Multiculturalism and Antiracism in Sports? U.S. Public Opinions about Native American Team Names and Mascots and the Use of Hijabs in Sports

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Abstract
Sports interactions offer contested cultural terrain where cultural citizenship is continually (re)established. Relatedly, this study uses National Sports and Society Survey data (n = 3,993) to assess public opinions about the use of Native American team names and mascots and the allowance of Muslim women to wear hijabs in sports. Descriptive results indicate that there is considerable but mixed support for eliminating Native American team names and mascots and the allowance of Muslim women to wear hijabs in sports. Multiple regression results show that dominant statuses and in-group identities, as well as indicators of traditionalism, are consistently associated with reduced support for the proposed changes in sports that are designed to result in multiculturalism and antiracism.

Keywords
Native American imagery, Muslim women, hijabs, multiculturalism

Multiculturalism involves efforts to promote understanding, appreciation, and cohesion among members of diverse societies and to encourage social, cultural, and emotional harmony; it is often paired with antiracism efforts to eliminate racial/ethnic inequalities (Gerteis, Hartmann, and Edgell 2019; Hartmann 2015; Kendi 2016; Knoester, Ridpath, and Allison forthcoming; Spencer 1994). Research on multiculturalism and antiracism typically stresses the need for individuals and societies to work toward increased sensitivity, social inclusion, appreciation of diversity, and appropriate means of addressing the past mistreatment of racial and ethnic minorities in particular (Bell and Hartmann 2007; Cooper 2019; Hartmann 2015; Knoester, Ridpath, and Allison forthcoming; Spencer 1994; Strong 2004). We perceive multiculturalism as the antithesis of the perpetuation of extreme, inhumane racial/ethnic inequalities (e.g., genocide, enslavement, hate crimes) and a frequent companion to antiracism initiatives. Along such a continuum of (in)equality, contestations and negotiations toward full cultural citizenship (i.e., a clear recognition of one’s humanity, the receipt of equitable dignity and respect, and continual indications of appropriately belonging in cultural interactions and representations) for racial/ethnic minority group members have occurred and continue to occur; antiracism specifically refers to efforts to reduce racial/ethnic inequalities. Despite attempts to overcome racial/ethnic inequalities in the United States that are rooted in settler colonialism, genocide, and enslavement, complete recognition and valuing of the rights and humanities of minority racial/ethnic groups have yet to be achieved (Bell and Hartmann 2007; Gerteis et al. 2019; Kendi 2016; King 2016; Ong 1996).

In this study, we draw upon theorizing about cultural citizenship contestations and view these as negotiations toward multiculturalism and antiracism in culture, including in sports interactions. According to Ong (1996), cultural citizenship involves processes of self-making and being made within cultural beliefs and practices that are affected by...
unequal power arrangements; the processes are centrally about statuses and belonging. Sport structures, cultures, and interactions symbolize cultural citizenship statuses and also offer cultural terrain for challenging and negotiating them, with a common desire to establish fully dignified and respected indications of belonging, at least from the perspectives of those who are frequently discounted or “othered” (Amara 2012, 2013; Guiliano 2015; King 2016; Knoester et al. forthcoming; Ong 1996; Thangaraj 2015).

We focus upon the representations and inclusions of two relatively “invisible” yet “hypervisible” broadly defined racial/ethnic minority groups in sports and society: Native Americans and Muslims. That is, Native Americans and Muslims are invisible in the sense that they each represent only about 1 percent of the U.S. population, and their interests and needs are often neglected (Gerteis et al. 2019; Guiliano 2015). Yet they are hypervisible in that they are frequently present in cultural representations, most often in unflattering ways and through a history of being feared, and are commonly “othered,” ignored, and juxtaposed with “real Americans” (Gerteis et al. 2019; King 2016; Mowatt, French, and Malebranche 2013). These particular broadly defined racial/ethnic groups have been consistently “othered” in America because of a blend of racial, religious, and cultural uniqueness; their cultural citizenship statuses have been especially discounted by dominant racial/ethnic groups (i.e., especially white and Christian individuals); and questions about their representations in sports have challenged the status quo of sports practices in recent years (Amara 2012, 2013; Gerteis et al. 2019; Guiliano 2015; King 2016).

Although there are many differences in the histories, treatments, and inclusions of Native American and Muslims in sports and society in the United States, members of both groups have been racialized within the predominant Black-white continuum (i.e., Blackened in comparison with the perceived purity of whiteness), even though, for example, Native Americans are not commonly perceived as “Black,” and identifying as Muslim is first viewed as a religious identity, and Muslims are frequently viewed as religious outsiders and recognized as engaging in cultural practices that have been viewed by many Americans as worthy of concern, sometimes threatening and uncivilized (Amara 2012, 2013; Gerteis et al. 2019; Guiliano 2015; King 2016; Ong 1996). Indeed, previous research has highlighted the remarkable blend of racialization (i.e., not eminently white only), challenges that are presented to Christian hegemony, and seemingly “foreign” cultural practices of Native Americans and Muslims (Gerteis et al. 2019; Guiliano 2015; King 2016).

Related to this, we suspect that important predictors of public opinions about Native American team names and mascots as well as the inclusion of Muslims with hijabs in sports may similarly consist of indicators of dominant status positions, in-group identities, traditionalism, and beliefs about racial/ethnic discrimination among U.S. adults. Thus, we seek to take advantage of a new large survey data set (n = 3,993), the National Sports and Society Survey (NSASS), to consider public opinions about both of these issues within a single study (Knoester and Cooksey 2020). Public opinions about the representations and inclusions of Native Americans and Muslims in sport symbolize their cultural citizenship statuses and offer insight into progress and negotiations surrounding multiculturalism and antiracism. Pushes toward multiculturalism and antiracism may disrupt cultural citizenship statuses in uneven ways, as dominant and minority groups often respond to one another’s concerns (Gerteis et al. 2019; King 2016; Marti 2020; Samie and Toffoletti 2018).

Sport is often seen as a social institution that enhances social mobility and inclusion through the promotion of (relatively) equal opportunities, tolerance, cooperation, respect for others, and good sportsmanship. However, disproportionate criticism, intolerance, and exclusion of racial/ethnic minorities are still prevalent in sporting contexts (Ahmed 2017; Carrington 2010, 2013; Guiliano 2015; Knoester and Ridpath 2021; Knoester et al. forthcoming; Thangaraj 2015). Prejudices, misunderstandings, and stereotypes about different racial and ethnic groups are frequently enacted and reified through sports interactions (Allison, Knoester, and Ridpath 2021; Bonilla-Silva, Goar, and Embrick 2006; King 2016; Knoester and Ridpath 2020; Knoester et al. forthcoming; Leonard 2017). Relatedly, sports interactions are replete with messages, practices, challenges, and sometimes changes with regard to who is valued, who belongs, and who is excluded in different contexts (Allison et al. forthcoming; Carrington 2013; Knoester and Ridpath 2020; Knoester et al. forthcoming; Samie and Toffoletti 2018; Strong 2004). These processes involve contestations for cultural citizenship. Often, dominant group members are relatively unaware or concerned about these processes; commonly they are identified as enactors of color-blind racism (Bell and Hartmann 2015; Bonilla-Silva 2003; Kendi 2016; King 2016; Knoester et al. forthcoming; Ong 1996; Thangaraj 2015).

In the present study, we focus on U.S. adult public opinions in 2018 and 2019 about two controversial changes to sports that are designed to enhance multiculturalism and advance antiracism: (1) the elimination of Native American team names and mascots and (2) allowances of Muslim women to wear hijabs (i.e., head coverings that some Muslim women wear) in sports. First, we describe U.S. public opinions about these issues. Then, we use multiple regressions to examine the extent to which dominant statuses and in-group identities (e.g., racial/ethnic, gender, sexuality, religious, sports fandom), traditionalism (e.g., indicators of age, rurality, conservatism), and recognition of rather traditionally defined processes of racial/ethnic discrimination (i.e., discrimination against people who are not seen as white) in society distinguish adults’ public opinions. We advance research by (1) providing new and updated public opinion information about two controversial issues in sports that involve multiculturalism and are infused with antiracism; (2) using public opinions about these issues
as a window into beliefs and challenges toward multiculturalism, change, cultural citizenship, and antiracism, especially in sports; and (3) analyzing empirical evidence about the extent to which dominant statuses and in-group identities, traditionalism, and the recognition of racial/ethnic discrimination shape these public opinions.

**Background**

**Native American Mascots and Team Names**

For more than 50 years, debate over the use of Native American team names and mascots has occurred (Burkley et al. 2017; Guiliano 2015; King 2016). Supporters of the use of these team names and mascots often argue that they are meant to be symbols of respect that honor the bravery, fierceness, and rich traditions of Native peoples; thus, everyone should be proud of them (Davis 1993; King 2016; Staurowsky 2007). Others emphasize that these symbols inflict harm and dehumanize indigenous peoples because they sit alongside mostly animal symbols in sports and are often cartoonish, disparaging, and stereotypic depictions of Natives—and are frequently used as part of rituals that mimic sacred religious traditions (Davis 1993; Kraus, Brown, and Swoboda 2019).

The mascots and team names are extensions of the ways that Native Americans have been represented in other aspects of culture, reflecting prejudices that have been perpetuated through the mythologizing of the colonization and genocide of indigenous peoples (Burkley et al. 2017; Davis 1993; Guiliano 2015). Previous research on the use of Native American team names and imagery has focused on their disrespect toward indigenous peoples, the stereotypes they activate and reinforce, and the harmful consequences of these processes, particularly for Native Americans (Davis 1993; Kraus et al. 2019). It has also highlighted activist efforts to eliminate Native American team names and mascots and assessed public opinions about changing traditions that disrespect Native Americans (Davis 1993; Kraus et al. 2019; Strong 2004). Native American team names and mascots emerged more than 100 years ago from settler colonialism ideologies that dehumanized, mistreated, and systematically eliminated indigenous peoples (Davis 1993; Guiliano 2015; Staurowsky 2007). Stereotype activation from Native American team names and mascots can lead to contemporary, tangibly negative consequences for Native American individuals, too, such as declines in self-esteem (Burkley et al. 2017; Leavitt et al. 2015; Strong 2004). Regardless, the cultural appropriation and frequently insulting depictions of Native Americans signal a dismissal of Native Americans as full cultural citizens, worthy of integration and respect in the United States (Davis 1993; Guiliano 2015; King 2016; Staurowsky 2007; Strong 2004).

The team names and mascots have largely persisted because of the romanticizing of Western mythology, particularly the drama of “cowboys versus Indians,” and the team histories and sports fan identities that are connected to Native American team names and mascots (Davis 1993; Kraus et al. 2019). For many, the continued use of Native American team names and mascots is part of a national identity, particularly for white individuals who chafe at what they perceive to be calls for “political correctness” around seemingly minor offenses (Davis 1993; King 2016; Staurowsky 2007). Although stereotypes of other racial/ethnic groups are scarce, teams continue to use Native American team names and images (Allchin 2020; Kraus et al. 2019; Whiteside 2016).

Still, a stream of activism and incremental changes in eliminating Native American team names and mascots from sports notably occurred prior to 2018 and 2019. The NCAA and a number of high schools phased out many Native American team names and mascots (Kraus et al. 2019; Staurowsky 2007). Some prominent journalists started refusing to use the term “Redskins” when referring to the National Football League team (Kraus et al. 2019; Whiteside 2016). Professional organizations, such as the American Psychological Association, began advocating for a ban of Native American mascots, symbols, images, and related personalities (Fryberg et al. 2008; Whiteside 2016). Nevertheless, Native American team names remained, and still remain, prevalent throughout all levels of sport (Allchin 2020; Kraus et al. 2019; Whiteside 2016).

**Muslim Athletes and Head Coverings**

More recently, the participation of Muslim women wearing hijabs in sport became controversial (Harkness and Islam 2011; Samie and Toffoletti 2018). The 2008 Beijing Olympics were a defining moment because a significant increase occurred in the number of veiled Muslim athletes who participated; 14 veiled women competed, including 6 from Egypt, 3 from Iran, and 1 each from Afghanistan, Bahrain, Oman, and the United Arab Emirates (Amara 2012; Samie and Toffoletti 2018). The Iranian press viewed the inclusion of these athletes as indicating that the hijab does not oppress, slow down, or hinder life for Muslim women (Amara 2012). Yet the issue of hijabs in sports became especially pronounced after the Iranian women’s soccer team was forced to forfeit a pivotal 2012 Olympic qualifying match because of a ban on the headscarf that Iranian women are required to wear (Ahmed 2017; Prouse 2015). On one hand, heightened Islamophobia and anti–Arab American sentiments since the 9/11 attacks, and assumptions of Muslim women as being “outside” of the westernized view of who belongs in sport, sparked uneasiness and outright hostilities (Prouse 2015; Toffoletti and Palmer 2017). Antiblack racism continues to be common and linked to being Muslim (Cooper 2019; Gerteis et al. 2019; Knoester and Ridpath 2020). Noninclusive experiences for Muslims (e.g., othering, prejudice, discrimination) seem to be particularly present in sport (Agergaard 2016; Thangaraj 2015; Toffoletti and Palmer 2017). Also, concerns about the safety of allowing various forms of headdress in sports and...
the appropriateness of changes in the rules of sport to accommodate particular minority group concerns are commonly raised as reasons to oppose hijabs in sports, but these may be partially used as excuses to obscure racist and anti-Muslim sentiments too (Ahmed 2017; Gerteis et al. 2019; Prouse 2015). Finally, some individuals consider Muslim women as “powerless” and “political pawns” who are oppressed by more conservative, religious, Muslim men and view the use of hijabs as symptomatic of oppression (Harkness and Islam 2011; Prouse 2015).

On the other hand, opinions about hijabs in sports are often wrapped up with sometimes complicated feelings about women’s rights. Muslim women seek to possess and express their own rights of choice, but their preferences often vary on the basis of unique cultural, religious, and family contexts (Harkness and Islam 2011; Toffoletti and Palmer 2017). Muslims living in the West frequently face competing pressures to fit in with a particular society’s norms and expectations, while also navigating their own beliefs about proper behavior and the expectations and sense of belonging that they derive from their own community of Muslim believers, which may have unique or mixed expectations, within itself (Amara 2013; Harkness and Islam 2011; Thangaraj 2015). Regardless, many individuals view increased opportunities for all women to participate in sport as an important stage of progress, especially for Muslim women, among whom sports involvement remains relatively rare (Prouse 2015; Samie and Toffoletti 2018; Toffoletti and Palmer 2015). Increasing physical activity through sports participation is celebrated for its health benefits and challenges to specifically masculine sports cultures, as well (Harkness and Islam 2011; Samie and Toffoletti 2018). Also, participating and engaging in sport for one’s own pleasure and agency is beneficial (Harkness and Islam 2011; Toffoletti and Palmer 2017).

Thus, debates about hijabs in sports have centered on political and legal issues, cultural ideologies, freedom of expression concerns, and gender inequalities (Harkness and Islam 2011; Samie and Toffoletti 2018). Many Westerners have viewed the hijab as the ultimate symbol of female oppression (Amara 2012; Harkness and Islam 2011). Others perceive the hijab as a symbol of honor and respect for Islamic identities (Harkness and Islam 2011; Toffoletti and Palmer 2017). Furthermore, many U.S. communities have struggled with appreciating and welcoming Muslim individuals following the incidents of 9/11 (Agergaard 2015; Gerteis et al. 2019; Harkness and Islam 2011). Sentiments have been inflamed by fear-inducing and derogatory rhetoric toward Muslims, with corresponding immigration and travel restrictions imposed by President Trump (Gerteis et al. 2019; Marti 2020; McVeigh and Estep 2019; Samie and Toffoletti 2018). Commonly, Muslim women are seen as strange, athletically incompetent outsiders in Western societies (Hamzeh 2015; Samie and Toffoletti 2018). Yet communities that have been accommodating to multiculturalism encourage freedom of expression, such as allowing Muslim women to wear their traditional hijabs and allowing men to wear their long swimming trunks (Amara 2013; Harkness and Islam 2011). The rule changes by FIBA and FIFA to allow head coverings in recent years reflect the most significant institutional changes that have occurred as part of efforts to support multiculturalism (Ahmed 2017; Prouse 2015). Still, the allowance, ban, and/or use of hijabs remains a contentious issue (Harkness and Islam 2011; Samie and Toffoletti 2018).

Conceptual Framework

In addressing these issues, our conceptual framework recognizes that sports interactions offer normative expressions of racial/ethnic prejudice and discrimination and occasionally provide the means for changing broader cultural and political values, such as through the elimination of Native American team names and mascots and the inclusion of hijabs in sports, potentially (Kraus et al. 2019; Strong 2004; Zirin 2005). Consequently, the structures, cultures, and interactions that surround sports should be carefully scrutinized (Carrington 2010, 2013; King 2016; Messner 2002).

We draw from a critical perspective to consider sport symbols, values, interactions, institutionalized practices, and interpretations as contested terrain for establishing cultural citizenship and broadly defined racial/ethnic meanings (Brayboy 2006; Guiliano 2015; Strong 2004; Toffoletti and Palmer 2015). That is, sports reflect and provide opportunities to shape our notions of who is included and excluded as particularly valued members of cultures, and these contestations frequently involve racial and ethnic dimensions. We constantly “do” cultural citizenship and can reify or change extant views; we have agency and are constantly doing cultural work, whether we realize it or not (Lamont, Beljean, and Clair 2014; Messner 2002; Ong 1996; Strong 2004; Zirin 2005). The promotion of, and reactions to, proposed changes in sports involving Native American team names and mascots and the inclusion of Muslim women wearing hijabs into sports exemplify some of the cultural work that is embedded in sports (Guiliano 2015; Harkness and Islam 2011; King 2016).

Consistent with basic sociological assumptions about social structure as well as emphases from critical race theory, social identity theory, dominant group theories, and (white) habitus, we understand dominant statuses and in-group identities as offering uneven power and authority to define cultural citizenship, shape a sports habitus (i.e., socially shaped dispositions and comfort levels with sports values, rituals, and interactions) and to otherwise affect how individuals perceive and react to attempts toward establishing multiculturalism and encouraging antiracism (Bonilla-Silva et al. 2006; Bourdieu 1978; Knoester and Ridpath 2020; Knoester et al. forthcoming; Ong 1996). In fact, othering processes function to not only discount minority status and out-group individuals but also to reify dominant status.
and in-group characteristics (Bonilla-Silva et al. 2006; Guilliano 2015; King 2016; Knoester and Ridpath 2020; Krysan 2000; Martí 2020; Samie and Toffoletti 2018). Relatedly, we perceive traditionalism as symptomatic of a resistance to change, especially change that is designed to enhance multiculturalism and antiracism (Bonilla-Silva 2003; Davis 1993; Johnson and Tamney 2001; King 2016). Finally, we view the recognition of traditionally defined racial/ethnic discrimination in society as key to observing racial/ethnic inequalities in sport, including the more broadly defined racial/ethnic inequalities that are the subject of the present analysis, and activating motivation to support efforts at multiculturalism and antiracism (Allison et al. 2021; Carrington 2010, 2013; Knoester and Ridpath 2020; Knoester et al. forthcoming; Kraus et al. 2019; Prouse 2015).

**Overarching Public Opinions**

Some understanding of the state and progress of multicultural and antiracist efforts, and their connections to cultural citizenship statuses, can be gleaned from public opinions about the equity and inclusion of Native Americans as well as Muslims in sports practices and the need for changes in these practices. Extant research suggests that U.S. public opinions are mixed on these issues but indicates rising support yet common resistance to multiculturalist and antiracist initiatives. For example, prior to 2018–2019, Daniel Snyder, owner of the Washington “Redskins” and now Washington Football Team, frequently referenced a controversial Annenberg poll that suggested that only 9 percent of 768 surveyed Native Americans considered the “Redskins” team name to be offensive (Keim 2016; Morris 2015). The results of this poll are often criticized because the surveyed individuals were self-identified instead of verified Native American (Cox, Clement, and Vargas 2016; Keim 2016). Studies with a well-vetted process for Native American identification have found that Native Americans view the use of American Indian names, logos, and mascots as more offensive than members of the general public (King 2016; Laveay, Callison, and Rodriguez 2009). Regardless, SurveyUSA and the *Washington Post* found that the majority of Washington, D.C., area respondents appeared sympathetic to the Redskins nickname (Associated Press 2013; Keim 2016). Yet Whiteside (2016) found that most sports reporters now oppose the use of Native American mascots but did not support eliminating references to Native American team names and mascots in their writing, when surveyed. In 2014, a poll conducted by Langer Research for ESPN’s *Outside the Lines* found that 23 percent of the American population thought that the name of the “Washington Redskins” should be changed. Of the 1,019 Americans surveyed, 71 percent were in favor of keeping the mascot and name, which dropped from 89 percent in 1992 (ESPN 2014). Nonetheless, NFL commissioner Roger Goodell repeatedly supported the team nickname prior to 2018–2019, suggesting that the name emits strength, courage, pride, and respect (Associated Press 2013; King 2016).

Similarly, BrandsEye, which uses artificial intelligence and human intelligence to measure public reactions on social media, reported that the wearing of hijabs has been discussed in a more positive light recently. This trend followed the 2016 Olympics, which featured Ibtihaj Muhammad, the first American athlete to participate wearing a hijab. Of the 233,000 social media mentions related to hijabs in sports, 21.7 percent involved men exhibiting positive attitudes, 18.7 percent involved men expressing negative attitudes, 28.6 percent involved women demonstrating positive attitudes, and 17.0 percent involved women posting negative attitudes (BrandsEye 2017). Progress toward inclusivity is also apparent through the changes that FIFA, FIBA, and other sports organizations have made by moving away from excluding players who insisted on wearing head coverings (Ahmed 2017; Prouse 2015). Rimla Akhtar, chair of the Muslim Women’s Sport Foundation, has been proactive in seeking these changes but has been highly critical of the processes that were necessary to overturn unnecessary and anti-inclusive bans (Ahmed 2017; Prouse 2015).

In sum, overall, there is still some question about how supportive Americans are toward eliminating Native American team names and mascots and supporting the allowance of hijabs in sport. It appears that although there is increasing support for multiculturalist and antiracist initiatives that involve these sports-related issues, there continues to be mixed support for the elimination of Native American team names and mascots and the inclusion of hijabs in sports, although more evidence is needed.

**Dominant Statuses and In-Group Identities**

We now turn to consider prominent means through which public opinions about our issues of interest arise. Cultural processes such as identification, racialization, and stigmatization influence norms, perceptions, and othering mechanisms such that cultural citizenship is constantly negotiated and usually reified (Carrington 2010; Lamont et al. 2014; Martí 2020; Strong 2004; Thangaraj 2015). The negotiation and establishment of cultural citizenship, or who is valued, has implications for the stigmatized as well as for the acceptance and the solidarity of dominant statuses and in-group identities. These processes result in the establishment of a general habitus among, especially those with stacked identities of privilege and cohesion that offer comfort, integration, and respect (Bonilla-Silva et al. 2006; Bourdieu 1978; Martí 2020; McVeigh and Estep 2019). Consequently, dominant status positions and in-group identities tend to influence subjective perceptions of issues and become activated toward resistance if the habitus is challenged (Gerteis et al. 2019; King 2016; Krysan 2000; Lamont et al. 2014; Martí 2020; McVeigh and Estep 2019). Thus, we anticipate that racial/ethnic, gender, sexuality, religious, and sports fandom identities are likely to
distinguish support for the elimination of Native American team names and mascots as well as the allowance of Muslim women to wear hijabs in sports.

That is, we expect threats to the general sports habitus from multiculturalist and antiracist initiatives to activate attitudes of resistance among especially those with more privileged statuses and in-group identities. We understand a sports habitus, in this sense, to be dispositions toward the beliefs, values, rituals, and practices in sports that are socially encouraged, commonly learned, and likely to minimize or neglect problems in sport (Bonilla-Silva et al. 2006; Bourdieu 1978; Knoester and Ridpath 2020; Knoester et al. forthcoming). Thus, for instance, the use of Native American team names and mascots is normalized, and many people have developed affinities for the symbolism and the subjective meanings they attribute to them. Also, the absence of hijabs in sports and a Muslim presence in many sport settings is normalized (King 2016; Samie and Toffoletti 2018).

The sports habitus is not egalitarian, although it is commonly thought to be (Bourdieu 1978; Knoester and Ridpath 2020; Knoester et al. forthcoming). As in much of society, U.S. sport is overrepresented and powerfully dominated by white, male, heteronormative, Christian sports fans, sponsors, and participants (King 2016; Lapchick 2019; Leonard 2017; Marti 2020; McVeigh and Estep 2019; Thangaraj 2015). These dominant statuses and in-group identities naturalize a sports habitus wherein the tastes, comfort, cohesion, power, and respect afforded to such positions and memberships are largely seen as appropriate and preferred; proposed changes may be seen as inappropriate and threatening (Bonilla-Silva et al. 2006; King 2016; Lamont et al. 2014; Samie and Toffoletti 2018). Whiteness is a social identity and privilege that has shaped widely accepted descriptions and understandings of history and politics and generated norms and expectations for culture that have worked to maintain in-group boundaries and social closure (Bonilla-Silva et al. 2006; Carrington 2010, 2013; Marti 2020; McVeigh and Estep 2019). White settler colonialism and Western mythology have seemingly desensitized particularly white individuals, compared with other racial/ethnic groups, to concerns about the use of Native American team names and mascots (Davis 1993; King 2016; Staurowsky 2007). Also, whites are likely to be most concerned about the increasing presence and respect afforded to Muslims in America (Carrington, 2010; Gerteis et al. 2019; McVeigh and Estep 2019; Newman and Giardina 2011; Samie and Toffoletti 2018; Staurowsky 2007).

In addition, (hegemonic) masculinity is celebrated in sport, and thus men may be especially resistant to changes in the sports habitus (King 2016; Lapchick 2019; Messner 2002; Samie and Toffoletti 2018). For example, male heroes from the Western frontier are frequently described and praised in masculine terms; even Native American imagery evokes hegemonic masculine characteristics such as stoicism, violence, toughness, and athleticism (Davis 1993; Guiliano 2015; King 2016). U.S. men not only tend to trivialize female sports, but they also hold less favorable feelings toward Muslims than do women (Gerteis et al. 2019; Messner 2002; Zainiddinov 2013; Zirin 2005). Resistance to change by men is often motivated by indignation that they are viewed as oppressors, it appears (Davis 1993; Spencer 1994).

Heteronormativity is also part of the fabric of U.S. sports and society (Griffin 1998; Grollman 2017; Thangaraj 2015; Zirin 2005). That is, heterosexuality is assumed to be normal and preferred, and lesbian, gay, and bisexual individuals are viewed with suspicion and sometimes outright hostility in sports and society, despite progress toward equality and inclusion over recent decades (Griffin 1998; Grollman 2017; Zirin 2005). Thus, we anticipate that heterosexuals will be more comfortably situated in their sports habitus and will be more resistant to changes such as eliminating Native American team names and mascots and allowing Muslim women to wear hijabs in sports, compared with those who do not identify as heterosexual. In contrast, sexual minorities are expected to be more likely to empathize with disadvantaged groups and advocate for social change. Indeed, there is empirical evidence that sexual minorities are more sympathetic toward multiculturalism and changes designed to address racial and ethnic inequalities, compared with heterosexuals (Grollman 2017).

Christian practices and identities are also prevalent in sports and society and are increasingly activated as part of a national identity (Marti 2020; McVeigh and Estep 2019; Newman and Giardina 2011; Zirin 2005). Christians tend to naturalize and normalize their privileges through their cultural practices, beliefs, and norms, including through sports (Newman and Giardina 2011; Samie and Toffoletti 2018; Tranby and Hartmann 2008). Many Christians tend to adhere to antistructural and individualistic ideals that lead them to be less sympathetic to racial and ethnic minority struggles (Emerson and Smith 2000). In addition, Native Americans and Muslims tend to be viewed as outsiders in the United States, compared with Christians, with the perceived threat of Muslim extremism and competition for religious hegemony particularly salient as part of Islamophobia (Gerteis et al. 2019; King 2016; Samie and Toffoletti 2018). Thus, there is reason to anticipate that Christians may be less likely to sympathize with eliminating the cultural appropriation of Native American team names and mascots and accommodating Muslim religious practices, compared with the religiously unaffiliated.

Finally, dominant sports statuses and sports-related in-group identities are expected to shape support for eliminating Native American team names and mascots as well as allowing Muslim women to wear hijabs in sports. By definition, dominant sports statuses and sport-related in-group identities, such as sports fandom, will be deeply enmeshed within a sports habitus that is beloved. Thus, we anticipate that sports fandom will be negatively associated with supporting changes in sports that are designed to address multiculturalism. There is
evidence from previous research that sports fandom increases resistance to eliminating the use of Native American team names and mascots in sports (Schultz and Sheffer 2017; Whiteside 2016). Yet one might assume that sports fandom may lead to more mixed support for the use of hijabs in sport, because the inclusion of more Muslim athletes may expand sports opportunities for participation, spectatorship, and competition (Harkness and Islam 2011; Samie and Toffoletti 2018; Toffoletti and Palmer 2017).

Traditionalism

Traditionalism, or a resistance to change and nostalgia for the past, is also expected to influence attitudes about changing sports for the purpose of multiculturalism. Age, rurality, and self-identified conservatism are indicators of traditionalism (Hochschild 2016; Johnson and Tamney 2001). There is also evidence that age, rurality, and self-identified conservatism are negatively associated with support for multiculturalism and are positively associated with a restrictive view of a national identity and resistance to antiracism efforts (Doucerain et al. 2018; Gerteis et al. 2019; Hochschild 2016; Knoester and Ridpath 2020; Marti 2020; McVeigh and Estep 2019). Consequently, we expect that age, rurality, and self-identified conservatism will encourage resistance to eliminating Native American team names and mascots and allowing Muslim women to wear hijabs in sports.

Recognition of Racial/Ethnic Discrimination

Finally, we posit that recognizing racial/ethnic discrimination will encourage support for multiculturalism and antiracism in society. There is evidence that individuals systematically perceive, or neglect, evidence of racial/ethnic prejudice and discrimination in sports and society (Carrington 2010, 2013; Grollman 2017; King 2016; Prouse 2015; Zirin 2005). Those who are more educated are more likely to recognize the social construction of race/ethnicity and perceived racial/ethnic differences, while acknowledging the influence of systemic discrimination for differences in racial/ethnic status attainment (Krysan 2000; Outram et al. 2018). Thus, recognizing racial/ethnic discrimination and having higher levels of education are likely to be positively associated with perceiving needs for more multiculturalism, antiracism, and social changes and lead to support for eliminating Native American team names and mascots and allowing Muslim women to wear hijabs in sports.

Hypotheses

Our conceptual framework and previous research lead to the following hypotheses:

Hypothesis 1: There will be considerable, but mixed, support for eliminating Native American team names and mascots and the allowance for Muslim women to wear hijabs in sports.

Hypothesis 2: Dominant statuses and in-group identities will be linked to resisting changes in sports that are designed to increase multiculturalism and antiracism.

Hypothesis 3: Traditionalism will be negatively associated with endorsing multiculturalism and antiracism in sports.

Hypothesis 4: Recognition of racial/ethnic discrimination in society will be positively associated with supporting changes in sports that are designed to improve multiculturalism and encourage antiracism.

Method

Data come from the NSASS, a landmark new survey of U.S. adults (n = 3,993) that is focused on sports and society issues. The NSASS sample was drawn from the American Population Panel, a panel of more than 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 from fall 2018 through spring 2019 to American Population Panel members whose birth years were 21 to 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 as well. NSASS respondents are disproportionately white, female, well educated, and midwestern. Therefore, the data are weighted when used to provide descriptive estimates for all U.S. adults (Knoester and Cooksey 2020).

The sample for the present study consists of all NSASS respondents (n = 3,993). Because our findings are robust across different sample selection and coding decisions and previous research supports the use of all available information from respondents as a preferred method for addressing missing data, even when some values for dependent variables may be missing, we use multiple imputation with chained equations over 10 imputations for all missing data (Johnson and Young 2011).

Dependent Variables

The descriptive statistics for all variables used in our analyses, with “don’t know” (DK) and “refused” responses coded as missing, are displayed in Table 1. The first dependent variable is formed from responses (1 = “strongly disagree,” 2 = “somewhat disagree,” 3 = “somewhat agree,” 4 = “strongly agree”) to the statement “Native American team names and mascots should be eliminated from sports.” Although for our regression analyses we code the 8 percent (n = 331) of DK responses as missing, we first discuss and present the DK responses as part of a summary of U.S. public opinion on the topic, presenting findings
from just the NSASS respondents and then using weighting techniques to better estimate opinions among the U.S. population. The second dependent variable is formed from responses (1 = “strongly disagree,” 4 = “strongly agree”) to the statement “Muslim women should be allowed to wear hijabs (i.e., head coverings) in sports.” As before, we code the 8 percent (n = 311) of DK responses to this statement as missing for our regression analyses only.

**Independent Variables**

The independent variables for this study address dominant status and in-group identities, racial/ethnic discrimination, and traditionalism. Dominant status and in-group identities include reports (1 = yes) of being white (only), male, and heterosexual. They also include religious affiliation (coded as Christian, non-Christian religion, and none as the reference category) and sports fandom (0 = “not at all,” 4 = “very much so”). Recognition of traditionally understood racial/ethnic discrimination is measured by responses (1 = “strongly disagree,” 4 = “strongly agree”) 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?” Education is indicated by dummy variables (i.e., high school or less [reference category], some college, and college or higher). Traditionalism is indicated by age (coded as dummy

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**Table 1.** Descriptive Statistics for All Variables Used in the Analyses.

| Variable                                             | M or Percentage | SD   | Percentage Missing |
|------------------------------------------------------|-----------------|------|--------------------|
| Support for eliminating Native American team names/mascots names/mascots | 2.51            | 1.22 | 11                 |
| Support for allowing hijabs in sports               | 3.20            | 1.10 | 11                 |
| Not white (only)a                                    | 27%             |      | 1                  |
| White                                                | 73%             |      | 1                  |
| Not malea                                            | 74%             |      | 0                  |
| Male                                                 | 26%             |      | 0                  |
| Not heterosexuala                                     | 28%             |      | 2                  |
| Heterosexual                                         | 72%             |      | 2                  |
| Age ≤ 30 yearsa                                      | 24%             |      | 0                  |
| Age 31–40 years                                      | 27%             |      | 0                  |
| Age 41–50 years                                      | 22%             |      | 0                  |
| Age ≥ 51 years                                       | 27%             |      | 0                  |
| High school or lessa                                 | 13%             |      | 0                  |
| Some college                                         | 40%             |      | 0                  |
| College                                              | 47%             |      | 0                  |
| Household income                                     | 5.25            | 4.01 | 15                 |
| Not working in paid labora                           | 34%             |      | 2                  |
| Works in paid labor                                  | 66%             |      | 2                  |
| Singlea                                              | 38%             |      | 1                  |
| Cohabiting                                           | 16%             |      | 1                  |
| Married                                              | 46%             |      | 1                  |
| Number of children                                   | 0.57            | 1.02 | 5                  |
| Large citya                                          | 26%             |      | 1                  |
| Suburban                                             | 32%             |      | 1                  |
| Town or small city                                   | 29%             |      | 1                  |
| Rural                                                | 14%             |      | 1                  |
| Westa                                                | 17%             |      | 0                  |
| Midwest                                              | 36%             |      | 0                  |
| Northeast                                            | 14%             |      | 0                  |
| South                                                | 33%             |      | 0                  |
| Sports fan                                           | 2.20            | 1.28 | <.5                |
| No religious affiliationa                            | 37%             |      | 6                  |
| Christian                                            | 48%             |      | 6                  |
| Other religion                                       | 15%             |      | 6                  |
| Conservatism                                         | 2.44            | 1.17 | 10                 |
| Discrimination recognized                            | 3.00            | 1.00 | 9                  |

Note: n = 3,993.

*aReference category.*
variables for being ≤30 years old [reference category], 31–40 years old, 41–50 years old, or ≥51 years old), rurality (coded as dummy variables for residing in a large city [reference category], suburb near a large city, small city or town, or rural area), and self-reported conservatism (1 = “very liberal,” 5 = “very conservative”).

Other Factors
Socioeconomic, family, and geographic region statuses are control variables in our analyses. Socioeconomic statuses include household income (coded in multiples of $10,000, capped at ≥15) and working in paid labor (1 = yes). Family statuses include marital status (dummy variables for married and cohabiting, with single as the reference category) and number of respondent’s own or their partner’s children who reside in the household. Finally, geographic region is included (coded as Midwest, Northeast, or South, with West as the reference category).

Results
Our analysis consists of first scrutinizing the descriptive statistics for our dependent variables. Then, we turn to predicting public opinions about eliminating Native American team names and mascots as well as allowing hijabs in sports in ordinal logistic regression models. First, consistent with our first hypothesis, descriptive statistics from the NSASS indicate considerable but mixed support for eliminating Native American team names and mascots. Slightly more respondents support, versus oppose, eliminating Native American team names and mascots compared with somewhat or strongly agreeing to their elimination (although the NSASS responses generally fall within the 95 percent confidence intervals for the public opinion estimates, yet, with “somewhat agree” responses from NSASS participants the exception, being 1 percent higher than the upper bound of the weighted estimate). Regardless, there is considerable yet mixed support for eliminating Native American team names and mascots, as expected.

Second, consistent with our first hypothesis, we find that public opinion support for allowing hijabs in sports is substantial. That is, as hinted at by the descriptive statistics presented in Table 1, more than 70 percent of NSASS respondents report somewhat or strongly agreeing that Muslim women should be allowed to wear hijabs in sports. Still, there is some mixed support; slightly more than 20 percent of NSASS respondents are opposed to hijabs being allowed in sports. As shown in Figure 2, the weighted NSASS estimates for supporting the allowance of hijabs in sports are similar to the unweighted estimates (although the “somewhat disagree” NSASS responses are less than .5 percent below the lower bound of the 95 percent confidence interval from the weighted estimate, and the “somewhat agree” responses are slightly more than 1 percent higher than the upper bound of the weighted estimate). Thus, there is much more substantial support for endorsing multiculturalism and antiracism through changes in sport in agreeing with the allowance of hijabs in sports compared with agreeing with the elimination of Native American team names and mascots; still, more than 20 percent of U.S. adults do not support allowing hijabs in sports.

We now turn to our ordinal logistic regression results, displayed in Table 2. The nested models first emphasize background characteristics as predictors. Then, selected identities, conservatism, and recognition of discrimination become the focus. As shown in model 1, and anticipated by our second
hypothesis, dominant status and in-group identities are associated with public opinions about eliminating Native American team names and mascots, as expected. White \((b = -0.20, p < .01, \text{odds ratio [OR] = .82})\), male \((b = -0.31, p < .001, \text{OR} = .73)\), and heterosexual \((b = -0.93, p < .001, \text{OR} = .39)\) identities are associated with resisting the elimination of Native American team names and mascots in sports. Also, consistent with our fourth hypothesis, older generations \((\text{ages 31–40 years: } b = -0.55, p < .001, \text{OR} = .58; \text{ages 41–50 years: } b = -0.79, p < .001, \text{OR} = .46; \text{age } \geq 51 \text{ years: } b = -0.78, p < .001, \text{OR} = .46)\) and rural residents \((b = -0.54, p < .001, \text{OR} = .58)\) are more opposed to eliminating Native American team names and mascots. Finally, as anticipated by our third hypothesis, having some college \((b = 0.51, p < .01, \text{OR} = 1.28)\) is positively associated with support for eliminating Native American team names and mascots.

In model 2, we present the results from predicting public opinions about eliminating Native American team names and mascots from sports after adding more voluntary \(\text{(i.e., selected)}\) identities and self-reported views of conservatism and racial/ethnic discrimination into the analytic model. As expected, consistent with our second and fourth hypotheses, sports fandom \((b = -0.17, p < .001, \text{OR} = .85)\), Christianity \((b = -0.38, p < .001, \text{OR} = .68)\), and self-reported conservatism \((b = -0.57, p < .001, \text{OR} = .56)\) are associated with a resistance to eliminating Native American team names and mascots. In contrast, as anticipated by our third hypothesis, recognition of racial/ethnic discrimination in society is associated with stronger support for eliminating Native American team names and mascots in sports \((b = 0.63, p < .001, \text{OR} = 1.88)\).

We now analyze the results from predicting support for Muslim women wearing hijabs in sports. As shown in model 3, and expected from our second hypothesis, male \((b = -0.31, p < .001, \text{OR} = .73)\) and heterosexual \((b = -0.26, p < .01, \text{OR} = .77)\) identities are linked to reduced support for allowing hijabs in sports. Also, as anticipated by our fourth hypothesis, older generations \((\text{ages 31–40 years: } b = -0.40, p < .001, \text{OR} = .67; \text{ages 41–50 years: } b = -0.71, p < .001, \text{OR} = .49; \text{age } \geq 51 \text{ years: } b = -0.83, p < .001, \text{OR} = .43)\) are less supportive of allowing hijabs in sports. Finally, compared with those with a high school or less education and consistent with our third hypothesis, having some college \((b = 0.25, p < .05, \text{OR} = 1.28)\) or a college education \((b = 0.36, p < .01, \text{OR} = 1.43)\) is associated with greater support for allowing Muslim women to wear hijabs in sports.

Last, in model 4, we show the results from predicting public opinions about allowing Muslim women to wear hijabs in sports, after adding selected identities and self-reported views of conservatism and racial/ethnic discrimination into the model. As anticipated by our second hypothesis, identifying as Christian \((b = -0.24, p < .01, \text{OR} = .79)\) leads to less support for allowing hijabs in sport. Consistent with our fourth hypothesis, conservatism is negatively associated with support for allowing hijabs in sport \((b = -0.50, p < .001, \text{OR} = .61)\). Also, as anticipated by our third hypothesis, recognition of racial/ethnic discrimination in society is positively associated with support for allowing Muslim women to wear hijabs in sports \((b = 0.54, p < .001, \text{OR} = 1.72)\).

**Discussion**

The purpose of the present study was to use new, national data from a large sample of U.S. adults to assess public opinions about two controversial sports-related issues that are linked to multiculturalism, cultural citizenship, antiracism, and changes in how sports are done: (1) the elimination of Native American team names and mascots and (2) allowances for Muslim women to wear hijabs in sports. We expected to find that there would be considerable, albeit mixed, support for changes in sports that are designed to increase multiculturalism and antiracism. We also anticipated finding that dominant statuses...
and in-group identities, traditionalism, and the recognition of racial/ethnic discrimination in society would be important predictors of public opinions about these issues.

Our first hypothesis anticipated considerable, but mixed, evidence that U.S. public opinions would endorse multiculturalist and antiracist changes in sports, and the NSASS descriptive statistics and weighted estimates offered support for this. In the NSASS, slightly more respondents (i.e., 47 percent vs. 44 percent) reported that they somewhat or strongly agree that Native American team names and mascots should be eliminated from sports, as opposed to somewhat or strongly disagreeing. About 8 percent of respondents indicated that they “don’t know.” After weighting, the proportions for agreement and disagreement flip-flopped; that is, U.S. public opinion in 2018 and 2019 was best estimated to be slightly more opposed to eliminating Native American team names and mascots than to support their elimination.

Overall, these public opinion estimates reflect continued controversy over the use of Native American team names and mascots in sports, but increased activism and approval toward banning them at least among NCAA schools and many state and local boards of education (Kraus et al. 2019;
Lavey et al. 2009; Whiteside 2016). Change in the use of such team names and mascots has been slower within professional sports leagues (e.g., “Blackhawks,” “Chiefs”), although prominent changes have occurred since the 2018–2019 NSASS was conducted (e.g., elimination of Washington “Redskins” and Cleveland “Indians”). Still, Native American mascotry and team names remain common at all levels of sport, even after some formal bans; for example, more than 1,000 high schools were still using Native American team names in late 2020, including 45 schools that continued to sanction the use of “Redskins” after the Washington Football Team’s elimination of its use. In fact, resistance to bans remains influential (Allchin 2020; Kraus et al. 2019; Staurowsky 2007).

Support for allowing Muslim women to wear hijabs in sports was more substantial, although still somewhat mixed. More than 70 percent of NSASS respondents reported that they somewhat or strongly agree that hijabs should be allowed in sports. Yet more than 20 percent still indicated that they somewhat or strongly disagree, with 8 percent of respondents reporting that they “don’t know.” Weighted estimates were similar. These results suggest that most Americans are aligned with the moves by FIFA and FIBA to allow head coverings in sports, after much controversy and debate (Ahmed 2017; Prouse 2015). Still, resistance to allowing head coverings in sport continues to exist and can adversely affect the potential benefits of sports participation and physical activity, by reducing participation levels (Harkness and Islam 2011; Jiwani and Rail 2010). There continue to be sizeable challenges to encouraging widespread participation and acceptance in sports for Muslim women, or even allowing freedom of choice, in these matters (Ahmed 2017; Harkness and Islam 2011; Thangaraj 2015).

Our second hypothesis anticipated that dominant statuses and in-group identities would be linked to resisting changes in sports that have been proposed to increase multiculturalism and antiracism, such as eliminating Native American team names and mascots and allowing hijabs in sports. Because sports cultures in America have been disproportionately organized, controlled, and dominated by white, male, and heterosexual privilege (Griffin 1998; King 2016; Lapchick 2019), we anticipated that white, male, and heterosexual identities would lead to a resistance to changing how sports are done, in the name of multiculturalism and antiracism. Furthermore, Christian identities have long served as powerful in-group identities and have been historically privileged in the United States (Gerteis et al. 2019; Marti 2020; McVeigh and Estep 2019). Together, white, male, heterosexual, and Christian identities have also been frequently activated to resist social changes that are viewed as “politically correct” and changes that are enmeshed with feelings of threat and even increasing victimization in the midst of widespread demographic and social changes (Gerteis et al. 2019; Harkness and Islam 2011; Kendi 2016; King 2016). Sports fandom is also linked to passionate emotional ties and resistance to changes in the status quo in the name of multiculturalism and antiracism—or perceived “political correctness” (Davis 1993; Guiliano 2015; King 2016; Kraus et al. 2019; Strong 2004).

As expected, these dominant status and in-group identities were consistently associated with reduced support for changes in sports designed to lead to greater multiculturalism and antiracism. One exception was that there was surprisingly a lack of association between whiteness and support for allowing hijabs in sports. Supplementary analyses suggests that this was a function of whites’ being significantly less likely than Blacks to support hijabs but more likely than Latinx and other racial/ethnic group members to support hijabs. Future research should explore these patterns further, but it may be that concerns about multiculturalism and antiracism are somewhat counterbalanced among whites by beliefs that sport participation can encourage assimilation into Americanness, as they define it (Guiliano 2015; Thangaraj 2015). Sports fandom was also not associated with reduced support for hijabs, perhaps because sports fans may similarly want to encourage sports involvement so that more people can benefit from it (Allison and Knoester 2021; Knoester and Allison 2021). Regardless, in sum, these findings are consistent with sports’ being contested territory whereby power dynamics and cultural citizenship are established (Guiliano 2015; Harkness and Islam 2011; King 2016; Strong 2004; Thangaraj 2015). Sports are means through which dominant status and in-group identities shape nationalist sentiments about “who counts” and who does not, sentiments that often oppose attempts at multiculturalism and antiracism and deride them as simply political correctness run amuck (Guiliano 2015; Kendi 2016; King 2016; Kraus et al. 2019; Marti 2020; McVeigh and Estep 2019; Strong 2004).

Relatedly, opposition to proposed changes that are designed to encourage multiculturalism and antiracism, in sports and otherwise, are frequently enhanced by traditionalism. Nostalgia for the past and resistance to change are hallmarks of traditionalism and are frequently evidenced among older adults, rural residents, and self-identified conservatives (Hochschild 2016; Marti 2020; McVeigh and Estep 2019; Spencer 1994; Strong 2004). As previewed by our third hypothesis, older generations, rural residents, and self-identified conservatism were consistently and negatively associated with supporting multiculturalism and antiracism in sports. Thus, we see further evidence that dominant status and in-group identities are bolstered by traditionalism in defending the status quo and resisting changes toward multiculturalism and antiracism (King 2016; Kraus et al. 2019; Marti 2020; Strong 2004).

Finally, our fourth hypothesis suggested that recognition of racial/ethnic discrimination would be positively associated with supporting the elimination of Native American team names and mascots as well as allowing Muslim women to wear hijabs in sports. Although sports-related opinions are often thought to be color-blind, critical theorists recognize that sports can act as sites for normative expressions of racial/ethnic prejudice, discrimination, and dehumanization.
(Carrington 2010, 2013; Guiliano 2015; Harkness and Islam 2011; King 2016; Kraus et al. 2019; Strong 2004). Invoking issues about Native Americans, Muslims, multiculturalism, changes in the patterns of sports, and concerns about political correctness are likely to activate such prejudicial views and either lead to enhanced concern over multiculturalism and racism or a dismissal of the need to disrupt the sports habitus (Davis 1993; King 2016; Kraus et al. 2019). Indeed, as expected, higher education and increased recognition of racial/ethnic discrimination in society were consistent and significant predictors of supporting multiculturalism and antiracism in sports. Thus, it seems that sports controversies involving Native American team names and mascots as well as allowing hijabs in sports are eminently racial/ethnic issues, at least broadly defined, and that knowledge and empathy about traditionally defined racial/ethnic discrimination processes (i.e., discrimination against those who are not seen as white) are likely to lead to increased support of multiculturalism and antiracism.

**Conclusion**

In sum, our findings suggest that the cultural citizenship of Native Americans and Muslims in America is not uniformly agreed upon; in fact, many adults continue to be in favor of exclusionary policies toward Muslim women in sports and substantially more remain at ease with the use of Native American team names and mascots. U.S. adults with stacked identities of privilege in the sports habitus, those who exhibit more traditionalism, and those who are not recognizing racial/ethnic discrimination seem to be most opposed to changes in sports that are designed to enhance multiculturalism and antiracism. These findings offer striking parallels to both historical and contemporary struggles within and outside of sports for more democratic, equal, and multicultural representations—and resistance to these proposed changes among those who occupy more dominant statuses and in-group identities and who support traditionalism (Harkness and Islam 2011; Hochschild 2016; Kendi 2016; King 2016; Marti 2020; McVeigh and Estep 2019).

In recent years, the rise and defense of Trumpism—and its more explicit othering and mistreatment of broadly defined racial/ethnic minorities who exhibit racial, religious, and/or cultural uniqueness compared with “real” Americans (i.e., white, Christian, assimilated)—offer similar dynamics of negotiations in power, equality, cultural citizenship, and multiculturalism (Gerteis et al. 2019; Hochschild 2016; Marti 2020; McVeigh and Estep 2019). In fact, President Trump intentionally used sports to stoke outrage and othering from among his base of supporters (i.e., especially white, Christian, traditionalists), in particular (Allison et al. 2021; Knoester et al. forthcoming). Yet the findings from this study about widespread public opinion support for the allowance of hijabs in sports, and recent actions (e.g., the Washington Football Team’s recent removal of its former “Redskins” mascot and logo) that have stemmed from a surge in attention, thought, and activism surrounding racial/ethnic inequalities, suggest that some measure of tilt toward multiculturalism and antiracism is occurring (Allchin 2020; Forsyth 2020).

Before concluding, there are some limitations to this study to note. The NSASS respondents are not nationally representative, nor were they randomly selected. Thus, we should be cautious about generalizing our findings. Nonetheless, we used poststratification weighting to allow more precise estimates of public opinions among all U.S. adults in our descriptive analyses; also, we used a large national sample and a rich set of covariates for our regression analyses. Yet we relied on survey information from closed-ended questions to analyze public opinions. This work should continue to be complemented with more in-depth interviews, observations, and textual analyses about perceptions and experiences of multiculturalism in sports.

Still, the present study advances research by examining public opinions about two contemporary sports-related controversies that symbolize beliefs about multiculturalism and antiracism in sports and offer cultural terrain for negotiating cultural citizenship statuses and antiracist efforts. Using landmark new data from a large sample of U.S. adults, we find considerable, but mixed, support for eliminating Native American team names and mascots as well as allowing hijabs in sports. We also find strikingly consistent evidence that dominant statuses and in-group identities that involve race/ethnicity, gender, sexuality, religion, and sports fandom are associated with public opinions about multiculturalism in sports. In addition, we find that traditionalism, as evidenced by age, rurality, and conservatism, is consistently and negatively associated with support for changes toward multiculturalism in sports. Finally, we find that increased recognition of racial/ethnic discrimination in society is positively associated with support for multiculturalism and antiracism in sports.

These findings and the conceptual framework for this study suggest that sports will continue to be contested territory for power dynamics and the ability to define norms, understandings of cultural citizenship, goals surrounding multiculturalism and antiracism, and the willingness to change the status quo. Thus, public opinions about sports-related issues and the factors that predict them are worthy of additional inquiries and better understanding. Furthermore, we should anticipate that efforts at increasing multiculturalism and antiracism in sports, as well as in society, will be resisted.

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landmark survey that focuses on patterns of sports involvement over the life course and their links to adults’ attitudes, social patterns, and well-being. He is an emerging sociology of sport researcher and longtime sociology of family scholar with more than three dozen peer-reviewed publications. His research has appeared in journals such as Social Forces, the Journal of Marriage and Family, Sex Roles, Social Science Research, Sociology of Sport Journal, International Review for the Sociology of Sport, and Leisure Sciences. His expertise has been featured in outlets that include the New York Times, the Washington Post, the Wall Street Journal, Bloomberg, Forbes, US News & World Report, Salon, UPI, CNN, Yahoo!, and The Conversation. For more on the NSASS project, please reference https://nsass.org/.

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