caption that reads "We're digging the look, @StLouisBlues! 🏒 #HockeyIsForEveryone" (National Hockey League [@NHL], 2022d). This caption did not provide any information about the "Hockey Is For Everyone" campaign or mentioned information about DEI, CSR, or CSA. The photos clearly indicate that the jerseys are in support of the LGBTQIA+ community but it is not explicitly mentioned in the tweet.

Table 1. Frequency and Percentage of News Frames

| News Frame | Frequency | Percentage |
|-------------------------------|------------------|-------------------|
| Human Interest | 28 | 56% |
| None | 10 | 20% |
| Morality | 7 | 14% |
| Conflict | 3 | 6% |
| Attribution of Responsibility | 2 | 4% |
| Economic | 0 | 0% |
| Total | 50 | 100% |

The analysis process was repeated to successfully determine which charity support behavior was most frequently utilized in the NHL’s tweets. The results are shown in Table 2. Of the coded sample (N = 50), there were two CSBs that had the highest yield: general awareness (n = 18) and “other” (n = 18), each making up 36 percent of the sample. As stated in the codebook (Appendix B), the “other” code was assigned if a post did not fit into one of the previous eight categories or if a tweet contained multiple CSBs. Many of the remaining CSBs were surprisingly not utilized in the sample, including team volunteering, athlete volunteering, employee volunteering, and e-commerce call to action. Considering that human interest was the most implemented news frame throughout the sample, it is understandable as to why general awareness posts were tied for the highest used CSB. Awareness posts are used to familiarize the audience with a topic, in this case the “Hockey Is For Everyone” campaign, and do not have a specific call to action attached to it for this purpose. As people become more skeptical of CSR campaigns, it is important for organizations to prove that they are genuinely working to make a difference in the communities they exist in rather than being focused on increasing profits or improving its reputation (Elving, 2013). As mentioned previously, the NHL needs to make it clear to its audience that its

involvement in advocating for diversity, equity, and inclusion is to genuinely resolve inequities in the league and promote fairness for players, employees, and fans of all demographics.. It is significant that a majority of the posts (n = 18) solely focused on spreading the campaign's messaging through stories of impressive and inspiring individuals, while none of the posts aimed to sell "Hockey Is For Everyone"-related merchandise. Many posts that received the "other" code were a mix of general awareness, including human interest stories, with a call to action to learn more about them through a documentary called "NHL Bound" or to watch the highlighted athlete play in that day's game. For example, brothers Mathieu and Pierre-Olivier Joseph are Black Canadian players in NHL who have both had successful careers thus far with Mathieu winning two Stanley Cups with the Tampa Bay Lightning, and Pierre-Olivier being selected in the first round and 23rd overall in the NHL Draft in 2017. In honor of Black History Month, the NHL tweeted a photo of the brothers with background information on their careers but also with a call to action to watch the Tampa Bay Lightning game that evening. Several more posts were formatted in a similar manner. By utilizing a combination of general awareness information and calls to action to learn more about an individual or to support them by watching a game, these posts provide additional safety for the campaign's messaging, as there were zero posts that asked fans to purchase merchandise or donate to a cause, further proving that the "Hockey Is For Everyone" campaign's intention on social media is to mostly bring awareness to the stories that drive the reasoning behind it.

Table 2. Frequency and Percentage of Charity Support Behaviors

| Charity Support Behavior | Frequency | Percentage |
|---------------------------------|------------------|-------------------|
| General Awareness Post | 18 | 36% |
| Other | 18 | 36% |
| Game Information | 8 | 16% |
| Call to Action for Fan | 5 | 10% |
| Team Donations | 1 | 2% |
| Team Volunteering | 0 | 0% |
| Athlete Volunteering | 0 | 0% |
| Employee Volunteering | 0 | 0% |
| E-Commerce Call to Action | 0 | 0% |
| Total | 50 | 100% |

Social Media Engagement

Social media engagement is an important factor to consider in measuring fans' reactions toward the NHL's "Hockey Is For Everyone"-related tweets. These metrics provide insight as to whether a tweet elicits a reaction from a fan to want to interact with the post, prompting them to like, retweet, quote retweet, or comment. For example, through the act of retweeting, fans are sharing these tweets to their feeds because they most likely approve of the content and feel comfortable sharing it with their followers. In this study, quote tweets were counted towards the overall social media engagement metrics, but the actual content written by the users were not analyzed due to the possibility that users who quote tweet may have their settings switched to private, which does not allow for public viewing and would not provide full and accurate data.

The goal of RQ2 was to determine which news frame and CSB received higher levels of engagement on "Hockey Is For Everyone" tweets. Table 3 and Table 4 provide the results for the

social media engagement on each news frame and charity support behavior, respectively. The mean values were calculated for the total retweets, total quote tweets, total likes, total comments, and total engagement as each news frame had a varying number of posts associated with it. On average, posts that did not have a news frame ($n = 10$) had the most social media engagement in total by far ($M = 648.30$). Although there were only 10 posts that did not have a news frame, compared to the most frequently used news frame, human interest ($n = 28$), these tweets surpassed the level of engagement on the human interest-framed posts.

As shown in Table 3, tweets that did not have a specific news frame also had an increased number of average comments ($M = 15.70$), which was much more than other news frames received. This could mean that these types of tweets received an impressive amount of feedback from the NHL's followers, whether positive, negative, or a mix of both, which will be further analyzed in answering RQ3. In viewing the engagement analytics without additional context, it can be inferred that, overall, fans react more to basic messages that do not offer much explanation or information about the campaign. For example, two of the tweets that were coded as not having a news frame were photos of the Vancouver Canucks' and Dallas Stars' "Pride Night" warm up jerseys. Both captions for these posts were similar as they only expressed positive sentiments regarding the jerseys, "These are some brilliant @Canucks threads! #HockeyIsForEveryone" and "These @DallasStars Pride Night jerseys are truly marvelous. #HockeyIsForEveryone" (Appendix D). These results may indicate that implementing obvious news frames might not be the most effective way to persuade the audience to first engage with the post itself, but also to accept the messaging embedded into the tweet. It is also important to note that the news frame that receiving the second-highest amount of social media engagement was morality ($M = 357.43$), which pleads with the audience to understand the personal beliefs

behind a problem or issue. Although there were only seven posts ($N = 50$) that were determined to have applied the morality news frame, these tweets might have attracted more engagement because it could be provoking conversations or either unpleasant or supportive reactions.

Upon calculating the social media engagement for the nine CSBs, it was determined that the general awareness posts received the most total likes, retweets, quote tweets, and comments ($M = 646.53$). This finding further proves that fans prefer basic “Hockey Is For Everyone” tweets, rather than ones that focus on controversial topics. Within the sample of coded general awareness tweets, the NHL shared the story of 17-year-old Alero Eribo, a “Nigerian-born member of the NHL Power Players™ and founder of HockeyGirlz.” She is providing girls in Lagos, Nigeria, with the opportunity to play hockey by providing free resources to them (National Hockey League [@NHL], 2022a). This wholesome story provides fans with a reason to press the like and retweet buttons, and hopefully taking it as far as to publish a supportive reply. Tweets coded as “game information” received the second-highest amount of engagement ($M = 612$), which indicate that fans are taking notice of this aspect of the Hockey Is For Everyone campaign. These tweets mainly focused on content that mentioned Black History Night or Pride Night, which are held in support of the various communities that are being advocated for by the NHL.

In analyzing the social media engagement for the types of news frames and CSBs, respectively, both parts of RQ2 were answered. The data clearly showed that the tweets which did not contain a news frame received the highest amount of social media engagement, on average, when compared to the five prominent news frames: attribution of responsibility, conflict, economic, human interest, and morality. These findings confirm that the NHL’s fans and Twitter followers prefer to interact with posts that are not intentionally trying to

communicate about any specific agenda with them or discussing topics that might be considered sensitive or controversial by this audience. Additionally, the posts classified as general awareness or “other,” received the most social media engagement, on average, when compared to the other CSBs: game information, call to action, team donation, team volunteering, athlete volunteering, non-athlete volunteering, and e-commerce. These results only further support the understanding that fans are more comfortable with general messages, such as highlighting an inspirational story of an individual who is a part of a minority group or sharing a jersey that was created for a specific “Hockey Is For Everyone”-themed game. As McGovern (2015) found, sports fans tend to shy away from discussing topics that are seen as sensitive, such as race, as they would prefer to enjoy the atmosphere of a game. This is visibly shown through the data in Table 3 and Table 4, only further confirming this information through this study.

Table 3. Social Media Engagement by News Frame

| News Frame | N | Mean Values | | | | Total Engagement (M) |
|-------------------------------|----|--------------|------------------|-----------|--------------|----------------------|
| | | Retweets (M) | Quote Tweets (M) | Likes (M) | Comments (M) | |
| Human Interest | 28 | 34.39 | 3.71 | 225.79 | 3.46 | 267.36 |
| None | 10 | 57.90 | 11.40 | 563.30 | 15.70 | 648.30 |
| Morality | 7 | 44.29 | 6 | 300.43 | 6.71 | 357.43 |
| Conflict | 3 | 48.50 | 4 | 236 | 1 | 289.50 |
| Attribution of Responsibility | 2 | 16.50 | 0.50 | 108.50 | 3.50 | 129 |
| Economic | 0 | — | — | — | — | — |

Table 4. Social Media Engagement by Charity Support Behaviors

| CSB | N | Mean Values | | | | |
|--------------------------|----|--------------|------------------|-----------|--------------|----------------------|
| | | Retweets (M) | Quote Tweets (M) | Likes (M) | Comments (M) | Total Engagement (M) |
| Awareness | 18 | 81.89 | 9.05 | 546.32 | 9.26 | 646.53 |
| Other | 18 | 31.00 | 4.22 | 234.11 | 6.56 | 275.89 |
| Game Information | 8 | 59.38 | 11 | 529.88 | 11.75 | 612 |
| Call To Action | 5 | 24.40 | 2.40 | 166.60 | 1.60 | 195 |
| Team Donation | 1 | 58 | 7 | 329 | 2 | 396 |
| Team Volunteering | 0 | — | — | — | — | — |
| Athlete Volunteering | 0 | — | — | — | — | — |
| Non-Athlete Volunteering | 0 | — | — | — | — | — |
| E-Commerce | 0 | — | — | — | — | — |

Fan Reactions

To answer research questions 3 and 4, the comments received for the data sample (N = 50) were coded based on either positive or negative sentiment. The replies were separated based on the news frame and CSB codes that its original tweet received, in order to analyze which types of messaging either sparked supportive or negative reactions from the NHL's Twitter followers. All of the comments were evaluated to ensure that the content was relevant to the original tweet and were omitted if it did not. Based on Table 7, the responsibility news frame

received the highest percentage of positive comments at 57.14% of its related sample, although it only had two original tweets that were coded as such. The replies, once again, indicated that fans are motivated to share their opinions when it comes to the jerseys the league creates to honor the various programs that exist within the Hockey Is For Everyone initiative. One of the tweets that received the “responsibility” frame code was celebrating recent NHL events that celebrated and acknowledge Gender Equality Month, sharing photos of three teams donning their themed warmups and a final photo showing a panel of female presenters at a speaking engagement (see Appendix D). Fans commented “That rangers jersey goes hard” and “The Devil's should wear that jersey more often,” which further indicate that they are intrigued by these new designs and are looking to be impressed when the jerseys are released. Ellis (2021) has even claimed that hockey fans have “always been protective of NHL uniforms,” which provides additional context as to why so many of the received comments are focused on this aspect of the campaign.

The charity support behavior that received the highest percentage of positive replies was team donation at 100%. This is unsurprising due to the fact that donations are usually socially motivated, obviously rather than profit motivated, and are more difficult to provoke negative emotions. In this case, in honor of its participation in the Stadium Series, the Nashville Predators unveiled its plans to build an outdoor hockey rink at the Nashville Inner City Ministry, a nonprofit that provides meals, life skills classes and amenities to more than 600 families per year (National Hockey League [@NHL], 2022b). The goal is to keep children living in low-income areas off the streets at night by providing them with a place to retreat to, as the rink will be accessible 24/7, while also exposing them to the game of hockey. This tweet only received positive reactions such as “W!” and “Respect,” but it was the only post in the sample to be coded as a team donation news frame. The high levels of engagement and positive reaction to this

content indicate that the NHL should cautiously share more of these types of activities on their social media channels, as it helps build a positive reputation and reaction from the community. It is recommended to cautiously promote more of these events because if it is overdone, then it will seem ingenuine and self-serving, which is the opposite reaction that the campaign should aim to receive. In addition to the team donation receiving the highest percentage of positive comments, the tweets coded as “other” garnered the second-highest percentage at 58.76%, which follows the pattern of previous results.

Many of the news frames were closely split in the percentage of positive and negative replies, but one news frame particularly stood out in having a majority of its comments being unsupportive. The morality news frame received 66.67% of negative replies throughout its seven correlating tweets. This news frame may be polarizing as it is sharing information about a person or lifestyle that could perhaps not resonate well with fans who disagree with others having different values or way of living than themselves. The trickiest part of this frame is asking fans to get behind a cause that they do not agree with, as they may feel that the NHL does not have the right to push them into supporting something they find is not acceptable. Elving’s (2013) explanation of fit provides context as to why fans are not reacting well to these posts, as it can be inferred that those who are commenting negatively may believe that a sports organization advocating for diversity, equity, and inclusion has a low fit when it comes to choosing a cause to support. An example of this found in the data surrounded a tweet that featured the Florida Panthers wearing their Pride Night warmup jerseys, with the caption that reads “An important moment to celebrate the LGBTQ+ community in Florida and across the world. #HockeyIsForEveryone.” Unlike the other mentioned tweets that focused more on the look of the jerseys, the frame of this caption expresses that the LGBTQ+ community should be celebrated

and emphasizes that it is important to do so, which resulted in comments such as “Uh oh. @RonDeSantisFL is going to be mad at you!!!! Careful!!,” “@NHL you can’t celebrate what doesn’t exist,” and “Why? What about hockey is in any way not for "everyone?" It's a sport. Just play it; no virtue signals required.” The phrase “virtue signaling,” which is defined as “the act or practice of conspicuously displaying one’s awareness of and attentiveness to political issues, matter of social and racial justice, etc., especially instead of taking effective action,” was seen in other replies deemed as negative (“Virtue Signaling,” n.d.). This sentiment expressed by fans demonstrates that the NHL and other organizations should tread lightly when it comes to the expectation that its audiences will easily accept a community that goes against their values, solely because of a social media post. To reiterate, fit also plays a role in these communications because if fans do not believe that the NHL should be discussing sexuality or race, then they will continue to express these opinions the more that they are provided with a reason to do so. A better approach would be to provide basic information about this initiative or to use the human interest frame to soften the audience, rather than saying what they should do or think.

Lastly, the CSB that received the highest percentage of negative replies was call to action at 62.50%. These replies were attributed to one post that celebrated International Women’s Day, with a call to action celebrate women in hockey by visiting the NHL’s Instagram to learn more. The comments were seen as negative because many fans are calling for more females to be involved in the NHL and to be equally paid. This calls attention to the fact that the league is dominantly run by males, which provides the NHL with the opportunity to adjust these statistics to create a better reputation amongst its fans. The second-highest percentage of negative replies were attributed to the “game information” CSB at 59.09%. These tweets either shared information or photos surrounding Hockey Is For Everyone-themed game nights or highlighted

an individual in the league who would be later playing in a game. Based on the negative reactions that the Florida Panthers’ LGBTG+ Pride Night tweet received, it is understandable as to why this CSB also received a majority of unsupportive comments. As aforementioned, reevaluating the manner in which these messages are framed, will be crucial to the overall success of the campaign — both in metrics as well as the overall understanding and acceptance from the community that the NHL is trying to reach.

Table 5. Percentage of Positive and Negative Comments (News Frames)

| Frame Type | n | Comments | Related Comments (percentage of total) | Positive Comments (percentage of related) | Negative Comments (percentage of related) |
|-------------------|----------|-----------------|---|--|--|
| Human Interest | 28 | 95 | 84 (88.42%) | 45 (53.57%) | 39 (46.43%) |
| None | 10 | 150 | 142 (94.67%) | 81 (57.04%) | 61 (42.96%) |
| Conflict | 3 | 0 | — | — | — |
| Morality | 7 | 47 | 45 (95.74%) | 15 (33.33%) | 30 (66.67%) |
| Responsibility | 2 | 7 | 7 (100%) | 4 (57.14%) | 3 (42.86%) |
| Economic | 0 | — | — | — | — |

Table 6. Percentage of Positive and Negative Comments (CSBs)

| CSB | n | Comments | Related Comments (percentage of total) | Positive Comments (percentage of related) | Negative Comments (percentage of related) |
|-----------------------|----------|-----------------|---|--|--|
| General Awareness | 18 | 88 | 83 (94.32%) | 47 (56.63%) | 36 (43.37%) |
| Game Information | 8 | 94 | 88 | 36 (40.91%) | 52 (59.09%) |
| Other | 8 | 107 | 97 | 57 (58.76%) | 40 (41.24%) |
| Call to Action | 5 | 8 | 8 (100%) | 3 (37.50%) | 5 (62.50%) |
| Team Donation | 1 | 2 | 2 | 2 (100%) | 0 (0%) |
| Team Volunteer | 0 | — | — | — | — |
| Athlete Volunteer | 0 | — | — | — | — |
| Employee Volunteer | 0 | — | — | — | — |
| E-Commerce | 0 | — | — | — | — |

CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSION

In the last six years since the Hockey Is For Everyone campaign was launched, the National Hockey League has made strides in advocating for diversity, equity, and inclusion throughout the league and its surrounding communities. Understanding how to best communicate information about the many programs that exist within this CSR initiative with its audience is crucial to gaining acceptance and proving its effectiveness. The results of this study's content analysis provided several key findings that could advise the NHL on how to improve its communication tactics for this program as well as other organizations that are conducting this type of work, such as the English Premier League (Hansen et al., 2022) and National Football League (Devlin & Sheehan, 2017). Semetko and Valkenburg's (2000) news frames and Pelozo and Hassay's (2007) charity support behaviors provided context as to how the league shared messages surrounding its CSR/CSA program, focused on DEI, with its stakeholders and how they were subsequently received. The findings specifically provided insight as to the types of messaging that the NHL is using to communicate about the "Hockey Is For Everyone" campaign, as well as how fans not only engage with these tweets through likes, retweets, quote tweets, and replies. Furthermore, the sentiment of replies were also coded to view fans' real-time reactions and opinions of the different aspects of the campaign.

All research questions were successfully answered through this study and began with calculating the frequencies and percentages of the most utilized news frames and charity support behaviors found in the NHL's tweets. Human interest, by far, was the most used news frame

throughout the data set. This is a valid tactic to implement as this frame is used to associate a person with a specific issue, which in this case is DEI. Not only did the NHL highlight active players through these tweets, but it also shared inspiring stories of ice hockey players in other countries, strong female employees, former players who have found new roles within the league, and many more, to engage its audience's emotion and empathy. The general awareness and "other" CSBs were also the most frequency utilized, which demonstrated that the NHL is working to expose the topic of DEI and the Hockey Is For Everyone campaign to its audience and familiarize them with the varying tactics that accompany this effort.

Once the frequencies of news frames and CSBs were calculated, it was important to gauge the social media engagement that these tweets received from the NHL's Twitter followers, specifically measuring likes, retweets, quote tweets, and replies. These metrics are the key to understanding which posts perform better than others, and therefore which tweets are either supported or not by fans. Posts that did not use a clear news frame received the highest levels of engagement, which demonstrates that the audience prefers to interact with these posts as opposed to others that might ask them to better understand the reasoning behind an issue or to join them in resolving the issue. To further solidify this finding, the general awareness CSB also received the highest level of engagement, which shows that fans are more interested in tweets that are not as provoking but rather only present broad content surrounding the campaign.

Lastly, the fans' sentiments provide the highest level of understanding possible in how they react and feel towards the Hockey Is For Everyone campaign and its many accompanying tactics. The tweets without a news frame that received the highest percentage of positive replies, whereas tweets that were assigned as having the morality news frame received the highest percentage of negative replies. The posts without a news frame garnering the highest percentage

of positive replies is unsurprising because, as found in RQ2, these types of posts are also shown to attract the most engagement as they are solely providing information about a campaign tactics, such as a jersey, or sharing a person's inspiring story. On the other hand, the morality news frame is meant to make the audience understand the issue at hand, which in this case is DEI, and asking them to support it. This might not resonate well with fans as they feel as if the NHL is telling them that they need to be accepting of a lifestyle that they feel their values do not align with, which is difficult to achieve. In a similar fashion, the CSB with the highest percentage of positive replies were those coded as "other," whereas the call to action CSB received the highest percentage of negative replies. As explained previously, the "other" coded tweets were a combination of CSBs but were mostly used to highlight an individual and provided a call to action to learn more about them or to watch their team's game. The call to action CSB received the highest percentage of negative comments because the NHL is openly advocating for minorities, but do not reflect this same equity in their own workforce. In celebrating International Women's Day, a league that is mostly run by males will most definitely receive negative responses as it is not being authentic by creating more opportunities for women to hold higher level positions. It is critical for the NHL to become more diverse in this aspect in order to attract support from fans in regard to this topic.

Overall, the recommendation for the NHL and other organizations that are engaging in diversity, equity, and inclusion efforts as part of its corporate social responsibility programs, is to slowly expose its audience to a new campaign, especially if it might be considered polarizing. The results of this study come at a crucial time as diversity, equity, and inclusion programs, through their involvement in corporate social advocacy (Dodd & Supa, 2014) and corporate social responsibility (Kotler & Lee, 2005), have been and are still being launched around the

globe, with many organizations failing to effectively communicate the reasoning behind this important work. As organizations are wanting to participate in the conversations of DEI, they must also be wary of what this may do for their reputation and bottom line, which is why it is essential to not only understand how to choose a cause that has a high fit but also how to share these messages and efficiently as possible to make a difference without risking losing its audiences' support. Frequently using the human interest frame and general awareness posts will allow the audience to connect a face and story with the issue that the organization is advocating for. Interestingly, the NHL only utilized the team donation CSB once and did not use any of the volunteering CSBs throughout their tweets during the 2021-2022 season, which could have also attracted additional support from its fans, if done in a genuine and limited manner. This was an interesting finding as NHL players, team, and employees participate in volunteer activities throughout the season, with some relating specifically to the Hockey Is For Everyone campaign. It would be advised that the NHL share more of these details with its fans for them to see they are actively giving back to the community, rather than solely pushing an agenda. If they are communicated in a way that seems socially motivated, rather than self-serving or profit motivated, then these messages could elicit higher levels of engagement and positive reactions from fans. Additionally, it is recommended that the morality news frame is used less frequently, as it has been proven to garner the most negative reactions from fans. These reactions show that fans may believe that a DEI campaign might not be the best fit for a sports organization's CSR/CSA program, which is why they will need to be slowly introduced to these concepts by implementing general information posts and human interest-framed tweets to soften them. Finally, the NHL, as well as other organizations, should also look internally at its workforce and mission/values to identify key areas on which it can improve, which would therefore resonate

well with its key stakeholders as the league would not only be pushing DEI efforts on solely its fans, but also itself.

Limitations and Future Research

As diversity, equity, and inclusion efforts continue to integrate with corporate social responsibility tactics, there is still much research to be done to fully understand how to create a successful campaign. An audience's positive and supportive reaction to a CSR/CSA campaign is critical for not only the success of the organization's efforts, but also for the possible impact that it may have on its respective audiences. There are additional opportunities to continue researching this area as there were limitations that were present in this study that could be addressed in future studies. One of the most significant limitations of this study was the instability of Twitter. In Oct. 2022, Elon Musk purchased and acquired the popular social media platform, which led to many changes for users (Conger & Hirsh, 2022; *Twitter 2.0: Our Continued Commitment to the Public Conversation*, n.d.). Although Musk claims that there would be a greater support of free speech on the application, this study was impacted because many tweets in the sample that received comments from users who have had their accounts suspended, which affected the overall engagement metrics and the results when coding positive or negative comments. Due to the popularity of Twitter within the world of sports, this could be an issue when conducting future research studies using this platform. The use of Meta's Facebook could be explored as an alternative solution to study real-time reactions from hockey fans around the world as the National Hockey League and all of its 32 clubs have active Facebook pages.

Another limitation that presented itself was in the chosen method because a content analysis only aims to study texts, images, emojis, and GIFs that are published by a person at a

particular moment in time, but there is no additional information about their personal beliefs, values, and demographics that could explain their reasoning for replying to a tweet. Furthermore, there are no solid explanations as to why a user would like or retweet one tweet versus another. Additionally, the Twitter algorithm patterns have changed over the years, presenting tweets to users in various manners. The platform previously presented tweets to users in the following order: ranked tweets, “in case you missed it,” and remaining tweets in reverse-chronological order (Lua, A., 2020). No Twitter user will see the same content on their home timeline so real-time comments on tweets provide more context as to why an individual might react positively or negatively towards certain content. It would be valuable to continue conducting research in this field using supplementary methods such as a survey or focus group to measure hockey fans’ attitudes towards corporate social responsibility communications campaign in more depth.

Future studies could take the previously mentioned limitations into account and expand into analyzing how the 32 clubs choose to frame messages surrounding the Hockey Is For Everyone campaign, as this would offer additional information about how the varying geographical locations and fanbases react to these topics when it is even more personal to them. Additionally, other methods could be utilized to further understand how the NHL’s stakeholders view the “Hockey Is For Everyone” campaign messaging and tactics. For example, a survey of NHL fans could aim to better understand their attitudes towards the campaign and if they believe that the league should be engaging in CSR/CSA efforts or not. Similarly, Austin et al. (2019) conducted a study using a survey to examine the “perception of corporate involvement in controversial social-political issues,” which highlight demographic differences, but overall found that participants felt organizations should participate in these discussions (p. 3). Qualitative interviews could also provide in-depth information as to how stakeholders feel about

organizations launching programs that advocate for DEI and other socio-political issues. Utilizing either of these methodologies in the context of the “Hockey Is For Everyone” initiative would be valuable to further understand personal beliefs beyond one comment on a social media post. This study has proven that there are many iterations of this research that may contribute to further understanding how organizations can make a positive impact with their large reach through intentionally created CSR initiatives.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A: Codebook for News Frames

Table A1. News Frame Codes

| Code # | News Frames | Description | Example |
|--------|-------------------------------|---|---|
| 1 | Attribution of responsibility | The message implies that the audiences has a duty to step up and help solve key social problems. In the case of the #HockeyIsForEveryone campaign, the tweet is asking fans to be inclusive of all races, genders, sexuality preferences, or abilities. | Reminiscing on these Gender Equality nights celebrating the heroes, leaders, and role models who make hockey happen every day. Thank you to all who participated and continue to do so daily. #MovementNotAMoment #NHLLGenderEquality #HockeyIsForEveryone |
| 2 | Conflict | The message seeks to band people together for/against a cause, which helps to capture interest. | To honor, celebrate and inspire is not limited to a month but a constant, always on action. This is a movement not a moment. #NHLLBlackHistory #HockeyIsForEveryone |
| 3 | Economic consequences | The message is cautioning its audiences of any monetary issues that a problem or event might cause. | Providing kids of all socioeconomic backgrounds with the chance to play hockey can change the course of their lives. The NHL is fighting poverty by giving back through the #HockeyIsForEveryone program. |
| 4 | Human interest | The message is connecting a “human face” or “emotional angle” with an event, issue or problem. | On this date in 1948, Larry Kwong became a trailblazer in hockey. As the first player of Asian descent in NHL history, Larry skated onto the ice as a member of the @nyrangers and changed the game forever. #HockeyIsForEveryone |

| | | | |
|---|----------|--|---|
| 5 | Morality | The message is pleading for the audience to understand the personal beliefs behind a problem or issue. | Love is love. Let's support all people from different backgrounds and sexual preferences. #HockeyIsForEveryone |
| 6 | None | The tweet does not distinctly use a news frame to communicate a message. | ♡♡♡♡♡♡ #HockeyIsForEveryone |

Appendix B: Codebook for Charity Support Behaviors

Table B1. Charity Support Behavior Codes

| Code | Charity Support Behavior | Description | Example |
|------|--------------------------|--|---|
| 1 | General awareness posts | A tweet that does not prompt the audience to participate in a call to action as it is only used to bring attention to the Hockey Is For Everyone initiative. | 10 years ago, a woman played in the NHL for the first time. Take a look at Manon's story and see how she continues to be a role model for young girls everywhere. |
| 2 | Team donations | One or more of the 32 NHL teams make a donation to a cause that falls under the Hockey Is For Everyone campaign, specifically relating to DEI-related organizations or programs. | The Arizona Coyotes have donated \$10,000 to the You Can Play Project to provide LBGQIA+ kids with the opportunity to play hockey. |
| 3 | Team volunteering | One or more of the 32 NHL teams volunteer for an organization or DEI-related cause that is a part of the Hockey Is For Everyone campaign. | The Pittsburgh Penguins visited the Boys and Girls Club of Pittsburgh to inspire kids of all backgrounds to pursue their dreams of playing in the NHL. |
| 4 | Athlete volunteering | An NHL player volunteers for an organization that falls under the #HockeyIsForEveryone initiative | Sidney Crosby visited the Boys and Girls Club of Pittsburgh to inspire kids of all backgrounds to pursue their dreams of playing in the NHL. |

| | | | |
|---|--------------------------------|--|--|
| 5 | NHL non-athlete volunteering | An employee or employees of the NHL, such as general managers, coaches, owners, etc., who participate in volunteer activities related to the Hockey Is For Everyone initiative. | @TBLightning coach @joncooper volunteered at the new skating rink in downtown Tampa, which is providing kids of all demographics with a place to safely practice hockey. |
| 6 | Call to action for fans | NHL fans are asked to participate in the campaign's goals by being an ally to a minority community that is being supported by the league through the Hockey Is For Everyone campaign, such as the LGBTQIA+ or Black communities or learning more through information assets. | Click below to learn how you can be an ally to the LGBTQIA+ community. #HockeyIsForEveryone |
| 7 | E-commerce call to action | The tweet is advertising merchandise, such as warm up jerseys or pucks, that have been created specifically for the Hockey Is For Everyone campaign. | Black History Night-themed jerseys are on sale now! Visit the link in our bio to shop. 10% of the proceeds will go to the You Can Play Project. |
| 8 | Information about themed games | Information about themed games related to the campaign – showcasing or providing details regarding an upcoming Hockey Is For Everyone themed game such as Pride Night or Black History Month Night. | The Tampa Bay Lightning are celebrating Asian and Pacific Islander Heritage Night with these cool jerseys! |
| 9 | Other | If a post does not fit into one of the previous eight categories or if a tweet contains multiple CSBs, then it will receive the “other” code. | These @LAKings Pride Night jerseys are awesome! Watch the game tonight on ESPN at 7 p.m. PST. |

Appendix C: Codebook: Social Media Reactions

Table C1. Social Media Reaction Codes

| Sentiment | Description | Example |
|------------------|--|--|
| Positive | Pleasant expressions or gratitude/appreciate towards the NHL or featured team. | “You love to see it” or “Keep up the great work @NHL.” |
| Negative | Express disapproval, are dismissive, question the intentions of the initiative, or are racist/homophobic/sexist/etc. | “What a joke” or “You can’t celebrate what doesn’t exist.” |

Appendix D: Twitter Sample Data

Table D1. Twitter Data

| Tweet Link | Retweets | Quote Tweets | Likes | Extracted Comments |
|---|-----------------|---------------------|--------------|---------------------------|
| https://twitter.com/NHL/status/1500247500908900359 | 78 | 15 | 651 | 21 |
| https://twitter.com/NHL/status/1511864320308748289 | 92 | 10 | 1,212 | 20 |
| https://twitter.com/NHL/status/1504836278579249171 | 68 | 3 | 564 | 8 |
| https://twitter.com/NHL/status/1497664055980478468 | 50 | 16 | 579 | 32 |
| https://twitter.com/NHL/status/1502481432375083010 | 98 | 18 | 983 | 18 |
| https://twitter.com/NHL/status/1497286534336335873 | 57 | 4 | 479 | 5 |
| https://twitter.com/NHL/status/1501209760779190279 | 58 | 7 | 423 | 7 |
| https://twitter.com/NHL/status/1496648519410663426 | 72 | 15 | 595 | 21 |

| | | | | |
|---|----|----|-----|----|
| https://twitter.com/NHL/status/1509610718848507910 | 48 | 7 | 321 | 15 |
| https://twitter.com/NHL/status/1509352825515556877 | 82 | 17 | 581 | 14 |
| https://twitter.com/NHL/status/1496614600799928324 | 21 | 4 | 142 | 1 |
| https://twitter.com/NHL/status/1512932379324784644 | 37 | 8 | 368 | 6 |
| https://twitter.com/NHL/status/1503873476146442244 | 39 | 10 | 287 | 3 |
| https://twitter.com/NHL/status/1498705960583507974 | 40 | 2 | 175 | 12 |
| https://twitter.com/NHL/status/1506463033475874824 | 75 | 16 | 741 | 31 |
| https://twitter.com/NHL/status/1497048245419356186 | 62 | 12 | 417 | 4 |
| https://twitter.com/NHL/status/1499060821221126154 | 58 | 7 | 329 | 2 |
| https://twitter.com/NHL/status/1496524092706635784 | 61 | 5 | 300 | 2 |
| https://twitter.com/NHL/status/1509177525011894277 | 74 | 5 | 367 | 2 |
| https://twitter.com/NHL/status/1498689582753320970 | 23 | 3 | 105 | 0 |
| https://twitter.com/NHL/status/1495092372555898880 | 65 | 6 | 333 | 2 |
| https://twitter.com/NHL/status/1492968123359801345 | 20 | 0 | 79 | 3 |
| https://twitter.com/NHL/status/1509615298873540609 | 13 | 1 | 128 | 4 |
| https://twitter.com/NHL/status/1508505669145616388 | 74 | 16 | 386 | 5 |
| https://twitter.com/NHL/status/1503054818969063435 | 42 | 5 | 237 | 2 |

| | | | | |
|---|----|---|-----|---|
| https://twitter.com/NHL/status/1493338059479334914 | 30 | 3 | 192 | 0 |
| https://twitter.com/NHL/status/1506668746693398530 | 26 | 5 | 151 | 6 |
| https://twitter.com/NHL/status/1492250979344990219 | 38 | 1 | 260 | 2 |
| https://twitter.com/NHL/status/1500231778916880386 | 29 | 4 | 229 | 8 |
| https://twitter.com/NHL/status/1496599504728072195 | 26 | 2 | 187 | 1 |
| https://twitter.com/NHL/status/1499478563099193347 | 9 | 1 | 80 | 1 |
| https://twitter.com/NHL/status/1492590588310532097 | 36 | 2 | 303 | 4 |
| https://twitter.com/NHL/status/1494032672921956362 | 11 | 1 | 67 | 0 |
| https://twitter.com/NHL/status/1496863860271325194 | 32 | 3 | 207 | 2 |
| https://twitter.com/NHL/status/1501953196272631808 | 9 | 0 | 68 | 0 |
| https://twitter.com/NHL/status/1500872756329697289 | 13 | 2 | 71 | 0 |
| https://twitter.com/NHL/status/1498834440461721610 | 5 | 0 | 58 | 2 |
| https://twitter.com/NHL/status/1493668901653258240 | 17 | 1 | 113 | 1 |
| https://twitter.com/NHL/status/1491900850486325259 | 19 | 4 | 193 | 6 |
| https://twitter.com/NHL/status/1497248783498977286 | 36 | 1 | 199 | 2 |
| https://twitter.com/NHL/status/1494070581800624128 | 44 | 7 | 168 | 5 |
| https://twitter.com/NHL/status/1508529162658717715 | 42 | 4 | 440 | 8 |

| | | | | |
|---|----|---|-----|---|
| https://twitter.com/NHL/status/1495468798723375121 | 6 | 0 | 50 | 0 |
| https://twitter.com/NHL/status/1496941807220965388 | 23 | 2 | 103 | 0 |
| https://twitter.com/NHL/status/1498736197350432771 | 9 | 0 | 64 | 1 |
| https://twitter.com/NHL/status/1506996805686468611 | 15 | 1 | 91 | 0 |
| https://twitter.com/NHL/status/1494765074703175684 | 18 | 0 | 101 | 2 |
| https://twitter.com/NHL/status/1494426867255894017 | 15 | 1 | 67 | 1 |
| https://twitter.com/NHL/status/1498811693115269123 | 54 | 9 | 354 | 2 |
| https://twitter.com/NHL/status/1508946628199301121 | 22 | 3 | 207 | 7 |