



"Altercation" vs Extreme Physical Violence

[Ray Rice, a member of the Baltimore Ravens in the NFL](#), is waiting to learn what his punishment will be for violating the NFL's "personal conduct policy".

Rice's "misconduct" resulted in him being indicted for aggravated assault. Personally, I'm not entirely certain hitting a woman so hard she ends up unconscious and then dragging her off the list constitutes "misconduct" which should only result in suspension for a few games. I'm more of the: "domestic violence is a crime for which Rice should be punished with an extended period in prison and permanent exclusion from the NFL" side.

I'm certainly extremely angry at the dismissal of a physical assault within a relationship as an ["altercation"](#). Domestic violence is not an "altercation". It is a pattern of controlling and coercive behaviour which may include physical and sexual violence. It does not matter that Rice has since married Janay Palmer. He committed serious physical assault. Using the term "altercation" implies that Palmer was partly responsible for being assaulted and rendered unconscious.

I'm not surprised that the media is desperate to label domestic violence "an altercation". Hell, even the police arrested Palmer at the same time as they arrested Rice. Palmer was hit so hard she was left unconscious and then dragged from an elevator and yet the police felt comfortable arresting Palmer too; although they have since dropped the charges.

This is the reality of domestic violence, particularly when committed by celebrities. We minimise the seriousness of the crime. We pretend the victim was partly culpable for putting their face in the way of the perpetrator's fist. And, then, like with Ched Evans, we worry about whether or not some dude who kicks a football about a field will be allowed to play this season. We don't worry about the message we are sending to men: that domestic violence is completely normal. Or, that we tell women that even if they end up requiring hospital treatment, we'll arrest them too. And, then we wonder why women do not report.

How can women be expected to access help to keep them safe when we're more concerned about the perpetrator's football career than we are the safety of women.