**The Impact of Deviance on Head Coach Dismissals and Implications of a Personal Conduct
Policy**

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Abstract

Effects of deviant behavior committed by NFL teams' coaching staffs and players on head coach dismissals are examined before and after a personal conduct policy change. Using 505 observations from 2000 through 2015, survival analysis results indicate deviance committed by players affect head coach retention decisions. More specifically, workplace deviance committed by subordinates, as measured by player fines, increases head coach dismissal likelihood, regardless of the institutional emphasis on personal conduct, represented by a personal conduct policy modification. However, penalty yards and off-duty legal incidents committed by players only increase the likelihood of head coach dismissal following the personal conduct policy modification, which was implemented to deter deviant behavior viewed by external stakeholders. Though head coaches are dismissed following instances of player misconduct, when those instances of misconduct result in suspensions (i.e., coaches are unable to utilize all their resources), the likelihood of head coach retention increases, suggesting suspensions may operate as an excuse for poor performance, thus allowing head coaches of deviant players to potentially forestall their dismissal.

Highlights:

- Four types of deviance and a policy change are used to explain leader dismissals
- Deviance committed by subordinates increase the likelihood of leader dismissal
- Penalties and legal incidents increase dismissal likelihood after a policy change
- Leaders may forestall dismissal when punishments limit their available resources

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1. Introduction

Coaching successions and subsequent effects is a popular area of study for sport management scholars (e.g., Roach, 2016; Soebbing, Wicker, & Weimar, 2015; Wangrow, Schepker, & Barker, 2017). Within this area of research, an understanding of the causes of the succession event (e.g., dismissal and retirement) are required (Fee, Hadlock, & Pierce, 2006; Fredrickson, Hambrick, & Baumrin, 1988) due to the complex and involuntary nature of dismissals (Fredrickson et al., 1988). In this area of research, various performance and socio-political forces contribute to involuntary dismissals (Foreman & Soebbing, 2015; Fredrickson et al., 1988; Wangrow et al., 2017),

One understudied factor is deviance, which one can define as actions that go against the norms of the organization and that can have a negative impact on the well-being of organizations or individuals associated with the organization (Michalak & Ashkanasy 2013). While deviance within organizations is a complex topic (Litzky, Eddleston, & Kidder, 2006), little research examined how deviance impacts dismissals of managers and CEOs. Instead, previous literature focused on how organizational deviance affects shareholders (Karpoff, Lee, & Vondracik, 1999), firm employees (Simpson, 2002), customers (Geis, 2007), and taxpayers (Gobert & Punch, 2007).

The purpose of the present study is to explore the role deviant behavior has on the likelihood of managerial dismissal, with particular emphasis on how institutional policies designed to regulate individual behavior potentially alter that likelihood of dismissal. The empirical setting for this study is the National Football League (NFL) from 2000 through 2015. During the sample period, the NFL implemented and modified a policy to deter misconduct

committed by league employees (e.g., players, coaches) outside of the workplace (Mahone, 2008).

Estimating a hazard model examining various types of coaching and player deviance, we find empirical support indicating head coaches are held responsible for deviance committed by players following a policy modification emphasizing personal conduct. However, head coaches may be able to strategically utilize deviant behaviors and institutional policies to forestall their dismissal if used as an excuse for poor organizational performance. The findings in the present study are important for scholars examining corporate governance or leader turnover because an understanding of the effects of leader turnover must begin with an understanding of the causes (Fredrickson et al., 1988). For practitioners, the findings of the present research are important as they make succession decisions or navigate their careers and consider what decisions will allow them to retain their position in the presence of deviant behavior within their organization. Finally, scholars and practitioners can use the present study when considering the effects, whether intended or unintended, of implementing a personal conduct policy for employees.

2. Literature Review

Fredrickson et al.'s (1988) theoretical model of CEO dismissals included four socio-political forces that combined with organizational performance helped explain the CEO dismissal decision. These four forces were the: (a) board of directors' expectations and attributions of the CEO's performance, (b) boards' allegiances and values, (c) availability of qualified candidates to replace the CEO, and (d) incumbent CEO's power. Due to the similarities between coaches and CEOs (Fredrickson et al., 1988; Humphreys, Paul, & Weinbach, 2016), Fredrickson et al.'s model of CEO dismissals has been used in studies examining coach dismissals (e.g., Foreman & Soebbing, 2015; Holmes, 2011; Wangrow et al., 2017).

Holmes (2011) examined college football head coach dismissals using three of Fredrickson et al.'s (1988) four forces of CEO dismissals, excluding the availability of qualified candidates due to data limitations. Holmes (2011) found head coach dismissals to be negatively related to head coach experience, post-season victories, and rivalry game victories. Consistent with Fredrickson et al.'s (1988) proposition that prior organizational performance is a determinant of executive expectations, Holmes (2011) found a negative relationship between past organizational performance and head coach dismissals. Notably, Foreman and Soebbing (2015) empirically examined all four of Fredrickson et al.'s (1988) socio-political forces of executive dismissal, but discovered no evidence to support Fredrickson et al.'s proposition that candidate availability influences head coach dismissals. Finally, Wangrow et al. (2017) explored these socio-political forces with a particular emphasis on power. In looking at NBA coaches, their results found several of Fredrickson et al.'s (1988) forces had a significant impact on the likelihood of dismissals.

In addition to the socio-political forces identified by Fredrickson et al. (1988), Holmes (2011) included a measure of deviance in the dismissal decision, namely, sanctions imposed on the program from a college football governing body. He observed infractions increased the probability of head coach dismissal. However, limited research exists regarding the effect of deviance on dismissals, which is largely due to the limited data available on deviance within organizations (Lyons, Hoffman, Bommer, Kennedy, & Hetrick, 2016). This limitation is especially striking given the effect deviance has on player career outcomes (Palmer, Duhan, & Soebbing, 2015), the substantial media attention devoted to deviance in sport (Ambrose, 2007; Rose, Cordell, Ham, Karcher, & Shukie, 2007), and the efforts sport governing bodies take to quell deviance and the media attention it receives (Ambrose, 2007; Edelman, 2008). One specific

effort taken by the NFL to mitigate deviant behavior associated with the league was the implementation and modification of a personal conduct policy (PCP).

2.1. NFL Personal Conduct Policy

Beginning in the 1990s, the NFL and its member clubs attempted to address issues of player off-field deviance. In the 1990s, the perception outside of the league was that unless a player committed a serious felony (e.g., murder), he would not be dismissed by league executives (Ambrose, 2007). As the NFL's Communication Director Greg Aiello stated in 1994, "We're not the criminal justice system... We can't cure every ill in society. You know, we're putting on football games. And unless it impacts on the business, we have to be very careful [from a legal standpoint] about disciplinary action we take. A player has rights, too" (Fainaru-Wada & Fainaru, 2014, n.p.).

As pressure continued to come from external stakeholders to the NFL teams and the league office, it "...inherently created an internal league mandate to fix the problem" (Daniels & Brooks, 2009, p. 45). The first attempt by then NFL Commissioner Paul Tagliabue was to institute a Violent Crime Policy in 1997 (Gibeaut, 2000). This first attempt looked at three areas: drugs (steroids and narcotics), alcohol, and guns. Most of the punishments for violating the policy was counseling (Gibeaut, 2000). Limited punishment by Tagliabue combined with increased external pressure due to high profile cases following the creation of the policy (e.g., Rae Carruth; Maske, 2000) led to changes to the Personal Conduct Policy, which occurred in 2000. In an open letter to NFL fans following a change from the initial Violent Crime Policy, Tagliabue stated "[t]he issue [player conduct] isn't one of image. It's a substantive issue of player conduct" (Associated Press, 2000, n.p.).

However, research reviewing the new policy noted many limitations and viewed the policy as insignificant in deterring behavior (e.g., Mahone, 2008). For example, Mahone (2008) described the policy as allowing the commissioner to punish an individual only after all the legal proceedings had concluded for an incident (e.g., trial and appeal) and the individual was found guilty. He concluded the initial policy not only failed to deter deviant behavior but also failed to protect the overall image of the league.

Since current commissioner Roger Goodell was appointed in 2006, he has emphasized player conduct. On April 10, 2007, he announced a modification of the Personal Conduct Policy. Goodell stated:

It is important that the NFL be represented consistently by outstanding people as well as great football players, coaches, and staff[...]. We hold ourselves to higher standards of responsible conduct because of what it means to be part of the National Football League. We have long had policies and programs designed to encourage responsible behavior, and this policy is a further step in ensuring that everyone who is part of the NFL meets that standard... (USA Today, 2007, n.p.).

The modified policy provided the commissioner with the power to act unilaterally to punish any person associated with the league if his/her conduct was deemed to harm the brand of the league in the eyes of the public and stakeholders, regardless of criminal charges being filed (Ambrose, 2007).

While much of the research directly examining the NFL's PCP examined the policy and commissioner power from a legal perspective (e.g., Mahone, 2008), recent empirical research looked at the impact personal conduct plays in team personnel decisions. Allen (2015) examined NFL rookie draft positions and the number of days veterans spent on the free agent market and found personal conduct does not impact draft position or days on the free agent market. Palmer et al. (2015) also looked at the impact personal conduct had on NFL rookies' draft positions and found players who were in trouble the year prior to the draft were selected lower in the draft.

The league's increased efforts to police off-field personal conduct provide an interesting dynamic to empirically examine how off-field player misconduct impacts dismissals of head coaches. Given the increased media attention devoted to personal conduct and increased emphasis on holding personnel accountable in the NFL, dismissal decisions based on executive and employee deviance may be more prevalent starting in the 2007-2008 season than in seasons prior. Thus, we hypothesize:

Hypothesis 1 (H1). Deviance committed by the coaching staff and players increases the likelihood of head coach dismissal following an institutional emphasis on personal conduct.

2.2. Workplace Deviance of Executives

Michalak and Ashkanasy (2013) defined workplace deviance as “a form of behavior that violates organizational norms and that consequently negatively impacts the well-being of the organization and its members” (p. 20). Workplace deviance is detrimental to organizations in several ways, including damaged reputations, exposure to lawsuits, and financial loss (Dilchert, Ones, Davis, & Rostow, 2007; Litzky et al., 2006; Robinson & Bennett, 1995). Executives are often responsible for workplace deviance, and the subsequent consequences of the deviance, due to either being involved with or aware of the behavior (Michel, Heide, & Cochran, 2014; Simon & Eitzen, 1990). Furthermore, executives are responsible for the public image of their organizations and are the most likely people within organizations to engage in deviant acts (Daboub, Rasheed, Priem, & Gray, 1995; Litzky et al., 2006).

Anecdotally, several accounts of workplace deviance committed by top executives led to dismissals at organizations such as Enron, WorldCom, and HealthSouth (Lease, 2006). Furthermore, empirical support establishing a relationship between executive deviance

committed directly by the top management team and executive dismissals exists (e.g., Gomulya & Boeker, 2015; Khanna, Kim, & Lu, 2015; Wiersema & Zhang, 2013). Wiersema and Zhang (2013) found CEO dismissal likelihood to increase following instances of stock option backdating, a specific form of executive deviance committed directly by the top management team. Pervasiveness of the deviance and the media attention devoted to the deviance further increases the likelihood of dismissal (Wiersema & Zhang, 2013).

Khanna et al. (2015) examined instances of CEOs being named as respondents in lawsuits pertaining to corporate fraud. They found, following instances of corporate fraud, stronger relationships with boards of directors can decrease the likelihood of CEO dismissal. However, relationships between boards of directors and CEOs often become strained following instances of executive deviance (Gomulya & Boeker, 2015). Due to the (a) substantial implications of deviance, (b) often direct responsibility of top management in their organization's workplace deviance, and (c) the effect of deviance on relationships between boards of directors and executives, we hypothesize:

Hypothesis 2 (H2). Workplace deviance committed by the coaching staff increases the likelihood of head coach dismissal.

2.3. Workplace Deviance of Employees

Even when top executives were not charged with a criminal violation or did not directly engage in wrongdoing, they were often aware of the illegal activities (Daboub et al., 1995; Litzky et al., 2006). Moreover, top executives establish the culture, incentives, and reporting procedures that not only influence the ethical conduct of subordinates, but also help to reduce the link between the top executives and the unethical behavior (Daboub et al., 1995; Ferrell & Ferrell, 2011; Litzky et al., 2006). Workplace deviance committed by employees that could

potentially be mitigated by executives' actions include minor and serious forms of workplace deviance (Litzky et al., 2006; Robinson & Bennett, 1995). Minor forms of workplace deviance are those resulting from poor ethical behavior or minor policy violations and include production deviance where employees may cut corners, resulting in a lower quality product (Litzky et al., 2006; Robinson & Bennett, 1995), similar to penalties such as holding, false start, or pass interference calls in the NFL. Serious forms of workplace deviance include acts of personal aggression such as employees physically or verbally abusing others within or outside the organization during the course of their job duties (Litzky et al., 2006; Robinson & Bennett, 1995).

Due to the leadership and responsibilities of executives, they may be held accountable for the transgressions of their subordinates and organization (Daboub et al., 1995; Simon & Eitzen, 1990), especially with their duties of establishing organizational culture and disciplining subordinates (Daboub et al., 1995; Lease, 2006; Litzky et al. 2006, Lyons et al., 2016; Zahra, Priem, & Rasheed, 2005). Furthermore, executives may be used as scapegoats following instances of workplace deviance committed by employees, despite evidence the executive did not contribute to nor had knowledge of the misconduct (Gangloff, Connelly, & Shook, 2015). Thus, we hypothesize:

Hypothesis 3 (H3). Workplace deviance committed by players increases the likelihood of head coach dismissal.

2.4. Off-Duty Deviance

Lyons et al. (2016) defined off-duty deviance (ODD) as “behaviors committed by an employee outside the workplace or off-duty that are deviant by organizational and/or societal standards, jeopardize the employee’s status within the organization, and threaten the interests and

well-being of the organization and its stakeholders” (p. 464). Research regarding ODD and its implications is limited, despite over 10% of Fortune 500 companies publicly provide information on their websites regarding their company ODD policies – and likely many more companies provide this information via internal documents (Lyons et al., 2016). Of the organizations that provided justification for company ODD policies, 82.8% of the organizations identified the reputation of the organization as a justification for the policies, however, several other justifications were provided such as employee safety or ability to perform at work. Given that executives are ultimately responsible for their organizations’ reputations and subordinates’ work performance (Fredrickson et al., 1988; Litzky et al., 2006), we hypothesize:

Hypothesis 4 (H4). Off-duty deviance committed by players increases the likelihood of head coach dismissal.

3. Methods

To test these hypotheses, we examine head coach dismissals in the NFL from the 2000-2001 season through the 2015-2016 season. The dependent variable is a binary variable indicating whether the head coach of the team-season was dismissed (*DISMISS*). The dependent variable *DISMISS* is coded with the value of 1 to represent a head coach dismissal and 0 otherwise. To determine if a dismissal occurred, we examine whether a change in head coach occurred after the beginning of the observed season but prior to the beginning of the first regular season game of the following season. If the head coach of a given season is different from the head coach of the following season, a head coach departure is noted. To determine whether the departure was voluntary (e.g., retirement) or involuntary (i.e., a dismissal), a review of newspaper articles was conducted through Factiva (academic license) where key terms such as *fire*, *oust*, *dismiss*, or *forced resignation* were used to indicate a dismissal.

3.1 Independent Variables

To isolate employee misconduct, the present research collected data regarding both on- and off-field behavior by players and coaches. The data are aggregated at the season level, which is defined as the day following the previous season's final game for the observed team through the final game of the observed season. The on- and off-field data are interacted with a dichotomous variable to represent the modified PCP (*GOODELL*). *GOODELL* is coded 1 for the 2007-2008 season and subsequent seasons, and 0 for seasons prior to the 2007-2008 season.

To identify deviance committed by the coaching staff (H2), we use the total amount of monetary fines assessed against the team's coaching staff by the National Football League standardized by season (*COACHFINE*). To standardize the *COACHFINE* variable by season, the mean coaching fine amount during the season in which the observation took place is subtracted from the observed coaching fine amount. Then, the difference is divided by the mean coaching fine amount during the season, thus creating a standardized variable. These fines can be attributed to various transgressions including verbal and physical altercations, falsifying injury reports, or off-field criminal activity. By standardizing the independent variables by season, comparisons may be made across seasons and variations in independent variables over time, such as increases in fines, can be analyzed within the context of the seasons in which they occurred. To measure the effect of coaching staff deviance after Goodell's PCP modification (H1), *COACHFINE* is interacted with *GOODELL* (*COACHFINE*GOODELL*).

Because workplace deviance spans a wide variety of forms, from minor workplace deviance, such as poor ethical decision making, minor policy violations, or cutting corners at work (Litzky et al., 2006; Robinson & Bennett, 1995), to serious personal aggression within the workplace, workplace deviance of employees (H3) is operationalized using three variables:

penalty yards (*PENALTY*), player fines (*PLAYERFINE*), and suspension weeks (*SUSPENSION*). Penalty yards are representative of minor workplace deviance due to these penalties often being only minor policy violations and/or occurring from cutting corners (e.g., holding, false start, pass interference). However, player fines and suspensions are indicative of more serious transgressions, often emanating from further reviews of on-field penalties or other on- or off-field excessive behavior that pertain to work-related performance (e.g., physical or verbal abuse, performance-enhancing drug use). Data regarding penalty yards were obtained from *Pro Football Reference*¹ and data regarding player fines and suspension were retrieved from *JustFines*² and *Spotrac*.³ In the few instances when discrepancies were identified between these sources, reputable media outlets with an expertise in the NFL (e.g., NFL.com, ESPN.com) were used to reconcile the differences.

To examine ODD (H4), data were collected on all off-field player incidents from the database compiled by the *San Diego Union Tribune*. The *San Diego Union Tribune* website recorded player incidents beyond standard parking violations. These incidents were confirmed and checked through various other secondary sources including national and local newspapers as well as sport websites such as ESPN.com to ensure the completeness of the database. Similar to the variables regarding on-field incidents, the total number of separate player incidents for the team are used and standardized by season (*LEGAL*). To examine ODD after the PCP modification (H1), *LEGAL* is interacted with *GOODELL* (*LEGAL*GOODELL*).

3.2. Control Variables

Consistent with previous theoretical and empirical research involving executive and coaching dismissals, numerous control variables are included in the present study to control for

¹ <http://www.pro-football-reference.com>

² <http://www.justfines.com/>

³ <http://www.spotracc.com/>

organizational performance, socio-political factors, and other demographic characteristics. As recent head football coach dismissal models used (e.g., Foreman & Soebbing, 2015; Holmes, 2011), we control for current organizational performance using regular season winning percentage in the observed season (*WINPCT*). In addition to overall regular season performance, we also look at the performance against close rivals (*DIVISION*) and in the postseason (*PLAYOFFS*). Following previous studies, *DIVISION* and *PLAYOFFS* are measured by subtracting career division or playoff losses from career division or playoff wins, respectively (Foreman & Soebbing, 2015; Holmes, 2011).

Per the Fredrickson et al. (1988) model for CEO dismissals, each of the four socio-political forces are accounted for in the present model. Expectations and attributions are modeled by past organizational performance and evaluations by external analysts. Past organizational performance is measured using regular season win percentages from the previous season ($WINPCT_{j-1}$), two seasons prior to the observed season ($WINPCT_{j-2}$), and the mean of three through 10 seasons prior to the observed season ($WINPCT_{j-3 \rightarrow 10}$; Foreman & Soebbing, 2015; Holmes, 2011). External analysts' expectations are measured by the percentage of regular season games a team covered against the point spread in the observed season (*COVERATS*; Foreman & Soebbing, 2015; Humphreys et al., 2016; Soebbing et al., 2015).

Allegiances and values are modeled by the relationship between the executive and the executive dismissal decision maker (Fredrickson et al., 1988). To operationalize this relationship in professional football, we use the number of seasons the general manager (GM) and the head coach have worked together (*HCGMTOG*). *HCGMTOG* may also decrease the likelihood of dismissals resulting from deviance (Khanna et al., 2015).

Alternatives to the incumbent executive are modeled using Foreman and Soebbing's (2015) proxy of qualified NFL head coach candidates (*CANDPOOL*). We operationalize the candidate pool as a count of current offensive/defensive coordinators and former head coaches whom exhibited either recent or career-long success in terms of points scored/allowed for coordinators and winning seasons for former head coaches (see Foreman & Soebbing, 2015 for a more detailed discussion).

Fredrickson et al.'s (1988) final socio-political force is incumbent power. Fredrickson et al. (1988) stated CEO power increases over time and cited experience as a CEO as a determinant of CEO power which decreases the probability of dismissal. Therefore, years of experience as an NFL head coach (*NFLHCEXP*) is included in the present model. Additionally, to control for the reluctance of decision makers to dismiss new leaders (Foreman & Soebbing, 2015) an indicator variable is included in the model, which is coded 1 for head coaches in their first year with the team and 0 otherwise (*FIRSTYR*). To capture potential changes in dismissal probabilities over time, a time trend is included and measured as a count of seasons since the beginning of the sample period such that the 2000-2001 NFL season possesses a value of 1 and continues incrementally through the 2015-2016 season with a corresponding value of 16 (*SEASONCNT*). Lastly, many previous head coach dismissal studies examined demographic characteristics of head coaches (e.g., Madden & Ruther, 2010; Volz, 2009; Wangrow et al., 2017). Therefore, demographic variables such as age (*AGE*) and visible racial minority status (*MINORITY*) are included in the model.

3.3. Empirical Specification

To examine whether changes in an institutional policy regarding executive deviance impact the likelihood of executive dismissal, the present research follows previous head coach

dismissal models (e.g., Holmes, 2011; Volz, 2009; Wangrow et al., 2017) in using survival analysis to examine NFL head coach dismissals from the 2000-2001 season through the 2015-2016 season. Survival analysis provides many benefits over cross-sectional and panel data when examining factors that change over time and their effects on the likelihood of an event occurring over time. For example, cross-sectional and panel data approaches are limited in their abilities to establish direction of causality, examine the time associated with reaching an event (e.g., dismissal), or estimate the function of the relationship between time and the dependent variable following a change in the independent variable (Blossfeld, Golsch, & Rohwer, 2007).

The unit of observation in survival analysis is an episode occurring prior to the event. However, when using time-dependent independent variables, episodes may be split into shorter durations (Blossfeld et al., 2009). Therefore, to account for independent and control variables changing within a coaching episode in the present study, coaching episodes are split into NFL seasons and the unit of observation will be a team-season. Within the 16-season sample period, 505 team-season observations exist.

The dismissal hazard function takes the following form:

$$h(t) = h_0(t)\exp(\beta_0 + \beta_1 X_{it} + \beta_2 \text{GOODELL}_t + \beta_3 X_{it} \text{GOODELL}_t + \beta_4 Z_{it})$$

where i indexes individual coaches and t indexes seasons. The vectors $\mathbf{X}_{it}$ and $\mathbf{Z}_{it}$ represent vectors of independent and control variables, respectively.

3.4. Estimation Issues

The main concern is the sample contains 296 uncensored, 93 left-censored, and 116 right-censored observations. As a result, we follow Berger and Black's (1998) approach to incorporating both stock and flow sample episodes. This method is consistent with previous hazard models examining career duration in sport (e.g., Ducking, Groothuis, & Hill, 2015;

Groothuis & Hill, 2004). Consistent with Volz (2009), we use this mixed flow and stock sample approach to estimate parametric hazard models with exponential, Weibull, and Gompertz distributions. To determine the most appropriate model, we perform graphical checks of the models' pseudoresiduals against the Cox-Snell residuals and find the difference in residuals to be minimized under the Gompertz distribution, indicating the Gompertz distribution provides the best fit for the data in the given model (Blossfeld et al., 2009). The second estimation concern is multicollinearity, which we examine in two ways. An examination of the correlation coefficients between each of the variables found none to exceed 0.7, indicating no need to omit variables to correct for multicollinearity (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2007). Moreover, none of the variance inflation factors for the independent and control variables exceeded a value of six. This result further indicates multicollinearity is not an issue (Menard, 2002).

4. Results

Table 1 reports the descriptive statistics for each of the variables in the model. In this sample, an average of 17.6% of head coaches were dismissed. Within the sample period, 57% of the observations occurred after the implementation of Goodell's PCP.

 Insert Table 1 About Here

Table 2 presents the survival model results. Consistent with Hypothesis 1, all five deviance variables (i.e., variables representing coaching fines, penalty yards, player fines, player suspensions, and off-field legal incidents) have positive coefficients when interacted with the Goodell policy modification indicator variable. Among the five positive interaction variables, the penalty yards interaction variable is statistically significant ($p < 0.05$) and the legal incidents interaction variable is marginally significant ($p < 0.1$). Thus, empirical evidence exists to support Hypothesis 1, in part, that deviance committed by the players increases the likelihood of head

coach dismissal following an institutional emphasis on personal conduct, however, not for the coaching staff. Furthermore, there is no empirical evidence to support Hypothesis 2 that workplace deviance committed by the coaching staff increases the likelihood of head coach dismissal fines accrued by the coaching staff, as indicated by the statistically insignificant coefficient associated with the coaching fines variable.

Similar to Hypothesis 1, partial support exists for Hypothesis 3, that workplace deviance committed by players increases the likelihood of head coach dismissal. Though the penalty yards variable is statistically insignificant, the player fines variable is positive and statistically significant ($p < 0.01$), which supports Hypothesis 3. However, contrary to Hypothesis 3, suspension weeks accrued by players has a negative and statistically significant ($p < 0.05$) coefficient. Therefore, the empirical support for Hypothesis 3 is mixed. Lastly, Hypothesis 4, being off-duty deviance committed by players increases the likelihood of head coach dismissal, is not supported by the data given the negative and statistically insignificant coefficient for player legal incidents.

Insert Table 2 About Here

5. Discussion

Previous research suggested deviance may affect executive dismissal decisions (Ertugrul & Krishnan, 2011; Ferrell & Ferrell, 2011; Wiersema & Zhang, 2013). However, it is unclear how various forms of deviance and institutional policies governing deviance impact dismissal decisions. The present research examines three types of deviance outlined within the literature: workplace deviance by the coaching staff, workplace deviance by the players, and off-duty deviance by the players. Observing head coach dismissals in the NFL over a 16-season span, the findings yield interesting insights. Broadly, they indicate deviance does affect dismissals and its

effects are contingent upon the type of deviant behavior and an institutional emphasis on personal conduct, as represented by the implementation of a more stringent PCP.

Examining how deviance committed during the modified PCP influences head coach dismissal probabilities, workplace deviance by players in the form of penalty yards and off-duty deviance in the form of legal incidents, also by players, increase the likelihood of head coach dismissal. The increases in dismissal likelihoods resulting from subordinate actions are not only statistically significant, but substantively significant as well. Table 2 presents the hazard ratios for each variable. The interpretation of the hazard ratio is an increase/decrease of the chance of getting dismissed relative to the baseline hazard rate (1.000). Thus, a one standard deviation increase in penalty yards accrued by a team after the PCP modification increases the risk of head coach dismissal by 45%. The positive effect of minor workplace deviance on head coach dismissals may result from the increased interest of team owners and GMs to decrease the perception of the NFL as being dangerous, thus creating a more marketable product. With recent concerns regarding injuries to players, more rules have been implemented, and with the rise in media coverage, there is likely increased pressure on teams and their head coaches to decrease penalties associated with deviant behavior in the form of injury-causing actions or undesirable attitudes.

Though only marginally statistically significant, players' off-duty legal incidents are substantively significant. More specifically, a one standard deviation increase in team legal incidents results in a 14.5% increase in head coach dismissal likelihood. This finding is consistent with the league's emphasis on curbing off-field misconduct (Mahone, 2008). As anticipated, the policy modification providing more power to the commissioner to punish employees of the league and its member clubs also reflects back on the head coach and can

potentially lead to his dismissal. This result may also be a result of NFL consumer preferences, which team owners and general managers are aware of and want to cater to by ensuring head coaches lead law-abiding teams. Moreover, leaders are responsible for instilling discipline within their organizations (Daboub et al., 1995; Lease, 2006; Litzky et al., 2006, Zahra et al., 2005), however, this finding indicates the need for instilling discipline for off-duty behaviors as well—especially because stakeholders outside the organization may be concerned with ethical behaviors of organizational actors (Lyons et al., 2016).

Deviance by subordinates within the workplace has varying effects on leader career outcomes. Penalty yards and player fines significantly increase the likelihood of head coach dismissal, whereas suspension weeks decrease the likelihood of head coach dismissal. More specifically, a one standard deviation increase in player fines results in a 21.7% increase in head coach dismissal likelihood, whereas a one standard deviation increase in suspension weeks results in a 20.9% decrease in dismissal likelihood. Though these three forms of deviance are all examples of workplace deviance, they are each unique forms of workplace deviance (Litzky et al., 2006, Robinson & Bennett, 1995).

The varying effects of workplace deviance on head coach dismissals could be a result of the different forms of workplace deviance (i.e., minor and serious) and the different types of punishments assessed by the league for different forms of workplace deviance (i.e., penalty yards, player fines, and player suspensions). As public awareness of deviance increased with media attention, NFL administrators placed increasing value on deterring conduct deemed detrimental to the league (Ambrose, 2007; Rose et al., 2007). Furthermore, there may be higher expectations of head coaches to instill an organizational culture conducive to the new emphasis on personal conduct (Ambrose, 2007; Rose et al., 2007). Therefore, head coaches of deviant

players are more likely to be dismissed, which is empirically supported by the positive relationships between head coach dismissals and both minor as well as serious workplace deviance, measured by penalty yards and player fines, respectively. However, the negative relationship between head coach dismissals and player suspensions contradicts the positive relationship between head coach dismissals and serious workplace deviance.

A possible explanation for the increased job retention of head coaches of teams with suspended players is that suspensions may have been used as an excuse for poor on-field performance (Palmer et al., 2015). In essence, the coaches were not able to use all their resources. More specifically, team owners and GMs may view suspensions as being excessive, unavoidable, or forgivable, thereby excusing poor organizational performance resulting from suspensions. The excuse for coaches not being able to utilize all their resources may also stem from these forms of deviance being less coachable, relative to forms of deviance such as incurring on-field penalties. Thus, head coaches may be able to forestall their dismissal by coaching deviant players who incur team punishments for serious workplace deviance. Furthermore, the policy of suspending deviant players may have unintended consequences allowing head coaches who are unwilling or unable to deter deviance within their organization to retain their positions. This unintended consequence could also lead to more deviant behavior if head coaches can use suspended players as excuses for poor performance.

In addition to interesting findings related to dismissals caused by deviant behavior, a couple interesting findings exist regarding control variables. Contrary to Foreman and Soebbing (2015) whom found a negative relationship between being a first-year head coach for a team and head coach dismissals, the present study finds an increase of dismissal risk by 241.2%, *ceteris paribus*. Because Foreman and Soebbing (2015) used a longer sample period (1978-2012), our

contradictory result may be indicative of a recent trend toward an increased willingness to dismiss head coaches within their first year of tenure. Another result contrary to previous literature pertains to potential racial discrimination. Though Madden and Ruther (2010) and Holmes (2011) found evidence of higher dismissal likelihoods for minority head football coaches, the present study's results are consistent with more recent findings from Foreman and Soebbing (2015) and Wangrow et al. (2017) whom found no statistically significant evidence of racial discrimination in the head coach dismissal decision.

6. Conclusion

The present study examined the effects of types of deviance on the risk of dismissal faced by the head coach before and after a policy change emphasizing personal conduct. The evidence from this study indicates deviance may have both positive and negative effects on dismissals depending on the type and timing of deviant behavior. ODD and minor workplace deviance increases the likelihood of head coach dismissal following the institutional emphasis on personal conduct. However, serious workplace deviance influences head coach retention decisions without respect to the institutional emphasis on personal conduct.

Though unaffected by the institutional emphasis on personal conduct, the effect of serious workplace deviance on head coach dismissals depends on the type of punishment assessed against deviant employees. When punishments for serious workplace deviance only adversely affected the individual responsible for the deviant behavior, the deviant behavior reduces the probability of job retention for the head coach. Thus, leaders are ultimately responsible for the deviant actions of their subordinates within and outside the workplace and the deviant actions of subordinates could result in adverse career outcomes for leaders.

However, in contrast to the relationship between deviant subordinate behavior and adverse career outcomes for leaders, a negative relationship exists between player suspensions and head coach dismissals. More specifically, when punishments for serious workplace deviance restricted a head coach's ability to utilize all available resources, head coaches experienced lower dismissal probabilities, suggesting player suspensions may be used as an excuse for poor organizational performance. Therefore, the policy of suspending deviant employees may have unintended consequences that can promote deviant behavior or allow head coaches unwilling or unable to instill a disciplined and rule-compliant organizational culture to retain their positions.

The present study provides a number of theoretical and practical implications. While dismissals have been of interest to many academic scholars within and outside sport, empirical challenges impede researchers to fully understanding the dismissal decisions. Though data limitations hindered many scholars from empirically testing the Fredrickson et al. (1988) dismissal model and introducing concerns regarding the validity of those studies (Foreman & Soebbing, 2015), the present study examines all four socio-political forces together with various deviance variables. The inclusion of deviance variables within the Fredrickson et al. (1988) model is important given the interplay between deviant behavior and the socio-political forces of dismissal (Khanna et al., 2015).

Another important reason to examine a comprehensive model of deviance and Fredrickson et al.'s (1988) four socio-political forces is to separate the effects of each due to the similarities in determinants of deviance (Daboub et al., 1995) and the four socio-political forces (Fredrickson et al., 1988). For example, studies in the corporate setting used firm size, which is a determinant of deviance (Daboub et al., 1995), to operationalize the availability of candidates to

replace an executive, as proposed by Fredrickson et al. (1988). The present study separates the deviance variables from the socio-political forces for a better understanding of both issues.

More specifically with respect to understanding the role of deviant behavior within organizations on the dismissal of organizational leaders, the present study develops an empirical test of the deviance-dismissal relationship. Similar to attempts of scholars to empirically test the full Fredrickson et al. (1988) dismissal model, scholars face data limitations when trying to understand the deviance-dismissal relationship (Lyons et al., 2016). However, the present study analyzes various types of deviant behavior within an organization, namely, (a) workplace deviance by management, (b) workplace deviance by employees, and (c) off-duty deviance. Knowing the causes of dismissal is the first step in understanding how successions effect organizations (Fee et al., 2006; Fredrickson et al., 1988) and knowing the causes and effects of institutional policies, such as the NFL PCP, can assist institutions in implementing and modifying their policies to create the most beneficial situation for the institutions.

The findings from the present study may be useful for league administrators and other institutional policy-makers. As it relates specifically to the NFL policy, the marginally significant findings related to off-field deviance are of particular interest given the league developed the policy primarily to deter deviant conduct off-the-field, and the institutional emphasis on personal conduct has extended to leader retention and dismissal decisions. Thus, organizations interested in deterring deviant behavior may benefit from instilling similar policies. However, policies which allow leaders of deviant employees to forestall their dismissal, such as suspensions of deviant employees, may not be optimal. Moreover, players and coaches may use the information in this study to understand how to advance in their careers and GMs and team

owners can benefit from understanding how to make optimal head coach dismissal and retention decisions.

The visibility of professional sports may affect the relationship between executive deviance and dismissals. However, we believe results of deviant behavior increasing dismissal likelihood within the NFL to be especially robust due to deviance-specific issues related to “locker room culture,” the promotion of violence, and the widespread media attention from numerous stakeholders (Coakley, 2015). Therefore, studies examining the effect of executive deviance on dismissals outside violent industries (e.g., NFL, military) may be even more likely to see a positive relationship between deviance and dismissals. A limitation of the present study was the fact fines were not separated into team fines and league fines, but combined which could be problematic in this study if teams fine their players in an attempt to establish a non-deviant culture. Similarly, we do not have data regarding actions taken after deviant acts, for example, if a coach or team rehabilitated or released a deviant player or coach.

The present study found player suspensions may be used as an excuse for poor performance, but that effect may dissipate as teams become more aware of signing players whom have engaged in misconduct (Palmer et al., 2015). Future research could examine the effect player deviance has on head coach dismissals when the head coach holds control over player personnel decisions. Future research could also examine how organizational performance following a succession differs for dismissals based on different types of deviant behavior. Due to the limitation in this study pertaining to unobserved coach reactions to deviant behavior, future research could examine how coaches react to deviance within their organizations and how their reactions mediate the executive deviance-dismissal relationship.

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Table 1

Summary Statistics (n=505)

Variable	Description	Mean	Std. Dev.	Min	Max	Median
DISMISS	Head coach is dismissed (1=dismissed)	0.176	0.381	0	1	0
GOODELL	Goodell's personal conduct policy in effect (1=in effect)	0.570	0.496	0	1	1
COACHFINE	Sum of coaching staff fines standardized by season	<0.001	0.744	-0.393	5.480	-0.177
PLAYERFINE	Sum of player fines standardized by season	<0.001	0.985	-1.275	5.249	-0.301
SUSPENSION	Sum of player suspension weeks standardized by season	0.001	0.928	-0.958	5.292	-0.240
LEGAL	Sum of legal incidents by players standardized by season	-0.003	0.979	-1.522	3.751	-0.284
PENALTY	Sum of penalty yards standardized by season	-0.004	0.988	-3.151	3.012	-0.071
PLAYOFFS	Head coach's career playoff wins less losses	0.537	2.425	-7	13	0
DIVISION	Head coach's career division wins less losses	3.350	9.161	-16	46	2
WINPCT	Team win percentage in observed season	0.502	0.193	0	1.000	0.500
WINPCT _{j-1}	Team win percentage in previous season	0.502	0.192	0	1.000	0.500
WINPCT _{j-2}	Team win percentage two seasons prior	0.501	0.193	0	1.000	0.500
WINPCT _{j-3→10}	Mean team win percentage from 3 to 10 seasons prior	0.497	0.106	0.125	0.789	0.500
COVERATS	Percent of games team covered against the spread	0.511	0.118	0.188	0.875	0.500
HCGMTOG	Years head coach and GM simultaneously employed by team	2.450	2.807	0	15	1
CANDPOOL	Estimated count candidates to replace head coach	7.626	1.868	5	11	7
NFLHCEXP	Years of NFL head coach experience	5.568	5.209	0	22	4
FIRSTYR	Head coach s in first year with team (1=first year)	0.214	0.410	0	1	0
AGE	Current age of head coach	51.123	6.783	32	69	51
MINORITY	Head coach is a visible minority (1=minority)	0.160	0.367	0	1	0

Table 2

Gompertz Distribution Parametric Hazard Model Results (Dependent Variable: DISMISS)

Variable	Hazard Ratio	Coefficient	Standard Error
GOODELL	1.165	-0.152	0.204
COACHFINE (H2)	1.095	0.091	0.071
COACHFINE*GOODELL (H1)	1.040	0.039	0.098
PENALTY (H3)	0.969	-0.031	0.095
PENALTY*GOODELL (H1)	1.450**	0.371**	0.167
PLAYERFINE (H3)	1.217***	0.197***	0.074
PLAYERFINE*GOODELL (H1)	1.028	0.027	0.108
SUSPENSION (H3)	0.791**	-0.235**	0.105
SUSPENSION*GOODELL (H1)	1.194	0.177	0.167
LEGAL (H4)	0.976	-0.025	0.056
LEGAL*GOODELL (H1)	1.145*	0.135*	0.072
PLAYOFFS	0.971	-0.029	0.058
DIVISION	0.978	-0.023	0.021
WINPCT	0.995	-0.005	0.498
WINPCT _{j-1}	0.928	-0.075	0.379
WINPCT _{j-2}	0.430***	-0.845***	0.265
WINPCT _{j-3→10}	0.526	-0.642	0.819
COVERSPREAD	0.983	-0.017	0.533
HCGMTOG	0.661***	-0.415***	0.068
CANDPOOL	0.994	-0.006	0.020
NFLHCEXP	0.942**	-0.060**	0.028
FIRSTYR	3.412***	1.227***	0.135
AGE	1.023*	0.023*	0.014
MINORITY	0.728	-0.318	0.358
SEASONCNT	0.842***	-0.172***	0.026
Constant	0.340	-1.078	0.894
γ	0.666***	0.666***	0.054

Note. Significance at 10% level denoted by *, 5% level denoted by **, and 1% level denoted by ***. Hypotheses are identified in parenthesis following each hypothesis's corresponding variable name.