Should Athletes be Allowed to Protest during the National Anthem?

An analysis of public opinions among U.S. adults

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Abstract

Using descriptive and multiple regression analyses of data from the National Sports and Society Survey ($N = 3,993$), this study examines public opinions about athletes' rights to protest during the national anthem. Results suggest that public opinion is now more supportive of athletes being allowed to protest during the anthem; although, considerable opposition persists. Black individuals and those who recognize racial/ethnic discrimination in society are especially likely to support the right of athletes to protest. Heterosexual, Christian, sports fan, and military identities seem to encourage opposition to the right to protest. Indicators of traditionalism and sports nationalism attitudes are also negatively associated with support for athlete protests.

Keywords: Athlete Protests; National Anthem; Sports Events; Race/ethnicity; Nationalism

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The structures, cultures, and interactions that surround sports-- and public opinions about them-- are worthy of rigorous empirical inquiries; they are symbolic and influential (Carrington, 2010; 2013; McDonald, 2020; Messner, 2002). In fact, sports offer cultural terrain for the negotiation of opinions, preferences, and understandings of these dynamics. These include negotiations over structural conditions, expectations for conduct, and how to interpret and react to what transpires in sports-related interactions (Bryant, 2018; Hartmann, 2019; Serazio & Thorson, 2020; Smith, 2019).

Nationalist meanings, identities, and rituals have been central to sport structures, cultures, and interactions. Indeed, overt, sacred, and normative rituals have entangled sports with nationalism. This entanglement has been heightened since September 11, 2001, as the U.S. responded to the devastating terrorism that occurred. Sacralized rituals and displays of patriotism, militarism, and a shared national identity have been standard in the two decades since. These have included honoring the American flag, standing at attention for the playing of the national anthem, and showing respect and appreciation for the service of military veterans (Bryant, 2018; Butterworth, 2020; Sirvent & Reyburn, 2017; Smith, 2019).

Disruptions to these sacred sports nationalist rituals have garnered great attention and engendered passionate responses. Traditionally, Black athletes have used these disruptions to call attention to racial/ethnic inequalities in America—particularly, by violating the norms of decorum during the playing of the national anthem (Bryant, 2018; Hartmann, 2019; Rounds, 2020). Recently, these dynamics have been subject to intense scrutiny because of the controversy and outrage that emerged in response to quarterback Colin Kaepernick's 2016 decision to begin

kneeling during the playing of the national anthem at NFL football games to protest racial/ethnic inequalities and especially police violence. There are long legacies of athlete protest actions and broader calls to address racial/ethnic inequalities. Yet, Kaepernick's protest became notably racialized and politicized, with the President of the United States, Donald Trump, weighing in. Trump called for protesters to "leave the country" and referred to Kaepernick as a "son of a bitch," among other insults. Consistent with the views of those who were disgusted by Kaepernick's actions and those of others who followed his model, Trump interpreted the protests as direct affronts to the country and the military. Further, he has denied the racialized or politicized aspects of the issue, tweeting "The issue of kneeling has nothing to do with race. It is about respect for our country, flag and national anthem, (the) NFL must respect this" (Beauchamp, 2017, p. 2; Bryant, 2018; Butterworth, 2020). In contrast, others have offered support for Kaepernick, been activated by his calls for reform, and viewed athlete protest actions during the national anthem as a social justice and human rights issue (Boykoff & Carrington, 2020; Intravia et al., 2018; 2019; Montez de Oca & Suh, 2020; Serazio & Thorson, 2020).

To better understand these processes and their implications, the present study utilizes new large-scale national data ($N = 3,993$) to examine the associations between U.S. adults' public opinions about athletes being allowed to protest during the playing of the national anthem and their social identities, social contexts, and related attitudes. In particular, we focus on race/ethnicity, (other) dominant statuses and identities, indicators of traditionalism, and beliefs about sports nationalism in shaping beliefs about athlete protests during the national anthem. This study advances previous research on public opinions about athlete protests that have mostly presented only descriptive results from public polling or presented interview findings from small numbers of respondents. In contrast, we use quantitative research methods to not only contribute

an additional set of descriptive results, but also more rigorously consider the potential influences of social structural and other contextual forces on public opinions about this issue. These include rarely considered attitudes about racial/ethnic discrimination and sports nationalism, as well as rarely studied identities linked to religious affiliations and military service—in addition to more typical indicators of background characteristics and political values (Intravia et al., 2018; 2019; Marist Poll, 2017; Montez de Oca & Suh, 2020; Smith, 2019; Serazio & Thorson, 2020).

Background

Sporting events, specifically in the U.S., include symbols and rituals associated with patriotism, militarism, and nationalism (Bryant, 2018; Butterworth, 2020; McDonald, 2020; Sirvent & Reyburn, 2017). The U.S. is unique in its celebration of sacred sports nationalism at the youth, scholastic, intercollegiate, and professional levels of sports; other countries typically only have national anthem rituals prior to international competitions (Beauchamp, 2017; Bryant, 2018; Serazio & Thorson, 2020). The U.S. flag, a focal point during the playing of the national anthem, is sanctified even over the shared memory of blood sacrifices; it is ever-present at American sporting events and its red, white and blue imagery is as commonly presented as the actions from the games themselves. Thus, many Americans see sports as a valued means of enhancing social connections and celebrating shared national histories and identities. In fact, these sentiments are often co-opted for marketing purposes (Bryant, 2018; Butterworth, 2020; Serazio & Thorson, 2020; Smith, 2019).

It is viewed as an American duty to show proper reverence and respect to the anthem, flag, and military within and outside of sporting events. If one fails to give “proper” respect to these symbols, there are negative sanctions that may include stigma, harsh words, and even physical encounters (Bryant, 2018; Hartmann, 2019; McDonald, 2020; Rounds, 2020; Sirvent &

Reyburn, 2017; Smith, 2019). Yet, somewhat paradoxically, sports are also treasured for providing an escape from politics as well as the monotony of everyday life. Thus, challenges to those respites and seemingly “apolitical” values have periodically raised the ire of many people (Bryant, 2018; Edwards, 2017; Hartmann, 2019; Intravia et al., 2018; 2019). Tamping down and even eliminating such challenges have served the political and economic agendas of those who want to avoid critical discussions about society, including the rationales for encouraging sacred sports nationalism (Bryant, 2018; Butterworth, 2020).

Nevertheless, repeatedly, iconic protests have occurred during national anthem ceremonies at sporting events (Bryant, 2018; Cooky & Antunovic, 2020; Rounds, 2020). Most famously, Tommie Smith and John Carlos raised black gloved fists at the 1968 Olympics in protest against antiblack racism, the neglect of poverty, and to recognize and support the Olympic Project for Human Rights movements (Bryant, 2018; Edwards, 2017; Hartmann, 2019). Recently, protests during the national anthem have become common as a result of the lead of San Francisco 49ers quarterback Colin Kaepernick. In 2016, Kaepernick started kneeling during national anthem ceremonies to protest racial/ethnic inequalities, and particularly antiblack police violence (Boykoff & Carrington, 2020; Bryant, 2018; Hartmann, 2019). Since then, other NFL players, as well as athletes in other sports at all levels of play, have also engaged in similar protest actions during the national anthem. In fact, Kaepernick’s protests have transcended the sports world and non-athletes, inside and outside of sports arenas, have supported and mimicked his symbolic call for change and helped to further antiracist work. Although, actually, a less famous protest during the national anthem by women’s basketball player Ariyana Smith intentionally built upon the Black Lives Matter movement and pre-dated Kaepernick’s protest (Cooky & Antunovic, 2020; Hartmann, 2019; Zaldivar, 2020).

These and other protest actions that have seemingly challenged the traditions and values of sacred sports nationalism have prompted discussion, support, outrage, and drastic sanctions. Few protests have engendered the amount of debate and discussion that protests during the national anthem have precipitated. The current and enhanced focus on athlete protests during the national anthem, within a historical context of Black athletes protesting against antiblack racism, makes the study of public opinion particularly important, as public opinion symbolizes cultural values but can also affect changes within sports and society. Indeed, the ripple effects of Kaepernick kneeling, on top of Black Lives Matter movement efforts, the killing of George Floyd, and backlash from Trumpism and traditionalists continue to play out in attitudes as well as behaviors (Butterworth, 2020; Hartmann, 2019; Serazio & Thorson, 2020; Zaldivar, 2020).

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework for this study highlights rhetorical entanglements, Critical Race Theory, and a sociological understanding of how structures, cultures, and interactions in sports are connected to power, identities, and attitudes. It begins by recognizing that sports experiences are frequently entangled with notions of sacred sports nationalism; that is, sports are interwoven with sacralized values and rituals that persuade us to communally sanctify love of country, appreciation and respect for the military, and the uniqueness and value of being American. In addition, sports act as sites for the negotiation and recognition of cultural citizenship (Author citation; Butterworth, 2020; Ong, 1996; Sirvent & Rayburn, 2017; Smith, 2019). Critical Race Theory (CRT) reminds us that racism is not only endemic to U.S. history, but it is also pervasive in the structures, cultural values, and interactions that we have—including in sports. Thus, cultural citizenship is traditionally and continually racialized, including in sports—with unequal implications. Related to this, awareness and concern about racial/ethnic

discrimination informs understandings of cultural citizenship and even sports nationalism processes. Consequently, racialized understandings of national identities, attributes of individuals, and sports interactions abound (Author citation; Butterworth, 2020; Cooper, 2019; Delgado & Stefancic, 2001; Hartmann, 2019; Kusz, 2018). Furthermore, (other) dominant social statuses, identities, and attitudes are entangled with sports experiences, understandings of sports nationalism, and race/ethnicity; thus, they are also important to recognize in their links to public opinions about athletes protesting during the national anthem (Author citation, Serazio & Thorson, 2020; Sirvent & Rayburn, 2017; Smith, 2019).

The Rhetorical Entanglement of Sports and Nationalism

Sacred sports nationalism is promoted through sports interactions, including through the presentation of the flag, singing of the national anthem, presentation of military personnel, and the communal respect, enthusiasm, and participation that surrounds these symbols and rituals. Sirvent and Rayburn's (2017) recognition of such rhetorical entanglement describes the persuasiveness of the process as a function of entwined tapestries of codes and symbols, combined with spectators' nearly unanimous, mimetic experiences of emotional arousal, so that it becomes difficult for individuals in the crowd to properly distinguish between the sports and nationalism enthusiasms. The "rhetorical" refers to an experience containing multiple rhetorics, or persuasive influences (verbal codes, visuals, personal experience) within a certain situation, while the "entanglement" indicates that the rhetorics are interwoven with one another and mutually reinforcing. Thus, our study's framework begins by noting that sports persuasively intertwine messages about patriotism, militarism, and national identities and sacralize them in an emotional and communal environment. Sacred sports nationalism becomes a visceral, affective,

and traditionalized experience; dissent is virtually unthinkable and is likely to be harshly sanctioned (McDonald, 2020; Rounds, 2020; Sirvent & Rayburn, 2017; Smith, 2019).

Consistent with the valuing of sacred sports nationalist values and rituals, public opinion polling has consistently offered descriptive statistics that indicate that most Americans disapprove of athlete protests during the national anthem. There is also some limited direct evidence from previous research that nationalist ideals influence public opinions about the issue. For example, an HBO/Marist Poll from 2016 ($N = 1,298$) reported that 52% of U.S. adults believed that pro sports leagues should mandate that players stand for the national anthem; 43% suggested that standing for the anthem should not be mandatory (Marist Poll, 2016). In 2017, a CNN/SRSS poll ($N = 1,037$) found that 49% of adult respondents felt that athletes who protested during the national anthem were doing the wrong thing, while 43% felt that they were doing the right thing. The poll found a much more even split in regard to whether or not players should be forced to stand during the anthem: 49% of respondents said that they should, while 47% said that they should not (Agiesta, 2017). Also in 2017, an updated version of the Marist poll ($N = 1,093$) found that 51% of U.S. adults now believed that athletes should not be required to stand for the national anthem, but 47% said that they should (Marist Poll, 2017). Yet, in January of 2018, the Public Religion Research Institute ($N = 1,010$) found that 60% of respondents agreed that professional athletes should be made to stand during the national anthem; 38% disagreed (PRRI, 2018). Also, in a 2018 Washington Post-Kaiser Family Foundation Poll ($N = 1,850$), 53% of Americans stated it was "never appropriate" to protest during the national anthem, in contrast to the 42% who indicated that it was "sometimes appropriate" (Clement & Guskin, 2018).

In terms of more direct evidence of the salience of nationalist ideals, Chaplin and Montez de Oca (2019) conducted in-depth interviews ($N = 32$) with undergraduate students and found a

nearly even split between those who supported and opposed the protests. Those who were opposed frequently cited being upset with the denigration of nationalist ideals. That is, they felt that the nation's history and institutions deserved reverence and deference and that the athletes who were protesting disrespected the work and sacrifice that went into creating a national heritage. Similarly, Intravia et al. (2018) found that a measure of self-reported patriotism was negatively associated with support for athletes kneeling in protest in their survey ($N = 294$) of Criminal Justice and Criminology undergraduate students at one Midwestern university. Thus, there is some evidence that substantial opposition exists in regard to athletes protesting during the national anthem. Also, perceptions of sacred sports nationalism appear to encourage resistance to viewing the athlete protests as acceptable.

Cultural Citizenship and Critical Race Theory (CRT)

Sports experiences are entangled with processes that establish cultural citizenship. That is, they reflect and negotiate cultural citizenship statuses—frequently offering evidence of racial/ethnic prejudice and discrimination and occasionally providing the means for challenging and even changing how people are valued in society (Bryant, 2018; Ong, 1996; Serazio & Thorson, 2020). In fact, this process is also connected to sacred sports nationalism because U.S. national identities, and historical exertions of power and exploitation, highlight the primacy of Whiteness (Bonilla-Silva et al., 2006; Hochschild, 2016; Kusz, 2018; Lapchick, 2019; Marti, 2020; Newman & Giardina, 2011).

Critical Race Theory (CRT) is especially useful in understanding cultural citizenship and the racialization of public opinions about athlete protests. Even when claims of colorblindness emerge, it is inescapable that individual and structural racism, racialized experiences, and racialized understandings are at play (Bonilla-Silva, et al., 2006; Carrington, 2010; Hylton,

2008). Thus, negotiations and recognitions of cultural citizenship and even the formations and expressions of public opinions are racialized processes of power (Author citation; Carrington, 2013; Hylton, 2008; Ong, 1996). Specifically, the present study is informed by the following CRT tenets: a) racism has been permanent and endemic to U.S. structures, cultures, and interactions (Carrington, 2013; Hylton, 2008), b) Whiteness as property norm indicates the racist origins of White power that were tied to property rights, the subsequent rights (e.g., rights of disposition, use and enjoyment, reputation and status, exclusion of others) that become a property of Whiteness, and the naturalization of White privileges and control that have emerged (Cooper, 2019; Harris, 1993), c) voices of color are neglected; for example, counter storytelling and experiential knowledge are frequently minimized and dismissed (Delgado & Stafancic, 2001; Delgado Bernal, 2002), and d) commitments to social justice are essential (Cooper, 2019; Delgado & Stafancic, 2001; Delgado Bernal, 2002). These tenets inform expectations for predicting public opinions about athletes protesting during the national anthem.

Proceeding from this, a CRT perspective emphasizes that athlete protests during the national anthem have traditionally been antiracist actions conducted by Black athletes seeking greater recognition of and actions against antiblack racism (Bryant, 2018; Edwards, 2017; Rounds, 2020). Indeed, these have been necessary commitments to social justice amid endemic racial/ethnic inequalities, antiblack racism, neglect of voices of color, and a continued lack of full cultural citizenship for Nonwhites. Athlete protest actions are rare, symbolic, and influential means to challenge White control of institutions, national identities, and cultural ideologies (Bryant, 2018; Edwards, 2017; Hartmann, 2019; Rounds, 2020). Thus, public opinions about athlete protests during the national anthem are likely to be most approving among Black and other Nonwhite individuals.

Furthermore, a CRT perspective notes that sports are perceived to be meritocratic, apolitical, and race-neutral—and thus a likely setting for colorblind racism to flourish (Author citation; Bonilla-Silva, 2003; Butterworth, 2020; Cooper, 2019; Edwards, 2017). Those who can afford and perhaps prefer to ignore or neglect racial/ethnic inequalities become upset when sports become “political” by challenging dominant ideologies about equality, post-racialism, and “real Americans.” The expression of discontent with protests against antiblack racism is a preference for the maintenance of this racism. Backlash is sure to follow, as it always has, when White superiority, privilege, power, and control are challenged (Bryant, 2018; Carrington, 2010; Cooper, 2019; Hylton, 2008; Kusz, 2018; Rounds, 2020; Serazio & Thorson, 2020).

Thus, we anticipate that White, compared to Nonwhite and especially Black, racial/ethnic identities are especially likely to encourage colorblind racism and disapproval of athlete protests during the national anthem. In addition, we expect that recognition of broader racial/ethnic discrimination in society is indicative of an awareness of the need to address racial/ethnic inequalities in sports and society.

Previous public opinion polls and more in-depth social science research have consistently found stark differences in opinions about athlete protests during the national anthem, according to respondents' race/ethnicity, with a focus on Black-White differences. Predominantly, these studies have found higher levels of support for athlete protests among Black individuals and especially low levels of support among White individuals—although there is also some evidence that Latinx adults are more approving of athlete protests than White adults, too. In addition, there is some evidence that beliefs about racial/ethnic discrimination are predictive of public opinions about athlete protests.

For example, the 2016 Marist study reported that 56% of White U.S. adults indicated that athletes should be required to stand for the national anthem; in contrast, most Latinx (i.e., 56%) and a plurality of Black (i.e., 48%) adults believed that athletes should not be required to stand. One year later, the Marist poll results found nearly identical results for White and Latinx adults, but skyrocketing (i.e., 76%) support for the rights of athletes to not stand for the national anthem among Black adults (Marist Poll, 2017). In 2018, the PRRI survey reported a similarly substantial Black-White split in approval of the rights of athletes to protest during the national anthem: 2/3 of White individuals thought that athletes should be required to stand, but less than 30% of Black individuals agreed. The Washington Post-Kaiser Family Foundation Poll similarly reported that 69% of African Americans believed that athlete protests during the national anthem were acceptable, compared to 58% of White and 54% of Latinx respondents who believed that they were never acceptable (Clement & Guskin, 2018).

More rigorous social science research, using multiple regression analyses that also accounted for an array of background characteristics, political beliefs, and sports fandom, further indicates the salience of race/ethnicity in shaping public opinions about athlete protests during the national anthem. Intravia et al. (2018) found that Black individuals were consistently more likely than Nonblack individuals to agree with the protests; in a related study, with a similar sample, Intravia et al. (2019) found the same patterns of support along racial/ethnic lines for Nike associating with and sponsoring Kaepernick. Intravia et al. (2018; 2019) also reported some evidence that suggests that a recognition of racial/ethnic discrimination encourages support for athlete protests; that is, they found that support for the Rooney Rule in the NFL, which requires interviewing racial/ethnic minority candidates for coaching hire openings, was positively associated with supporting athlete protests during the national anthem as well as Nike's support

for Kaepernick. Consistent with these results, Chaplin and Montez de Oca (2019) observed that White students were highly influenced by their racial/ethnic social positions and attitudes—but that they did not have the ability to articulate how their common opposition to athlete protests was wrapped up in their racialized experiences and White privilege.

(Other) Dominant Statuses, Identities, and Traditionalism

Other dominant statuses, identities, and attitudes are likely to be influential to public opinion because of the impacts of social structure, culture, and interactions in our lives (Author citation; Marti, 2020; Messner, 2002). Even beyond the influence of racial/ethnic inequalities, social statuses that are linked to gender and sexuality matter in sports and society. That is, both have been dominated by heterosexual (White) men, such that the status quo is expected to uphold and value heteronormativity and the power and expertise of men in sports and society.

Combined, this suggests that sports are sites that are replete with a White, hegemonically masculine habitus (Bonilla-Silva, et al., 2006; Cooky & Antunovic, 2020; Kusz, 2018; Messner, 2002). Consequently, the individuals who occupy these statuses may be especially comfortable and inclined to uphold the status quo—and view athlete protests as destabilizing.

Social structures, cultures, and interactions also shape (other) identities and attitudes that may predict public opinions about athletes protesting during the national anthem (Intravia et al., 2018; 2019; Marti, 2020; Messner, 2002). Religious and military service identities may be influential because of their strong in-group identities and connections to the valuing of sports and sacred sports nationalism. In addition, sports fandom and indicators of traditionalism may be linked to public opinions about athlete protests during the national anthem. By definition, sports fandom is associated with a passion for sports and immersion in the sacred sports nationalism ideals and rituals that are presented. Also, traditionalism is associated with nostalgia and

reverence for the myths of the past, especially about the history of our nation, as well as a resistance to changing the status quo (Jost et al., 2003; Johnson & Tamney, 2001; Marti, 2020; Serazio & Thorson, 2020).

First, religious affiliations may shape public opinions about protests during the national anthem. American sports have often been referred to as ‘organized religion’ and complementary to beliefs about American exceptionalism, which is defined as a mythic belief that God has entrusted the United States with a mission to civilize and democratize the rest of the planet (Butterworth, 2020; Sirvent & Reyburn, 2017). In the U.S., Christians have tended to naturalize and normalize their cultural citizenship and influence through their cultural practices, beliefs, and norms—including through sports (Hawzen & Newman, 2017; Newman & Giardina, 2011; Tranby & Hartmann, 2008). Thus, Christian practices and identities are prevalent in sports, as well as society and are increasingly activated as part of a national identity for many. Christian identities seem to especially encourage a view of sports as a sacred space, entangle religious identities with beliefs about sacred sport nationalism, and associate Whiteness with proper citizenship. Not following these norms and disrespecting sacred symbols is akin to insulting God (Butterworth, 2020; Hawzen & Newman, 2017; Newman & Giardina, 2011; Sirvent & Reyburn, 2017). Consequently, we anticipate that Christian religious affiliations will especially encourage disapproval of athlete protests during the national anthem.

Since militarism is so entangled with sports, military service may also shape public opinions about athlete protests. American sport, throughout its history, has functioned to legitimize militarism while also making it visible, appealing, and patriotic. In fact, televised sport in the U.S. routinely invokes militaristic and patriotic themes as if they are intrinsically democratic simply because they are American (Butterworth, 2020; Serazio & Thorson, 2020).

Military service is further identified with sacred sports nationalism in the celebration of sports among military service members, the respect and adoration given to military veterans at sporting events, and the integration of military terms and symbols within sports (Butterworth, 2020; Sirvent & Reyburn, 2017). Thus, although many military veterans recognize their service as sacrifices for American rights and freedoms, such as the right of free speech, we anticipate the military veteran identities are likely to encourage opposition to athlete protests during the national anthem, on balance.

Sports fandom may also encourage resistance to athlete protests. By definition, sports fans are passionate about sport and may see athlete protests as hampering their enjoyment. Furthermore, as common consumers of the sacred nationalist productions of sports, they may be more likely to tacitly approve, if not become more attached to, nationalist rituals presented within sports compared to those who are not sports fans (Butterworth, 2020; Serazio & Thorson, 2020; Smith, 2019). Thus, we expect that sports fandom will encourage resistance to athlete protests during the national anthem.

Finally, traditionalism, or a resistance to change and nostalgia for the past, may also influence attitudes towards athlete protests during the national anthem. Traditionalism encourages nostalgic and fiercely loyal connections to sacred sports nationalism and its symbols and rituals (Bryant, 2018; Butterworth, 2020; Newman & Giardina, 2011). Most obviously, it also encourages resistance to challenges to the status quo (Bryant, 2018; Jost et al., 2003; Serazio & Thorson, 2020). Traditionalism has tended to boost more restrictive views of cultural citizenship based on centuries of racial/ethnic inequalities and comfort with White people predominating in positions of power and influence (Butterworth, 2020; Edwards, 2017; Hochschild, 2016; Kusz, 2018). Thus, indicators of traditionalism such as being older, having

attained less education, living in a rural area, and self-identifying as more conservative may motivate opposition, and even backlash, to athletes protesting during the national anthem (Hartmann, 2019; Hochschild, 2016; Intravia et al., 2018; 2019; Johnson & Tamney, 2001).

Again, there is some evidence from public opinion polls and more rigorous social science research to support these expectations. In terms of gender and sexuality, Chaplin and Montez de Oca (2019) and Montez de Oca and Suh (2020) situate opposition to the athlete protests during the national anthem as a function of patriarchal and heterosexist cultures and institutions within sports and society. Relatedly, men were less likely than women to endorse Nike's support and sponsorship of Kaepernick—although there was also some evidence that men were more supportive of athlete protests, compared to women, but only after taking into account political, racial, and sports fandom attitudes (Intravia et al., 2018; 2019).

Although religious and military identities have been rarely studied in regard to public opinions about athlete protests during the national anthem, there is evidence of strong connections between Christianity and its entanglement with the sacredness of sports, nationalist identities, and their confluence in sacred sports nationalism (Hawzen & Newman, 2016; Marti, 2020; Newman & Giardina, 2011; Tranby & Hartmann, 2008). The controversy over athlete protests during the national anthem has centered military veterans and their service as reasons for both support and opposition; that is, protests have been discussed as both insulting to the military and as an extension of military sacrifices that have allowed free speech opportunities. Generally, perceived disrespect for the military is cited as a major reason for opposing athlete protests; this was a continual theme in previous research and acknowledged by over 60% of U.S. adults in a 2017 AP-NORC poll (AP-NORC, 2017; Chaplin & de Oca, 2019; Montez de Oca & Suh, 2020). Yet, 62% of military veterans ($N = 8,000$) said NFL players have a right to protest during a

game, although nearly 40% of the veterans reported that they would stop watching the NFL because of the protests, according to a poll conducted by the non-partisan Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans of America (Feldscher, 2017). Indeed, how sports fans might react to athlete protests has been an understudied and unclear issue as well. Intravia et al. (2018; 2019) did not find evidence of sports fandom being a significant predictor of public opinion about athlete protests, in their research.

Much more consistent findings exist about the extent to which indicators of traditionalism predict public opinions about athlete protests during the national anthem. Age and conservatism have been consistently and negatively associated with support for athlete protests in public opinion polling results (Marist, 2017; PRRI, 2018). In addition, Intravia et al. (2018; 2019) offer more rigorous evidence of the implications of self-reported conservatism along these lines in their work. Education has been linked to recognizing that police violence, as opposed to more general grievances, have motivated recent athlete protests (PRRI, 2018).

Hypotheses

Overall, our conceptual framework and previous research lead to the following:

- H1. There will be considerable opposition, and overall mixed support, for athletes having the right to protest during the national anthem. In general, thinking that sports teach nationalism (i.e., love of country, respect for the military, and Americanism) will be positively associated with opposition to allowing athletes to protests.*
- H2. Race/ethnicity will be integral to understanding public opinions about athlete protests during the national anthem. That is, racial/ethnic identities will be associated with public opinions such that Nonwhite, and especially Black, adults will be more supportive of the right to protest during the national anthem, compared to White adults. In addition,*

recognition of racial/ethnic discrimination in society will encourage support for athletes to have the right to protest.

H3. (Other) dominant statuses and in-group identities will also shape public opinions about athletes having a right to protest during the national anthem. Specifically, identifying as male, heterosexual, and (more of) a sports fan will be positively associated with opposition to believing that athletes have a right to protest. In addition, compared to having no religious affiliation, identifying as a Christian is expected to be positively associated with opposition to allowing athletes to protest. Also, military service is expected to be positively associated with opposition to athlete protests.

H4. Traditionalism will also encourage resistance to allowing national anthem protests. Thus, indicators of traditionalism such as age, rurality, lower levels of education, and self-reported conservatism will be positively associated with opposition to allowing athletes to protest during the national anthem protests.

Method

Data are derived from the National Sports and Society Survey (NSASS), a landmark new survey of U.S. adults' ($N = 3,993$) sports involvement experiences, public opinions about sports-related issues, and indicators of well-being and other means of social participation apart from sports. The sample for the NSASS was drawn from the American Population Panel (APP), a panel of over 20,000 survey volunteers that was created by the Center for Human Resource Research (CHRR), a long-established survey research organization. Invitations to take the NSASS were sent during Fall of 2018 through Spring of 2019 to APP members whose birth years were 21-65 years ago until a quota of 4,000 respondents was obtained. Respondents took the NSASS online and were paid \$35 for their participation. CHRR aided in the development of

the survey instrument, the data collection, and the data documentation. NSASS respondents are disproportionately White, female, and Midwestern. Therefore, the data are frequently weighted to provide more accurate descriptive estimates for all U.S. adults.

The primary sample for the present study consists of the NSASS respondents ($N = 3,658$) who offered substantive answers to a survey question about athlete protests during the national anthem. “Don’t Know” ($N = 201$) responses are included for descriptive purposes, only ($N = 3,859$); the analyses disregard the respondents ($N = 134$) who did not answer the question at all. Multiple imputation with chained equations over ten imputations is used to address the modest amounts of missing data on the predictor variables.

Measures

Descriptive statistics for all variables used in the analyses are displayed in Table 1. The dependent variable is based on responses to the statement: “Athletes should not be allowed to protest during the playing of the national anthem.” Response options (1 = *strongly disagree*; 4 = *strongly agree*) are coded to indicate respondents’ strength of agreement that athletes should not be allowed to protest.

(Table 1 about here)

The primary independent variables include race/ethnicity, (other) dominant statuses and identities, and indicators of traditionalism. Racial/ethnic identity is measured with a series of dummy variables that indicate identifying as: a) White only (reference category), b) Black, c) (Nonblack) Latinx, or d) an other racial/ethnic identity. Beliefs about racial/ethnic discrimination are also used in the analysis. Recognition of racial/ethnic discrimination (1 = *strongly disagree*; 4 = *strongly agree*) comes from responses to the statement, “On average, non-whites have worse

jobs, income, and housing than white people. Do you think these differences are mainly due to discrimination?"

(Other) dominant statuses and identities that are central to the study hypotheses include gender, sexuality, religious affiliation, military veteran status, and sports fandom. Gender (1 = *male*) and sexuality (1 = *heterosexual*) are dichotomous variables. Religious affiliation is measured with a series of dummy variables that indicate: a) no religious affiliation (reference category), b) a Christian religious affiliation, or c) an other religious affiliation. Military veteran status (1 = *yes*) is a dichotomous variable formed from answers to the question: "Have you ever served in the military?" Finally, sports fandom (0 = *not at all*; 4 = *very much so*) is an ordinal variable formed from responses to the question: "Are you a sports fan?"

Indicators of traditionalism include age, rurality, education, and conservatism. Age is a continuous variable. Rurality (1 = *yes*) is one of a series of dummy variables that indicates where one lives, based on the question: "Is your neighborhood in a large city, a suburb near a large city, a small city or town, or a rural area?" The other dummy variables (1 = *yes*) reference living in a large city (reference category), a suburb, or a small city or town. Educational attainment also consists of a series of dummy variables that indicate a) a high school or less, b) some college, or c) a college (reference category) education. Self-reported conservatism (1 = *very liberal*; 5 = *very conservative*) is based on responses to the question, "In terms of politics, do you consider yourself...?" Finally, sports nationalism is a scale ($\alpha = .81$) that is formed by averaging responses (1 = *strongly disagree*; 4 = *strongly agree*) to statements about the extent to which respondents agree that sports teaches patriotism, respect for the military, and a national identity. Specifically, the questions asked: a) "In general, sports teach people to love their country," b) "In

general, sports teach respect for the military,” and c) “In general, American sports teach people how to be Americans.”

Finally, control variables include additional measures of socioeconomic status, family contexts, and region. Household income (coded in \$10,000s, up to 15) and paid employment status (1 = *yes*) reflect SES. Marital status consists of a series of dummy variables that indicate whether one is currently: a) married, b) cohabiting, or c) single (reference category). Number of children indicates the number of one's own, or a partner's, children who live in the household. Finally, region indicates the Census region that one lives in: a) West (reference category), b) Midwest, c) South, or d) Northeast.

Analytic Strategy

The analytic strategy for this study first consists of describing public opinion on athletes protesting during the national anthem. Then, we apply post-stratification weighting to present more representative estimates of U.S. adults' public opinions; that is, we weight NSASS respondents' reports based on the 2018 American Community Survey summary demographics for U.S. adults ages 20-64 years old, according to their age, gender, race, education, work status, marital status, income, and region. Next, we use ordinal logistic regressions of public opinions about athletes protesting during the national anthem to test our remaining hypotheses. Because of endogeneity concerns, we first focus upon a model that only contains ascribed and background characteristics. Then, we add more voluntary group statuses and identities that may socially structure public opinions. Finally, we assess model estimates after the inclusion of attitudes that may further distinguish public opinions about athlete protests, after considering how background characteristics and dominant group statuses and identities matter.

Results

As shown in Table 1, NSASS respondents are generally in favor of athletes having the right to protest during the national anthem. That is, the mean response reflects that they “somewhat disagree” that athletes should not be allowed to protest, after disregarding the “Don’t Know” responses. More precisely, consistent with Hypothesis 1 that anticipated considerable opposition to allowing athletes to protest and overall mixed support, 26% of NSASS respondents reported that they “strongly agree” and 8% reported that they “somewhat agree” that athletes should not be allowed to protest (results not shown); 9% indicated that they “somewhat disagree,” 51% suggested that they “strongly disagree,” and 5% answered that they “Don’t Know.” As displayed in Figure 1, after weighting these responses to better approximate the U.S. adult population, the descriptive results remain similar, but slightly less supportive; that is, 28% of U.S. adults are estimated to strongly agree, 10% to somewhat agree, 10% to somewhat disagree, and 47% to strongly disagree with the sentiment that athletes should not be allowed to protest during the playing of the national anthem (5% are estimated to respond that they “Don’t Know”).

(Figure 1 about here)

We now turn to the regression results, which are displayed in Table 2. The focus in Model 1 is on the extent to which racial/ethnic identities and other ascribed or background characteristics that are thought to be indicative of dominant statuses and identities, and traditionalism, are associated with public opinions about athletes being allowed to protests during the national anthem. As predicted by Hypothesis 2, compared to identifying as White (only), identifying as Black ($b = -0.85, p < .001, OR = .43$) is positively associated with supporting the right of athletes to protest during the national anthem. That is, the odds ratio suggests that Black adults’ odds of strongly agreeing that athletes should not be allowed to

protest during the national anthem, versus answering some other way, are only 43% as large as the odds of White adults doing so (the odds ratio also indicates the comparative odds of answering some other way, compared to strongly disagreeing; that is, Black adults are also more likely to “strongly disagree”). Also, as suggested by Hypothesis 3, there is evidence that identifying as heterosexual ($b = 1.16, p < .001, OR = 3.20$) is positively associated with believing that athletes should not be allowed to protest, compared to identifying as a sexual minority; the odds of heterosexuals strongly agreeing that athletes should not be allowed to protests are more than three times as large as the odds for self-identified sexual minorities doing so. Finally, as anticipated by Hypothesis 4, indicators of traditionalism such as age ($b = 0.02, p < .001, OR = 1.02$), lower levels of education ($b = 0.91, p < .001, OR = 2.48$ for high school or less; $b = 0.52, p < .001, OR = 1.68$ for some college), and rurality ($b = 0.46, p < .001, OR = 1.59$) are also positively associated with strongly agreeing that athletes should not be allowed to protest. That is, each year of age, having a high school or less education or some college as compared to having a college education, and residing in a rural area as opposed to in a large city, are each positively associated with believing that athletes should not be allowed to protest. Unexpectedly, however, Model 1 suggests that Latinx adults ($b = 0.43, p < .001, OR = 1.54$) are more likely than White adults to believe that athletes should not be allowed to protest—which is the opposite of what was anticipated by Hypothesis 1. As estimates from the successive models suggest, though, this seems to be a function of voluntary group statuses and identities and this racial/ethnic difference disappears in successive model estimates.

(Table 2 about here)

As shown in Model 2, more voluntary group statuses and identities seem to further explain variations in public opinions about athletes protesting during the national anthem. In

particular, as suggested by Hypothesis 3, sports fandom, religious affiliations, and military service appear to shape public opinions about athlete protests. For example, sports fandom ($b = 0.16, p < .001, OR = 1.15$) and military service ($b = 0.71, p < .001, OR = 2.02$) are positively associated with believing that athletes should not be allowed to protests. In addition, the odds that Christians ($b = 1.50, p < .001, OR = 4.47$) strongly agree that athletes should not be allowed to protest during the national anthem are nearly 4.5x those of the religiously unaffiliated. Besides the aforementioned dissolution of the racial/ethnic difference between White and Latinx adults' responses in Model 2, there are only generally modest changes in the previously reported significant differences between the factors highlighted in Model 1—suggesting that they remain similarly salient in predicting public opinions, after additionally considering voluntary group statuses and identities in Model 2.

Finally, as shown in Model 3, attitudinal indicators are further considered as potential explanatory factors in predicting public opinions about athletes protesting during the national anthem. Based on Hypothesis 1's suggestion that opposition to athlete protests is encouraged by sports nationalism, we expected that a measure of sports nationalism would be positively associated with the opinion that athletes should not be allowed to protest during the national anthem. Also, based on Hypothesis 2's focus on race/ethnicity, we anticipated that recognitions of racial/ethnic discrimination would encourage support for the rights of athletes to protest during the national anthem. Finally, based on Hypotheses 4's emphasis on traditionalism, we assumed that self-reported conservatism would be positively associated with agreeing that athletes should not be allowed to protest. We find support for each of these expectations; sports nationalism ($b = 0.46, p < .001, OR = 1.59$) and conservatism ($b = 0.77, p < .001, OR = 2.16$) are positively associated with opposition to allowing college athletes to protest during the national

anthem, while recognition of racial/ethnic discrimination ($b = -0.53$, $p < .001$, OR = 0.59) is negatively associated with opposition to allowing college athletes to protest. Furthermore, with the exception of sports fandom's association with public opinions about athlete protests becoming overwhelmed, all other reported significant associations that are present in Model 2 persist in Model 3.

Discussion

This study sought to better understand public opinions about athletes' right to protest during the playing of the national anthem during sporting events. Specifically, we focused on whether or not U.S. adults think that athletes should not be allowed to protest—and how race/ethnicity, (other) dominant statuses and identities, traditionalism, and beliefs about sports nationalism shape public opinions. Below, we revisit our hypotheses and contextualize our findings.

First, we anticipated that there would be substantial resistance, but overall mixed support, for athletes protesting during the national anthem. Also, because we expected that the resistance would be a function of support for sacred sports nationalism, we hypothesized that a general belief that sports encourage nationalism (e.g., teach people to love their country, respect the military, how to be uniquely American) would be positively associated with wanting to disallow athletes from protesting during the national anthem. In fact, there was evidence of substantial resistance and mixed support for athletes protesting during the national anthem; about 60% of NSASS respondents supported the right of athletes to protest during the national anthem—still, about 1/3 of them suggested that athletes should not be allowed to protest. Weighted estimates suggested that U.S. adults, more generally, are slightly less supportive—nearly 40% were estimated to believe that athlete protests during the national anthem should not be allowed.

Furthermore, NSASS respondents' beliefs about sports nationalism were positively associated with their opposition to athlete protests, as expected. Together, these findings provide new quantitative survey research evidence that athlete protests during the playing of the national anthem continue to be controversial; also, that those who believe that sports teach nationalism are particularly likely to be offended by athlete protests that can be seen to disrespect sacred sports nationalism. Previous research has tended to focus on either White nationalism or concerns about racial/ethnic inequalities as important factors that may shape attitudes about protests during the national anthem (Intravia et al., 2018; 2019; Montez de Oca & Suh, 2020; Smith, 2019). The findings of this study suggest that sports nationalism beliefs further distinguish opinions about athletes' right to protest during the national anthem even after statistically accounting for adults' racial/ethnic identities, their views about racial/ethnic inequalities, and the relevance of other important predictors of attitudes about athlete protests.

Second, we hypothesized that race/ethnicity would be linked to public opinions about athletes protesting during the national anthem. In particular, we anticipated that racial/ethnic minority identities, and especially identifying as Black, and the recognition of racial/ethnic inequalities in society would encourage support for the ability of athletes to protest during the national anthem. Identifying as Black, compared to White, and recognizing that racial/ethnic inequalities in status attainment are largely due to discrimination were negatively associated with believing that athletes should not be allowed to protest, as hypothesized. Unexpectedly, identifying as Latinx was initially positively associated with thinking that athletes should not be allowed to protest, but this relationship disappeared after taking into account religious group memberships and military service. It may be that religiosity disproportionately encourages Latinx adults to sacralize the sports rituals that encourage nationalism and follow their protocols.

Regardless, in sum, the race/ethnicity findings reinforce that athlete protests during the national anthem is a racialized issue and suggest that Black experiential knowledge and identities, and more general understandings of broader systems of racial/ethnic inequalities, encourage support for the ability of athletes to protest during the national anthem—protests that have typically focused upon addressing antiblack racism and state violence (Bryant, 2018; Hartmann, 2019; Intravia et al., 2019; Montez de Oca & Suh, 2020; Rounds, 2020).

Third, we hypothesized that (other) dominant statuses and identities would further shape support for the ability of athletes to protest during the national anthem. That is, beyond expectations that White identities would encourage a suppression of protests (e.g., as shown in Model 1 of Table 2), we anticipated that the patriarchal, heteronormative cultures of sports and society would lead especially those who identify as heterosexual and as men to resist disruptions to the status quo, wherein heterosexual men wield the most power and influence. Furthermore, Christian, military, and sports fandom identities were expected to discourage support for athletes having a right to protest during the national anthem.

In fact, there was consistent evidence of heterosexual identities encouraging opposition to protests; gender did not seem to matter, however. Also, there was empirical support for each of the hypothesized associations involving Christian, military, and sports fandom identities and beliefs about athletes' right to protest-- although the sports fandom association later became overwhelmed and nonsignificant as a result of the additional considerations of sports nationalism, conservatism, and racial/ethnic discrimination attitudes (i.e., Model 3 of Table 2 results), which suggests that the relationship between sports fandom and opinions about protests during the national anthem is partially a function of these attitudes. Overall, these findings support the expectation that traditional sources of power and identity, such as being heterosexual

and Christian in America, encourage resistance to protests during the playing of the national anthem, that attempt to challenge the longstanding status quo of White, heteronormative, Christian dominance in the control and organization of sports and society. Identifying as a military veteran was also expected to be associated with resistance to allowing athletes to protest, although this prediction may be more controversial because of the purposive respect shown to the military by Kaepernick in his decision to kneel instead of stand during the anthem—and the outpouring of support for Kaepernick and other players, by many military veterans (Bryant, 2018; Hartmann, 2019; Intravia et al., 2019; Kusz, 2018; Montez de Oca & Suh, 2020; Newman & Giardina, 2011; Serazio & Thorson, 2020). Nonetheless, on average, military and sports fandom identities also seem to encourage resistance to allowing athletes to protest during the playing of the national anthem.

Finally, we hypothesized that traditionalism would be positively associated with agreeing that athletes should not be allowed to protest during the national anthem. In particular, we anticipated that age, lower levels of education, rurality, and conservatism would encourage resistance to allowing athletes to protest. In fact, there was consistent support for each of these indicators of traditionalism being positively associated with believing that athletes should not be allowed to protest. These findings suggest that traditionalism encourages not only resistance to change—such as the change that is periodically requested by athlete protesters-- and support for the status quo, but also specific disruptions to the traditional rituals of sacred sports nationalism, such as conformity to the norms of conduct during the playing of the national anthem. In fact, traditionalism is also frequently entangled with authoritarian expectations for conformity (Bryant, 2018; Hartmann, 2019; Intravia et al., 2019; Johnson & Tamney, 2001; Montez de Oca & Suh, 2020). It is also associated with a comfort with traditionally White power structures and

Nonwhite, and especially antiblack, resentment (Bryant, 2018; Butterworth, 2020; Cooper, 2019; Intravia et al., 2019; Kusz, 2018; Montez de Oca & Suh, 2020; Newman & Giardina, 2011).

Overall, this study offers compelling evidence of the extent to which social structures, cultures, and interactions encourage the prioritization of conformity to the expected absence of notable dissent during national anthem sports rituals that are entangled with messages of patriotism, militarism, and nationalism. As our conceptual framework emphasizes, these rhetorical entanglements are so naturalized and persuasive that many people do not view them as political and even treat them as sacred. Regardless, sports offer cultural terrain for the construction and negotiation of these rhetorical entanglements (Boykoff & Carrington, 2020; Butterworth, 2020; Montez de Oca & Suh, 2020; Serazio & Thorson, 2020).

As part of these processes, and in other sports and society interactions, cultural citizenship is continually being (re)established and sometimes challenged. Occasional acts of dissent during the playing of the national anthem during sporting events, such as refusing to stand, have traditionally been particularly symbolic and controversial attempts to challenge cultural citizenship statuses and to bring attention to the need for antiracist actions and social justice. CRT reminds us that racism and racial/ethnic inequalities are endemic and pervasive in the U.S. Also, a Whiteness as property norm has enabled and naturalized the ability of those who are White to maintain power, exclude others from full cultural citizenship, and continually neglect and criticize particularly voices-of-color that have sought antiracist social changes. Indeed, these processes have been apparent in the reactions and (mis)understandings of athlete protests during the national anthem (Boykoff & Carrington, 2020; Butterworth, 2020; Cooper, 2019; Montez de Oca & Suh, 2020; Rounds, 2020; Serazio & Thorson, 2020).

Consistent with the findings from this study about adults' likelihood of supporting athletes' right to refuse to stand during the national anthem, the protests are disproportionately viewed as antiracist by especially Black individuals and those who recognize broader patterns of racial/ethnic discrimination in society. In contrast, White nationalist backlash has been seemingly prompted by perceptions of racial/ethnic inequalities becoming diminished, continued demographic changes threatening a White majority, and continued requests for more forceful antiracist actions and this backlash has become apparent in attitudes about athletes' protests as well as in other public opinions and concerted actions (Author citation; Bryant, 2018; Cooper, 2019; Hartmann, 2019; Intravia et al., 2018; 2019). Further, a number of dominant statuses and identities encourage resistance towards allowing athletes a right to protest during sacred sports nationalist rituals. In addition, traditionalism seems to lead to authoritarian expectations for conformity. Strikingly, these factors also commonly predict resistance to other antiracist and social justice initiatives, in both sports and society, too (Author citation; Kusz, 2018; Marti, 2020; Serazio & Thorson, 2020; Smith, 2019). Thus, there appears to be a need for marked and further changes in social structures, cultures, and interactions in sports and society—and the attitudes that are linked to them-- if antiracist and full and equal cultural citizenship goals are to be achieved (Author citation; Boykoff & Carrington, 2020; Butterworth, 2020; Chaplin & Montez de Oca, 2019; Cooky & Antunovic, 2020; Hartmann, 2019; Marti, 2020; Serazio & Thorson, 2020).

There are limitations of this study to note. The analytic sample was not randomly selected; thus, even after post-stratification weighting, NSASS respondents' responses may not accurately reflect the beliefs and characteristics of U.S. adults. In addition, as a quantitative survey research study, the present research is unable to gather and analyze more detailed

information from respondents that could allow them to subjectively relay how they feel about athlete protests during the national anthem, and why. Consequently, additional research inquiries are needed to complement the contributions of the present study.

Nevertheless, this study offers new information about U.S. adult public opinion on athletes' right to protest during the playing of the national anthem. It contributes to the body of descriptive research efforts from mostly public polling efforts that do not comprehensively analyze the public opinions. In addition, it offers more sophisticated quantitative research analyses by using multiple regression techniques, with a substantially larger national sample of U.S. adults and the consideration of a wider array of predictor variables, to assess the extent to which dominant statuses and identities, traditionalism, and beliefs about sports nationalism shape public opinions about athletes having the right to protest during the national anthem.

There is ample evidence, consistent with previous research (e.g., Bryant, 2018; Hartmann, 2019; Intravia et al., 2019; Montez de Oca & Suh, 2020), that this issue is eminently racialized; racial/ethnic identities encourage Black adults, compared to White adults, to be more supportive of athlete protests. Also, beyond this, recognizing racial/ethnic discrimination as the main reason for why racial/ethnic inequalities in status attainment exist is positively associated with support for allowing athletes to protest during the national anthem. Yet, other dominant statuses and identities, as well as indicators of traditionalism, seem to matter. Heterosexual, Christian, military veteran, and sports fandom identities appear to encourage resistance to allowing athletes to protest. Further, traditionalism, as indicated by age, lower levels of education, rurality, and conservatism, as well as sports nationalism beliefs, seem to foment resistance to allowing athletes a right to protest during the national anthem.

From a sociological perspective, we understand these relationships to be shaped by social structure, culture, and interactions in sports and society. Future research should continue to consider how sports and their links to political processes occur and matter—including through the support, resistance, and enactment of athlete protests during the national anthem.

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Table 1. Descriptive Statistics for all Variables used in the Analyses

	<u>M/%</u>	<u>(SD)</u>
<i>Dependent Variable</i>		
Athletes should not be allowed to protest	2.09	(1.31)
<i>Predictor Variables</i>		
Black	10%	-
Latinx	9%	-
Other race/ethnicity	8%	-
(White)	73%	-
Age	40.87	(12.73)
Male	27%	-
Heterosexual	71%	-
High School or less	12%	-
Some college	40%	-
(College)	48%	-
Household income	5.31	(4.03)
Works in paid labor	66%	-
Married	38%	-
Cohabiting	16%	-
(Single)	46%	-
Number of children	2.44	-
Suburban	32%	-
Small city or town	28%	-
Rural	14%	-
(Urban)	26%	-
Midwest	36%	-
Northeast	33%	-
South	14%	-
(West)	17%	-
Sports fan	2.20	(1.28)
Christian	47%	-
Other religious affiliation	15%	-
(No religious affiliation)	38%	-
Military service	8%	-
Sports nationalism	2.26	(0.88)
Conservatism	2.42	(1.17)
Discrimination recognized	3.01	(1.00)

Note: N = 3,658.

Table 2. Results from Ordinal Logistic Regressions Predicting U.S. Adults' Public Opinions about Athletes Not being Allowed to Protest During the Playing of the National Anthem

	<i>b</i>	(1) <i>SE</i>	<i>OR</i>	<i>b</i>	(2) <i>SE</i>	<i>OR</i>	<i>b</i>	(3) <i>SE</i>	<i>OR</i>
Black	-0.85	0.13	0.43***	-1.17	0.14	0.31***	-1.05	0.15	0.35***
Latinx	0.43	0.12	1.54***	0.05	0.12	1.05	-0.09	0.13	0.91
Other	0.21	0.13	1.23	0.19	0.13	1.21	0.09	0.14	1.09
race/ethnicity									
Age	0.02	0.00	1.02***	0.14	0.03	1.01***	0.02	0.00	1.02***
Male	0.09	0.08	1.11	-0.04	0.08	0.96	-0.21	0.09	0.81*
Heterosexual	1.16	0.09	3.20***	0.85	0.09	2.35***	0.32	0.10	1.38**
High School	0.91	0.11	2.48***	1.00	0.12	2.73***	0.59	0.13	1.80***
or less									
Some college	0.52	0.08	1.68***	0.56	0.08	1.76***	0.31	0.09	1.37***
Household	-0.01	0.01	0.99	-0.01	0.01	0.99	-0.01	0.01	0.99
income									
Works in paid	0.06	0.08	1.06	0.08	0.08	1.08	0.09	0.09	1.10
labor									
Married	0.08	0.08	1.08	0.03	0.09	1.04	-0.14	0.10	0.87
Cohabiting	-0.12	0.10	0.89	-0.01	0.11	0.99	-0.05	0.12	0.95
Number of	0.09	0.04	1.09*	0.03	0.04	1.03	-0.01	0.04	0.99
children									
Suburban	0.25	0.09	1.29**	0.35	0.10	1.42***	0.33	0.10	1.39**
Small city or	0.27	0.09	1.31**	0.30	0.10	1.35**	0.29	0.11	1.34**
town									
Rural	0.46	0.12	1.59***	0.47	0.12	1.60***	0.39	0.13	1.48**
Midwest	0.24	0.10	1.27*	0.20	0.11	1.22+	0.19	0.12	1.20
Northeast	0.23	0.12	1.26+	0.16	0.13	1.18	0.24	0.14	1.27+
South	0.52	0.10	1.69***	0.38	0.11	1.47***	0.27	0.12	1.31*
<i>Voluntary</i>									
<i>Group</i>									
<i>Statuses &</i>									
<i>Identities</i>									
Sports fan				0.16	0.03	1.15***	-0.02	0.03	0.98
Christian				1.50	0.09	4.47***	0.76	0.10	2.15***
Other				0.54	0.12	1.71***	0.30	0.13	1.35*
religious									
affiliation									
Military				0.71	0.13	2.02***	0.38	0.14	1.46**
service									
<i>Attitudes</i>									
Sports							0.46	0.05	1.59***
nationalism									
Conservatism							0.77	0.04	2.16***
Discrimination							-0.53	0.04	0.59***
recognized									

Note: $N = 3,658$. OR signifies odds ratio.

Figure 1. Weighted Comparison Estimates of U.S. Adults' Public Opinion about Athletes Not being Allowed to Protest during the Playing of the National Anthem

Note: These NSASS estimates are weighted according to 2018 American Community Survey demographics for U.S. adults ages 20-64, based on age, gender, race, education, work status, marital status, income, and region.