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"Arrogant, ungrateful, anti-American degenerates": Development and initial validation of the Attitudes Toward Athlete Activism Questionnaire (ATAAQ)

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ABSTRACT

Despite its increasing prevalence in sports at all levels of competition, there is a startling paucity of research on athlete activism and its broader impact on social and political change. Furthermore, athletes who engage in sport-based political protest – many of whom hold one or more traditionally marginalized identities – often face vicious public backlash. In order to support the role of sport psychologists and other mental health professionals in responding to this issue, there is a need to deepen our understanding of the many views and opinions people hold toward athlete activism, whether they be athletes, coaches, sport psychologists, or the broader public. To stimulate further research on this topic, we developed the Attitudes Toward Athlete Activism Questionnaire (ATAAQ) as a measure of reactions toward athlete political behavior in sport across a range of competitive levels (e.g., professional, collegiate, high school). An initial pool of 40 items was administered to a total sample of 713 participants, recruited from social media and online sport-related forums. Exploratory and confirmatory factor analyses yielded a 19-item scale comprising five-factors: affective reactions (five items), perceived conflict with team (four items), athlete role (three items), lack of political qualifications/credibility (three items), and desired consequences or punishments (four items). Internal consistency estimates for the ATAAQ factors were 0.88 and above. We established initial evidence for convergent, criterion-related, and predictive validity, as ATAAQ scores were correlated in expected directions with scores on personal activism orientation, belief in a just world, and attitudes toward social justice. Strengths, limitations, and implications for research and practice are discussed.

> "… *We will not support millionaire ingrates who hate America and disrespect our Armed Forces and Veterans … We stand with the Heroes, not a bunch of rich, entitled arrogant, ungrateful, anti-American degenerates*."
>
> - Colonel Kriste Kibbey Etue, Director of Michigan State Police (Edwards, 2017)

In recent years, there has been a steep rise in the number and visibility of athletes who have engaged in acts of social or political protest in and out of sport, as well as an intense public debate around these behaviors (Cooper, Macauley, & Rodriguez, 2017; Frederick, Sanderson, & Schlereth, 2017; Gill, 2016; Sanderson, Frederick, & Stocz, 2016; Yan, Pegoraro, & Watanabe, 2018). The ongoing and volatile dialogue about "politics and sport" raises important questions about the impact athletes can have on the broader public consciousness, how athletes themselves are affected by the resulting discourse, and how mental health professionals can best support them in these roles. Much of the recent focus on athlete activism has concerned Colin Kaepernick, a biracial quarterback in the National Football League (NFL), who began kneeling during the national anthem in 2016, to protest racial injustice and police brutality in the United States. His actions have since inspired similar protests from other athletes and triggered a string of backlash from coaches, owners, fans, and the media. Kaepernick and other players who have knelt down have been publicly referred to as "entitled, arrogant, ungrateful, anti-American degenerates" by a member of law enforcement (Edwards, 2017), "inmates running the prison" by an NFL team owner (Bonesteel, 2017), and "sons of b*****" by the President of the United States (Tatum, 2017).

Research on athlete activism, especially within the field of sport psychology, is still in its infancy. Furthermore, much of the existing scholarship is theoretical in nature, sociological in scope, or qualitative in methodology (e.g., Agyemang, Singer, & DeLorme, 2010; Frederick et al., 2017; Smith, Bundon, & Best, 2016; Yan et al., 2018). Few studies have, for example, employed large samples or quantitative methods to explore sport-based activism or the attitudes people hold toward

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politically outspoken athletes. Instead, our understanding of these issues remains "largely anecdotal and comes from media images or our personal experiences" (Kaufman, 2008, p. 219). With these gaps in mind, and upon reviewing the extant literature, we sought to develop a psychometrically sound and valid measure of attitudes toward athlete activism (at professional and non-professional levels of sport) that could both inspire and methodologically support future research on this topic.

Research on athlete activism (and, specifically, attitudes toward athlete activism) holds considerable relevance and numerous implications for the field of sport psychology. Consider, for example, that participation in sports is traditionally thought to offer many benefits for childhood and adolescent psychosocial development (Petitpas, Cornelius, Van Raalte, & Jones, 2005). However, research rarely explores whether these benefits include issues related to diversity and inclusion, young athletes' awareness of their and others' sociocultural identities, and the role that sport can play in helping these athletes exist in a multicultural world. Second, and relatedly, important questions can be asked regarding the public perception of many athletes as role models for young children (Biskup & Pfister, 1999), and whether sociopolitical protest on the part of these athletes has an impact on this perception. Related research questions abound (e.g., What is the role of athlete race/ethnicity in public perceptions of athlete activism?). Third, sport – even at non-professional or amateur levels – can offer a highly visible platform for political protest, and evidence has shown that these protests do, in fact, stimulate meaningful public dialogue around issues such as racial injustice (Frederick, Pegoraro, & Sanderson, 2018). The mere fact that athlete activism is so widely provocative speaks to the ways in which it can, and often does, leave an indelible imprint upon the public consciousness. And finally, the growth of athlete activism will inevitably yield new opportunities and challenges for sport psychology practitioners. For athletes, especially people of color, women, LGBTQ + folk, or individuals of other traditionally marginalized identities, backlash to their outspokenness can compound experiences of ostracism and oppression they are already navigating within their sport (Anderson, 2002; Kaskan & Ho, 2016; Singer, 2005). With a stronger understanding of this issue, sport psychology practitioners will be better equipped to support athletes' psychological and emotional well-being, or to act as consultants with teams when internal conflict or discord arises around these protests.

1. Scope of "Activism"

Prior to item generation for this measure, a cursory review of the literature yielded a number of definitions for activism and seemingly related constructs (e.g., advocacy, collective action, resistance). For example, scholars have defined advocacy as: "… action which encourages a change in the way that an individual, community, or institution makes a decision about the treatment of a disadvantaged group in society" (Fietzer & Ponterotto, 2015, p. 21). Similarly, activism has been defined as: "… engagement in intentional actions that disrupt oppressive hegemonic systems by challenging a clearly defined opposition while simultaneously empowering individuals and groups disadvantaged by inequitable arrangements" (Cooper, Macaulay, & Rodriguez, 2017, p. 4). With a focus on seeking and promoting justice and equality for those living on societal margins, these definitions are consistent with how these terms are used within most mental health professions (Goodman et al., 2004; Hargons et al., 2017; Kiselica & Robinson, 2001; Ratts, Singh, Nassar-McMillan, Butler, & McCullough, 2016; Vera & Speight, 2003). Our review of the literature, however, also revealed that "political behavior" in sports is not always in the service of social justice, but can also be aimed at undermining equality or further disenfranchising certain identity groups. These forms of advocacy, by athletes such as Tim Tebow, Curt Schilling, Jaelene Hinkle, and others who have spoken out against abortion or LGBTQ + rights, are typically counter protests aimed at slowing or reversing social progress (Best, 2018; Butterworth, 2014; Fagone, 2010). Therefore, in order to broaden the current scale's utility for future research on *all* forms of political engagement, we employed Klar and Kasser's (2009) definition of activism:

> … The behavior of advocating some political cause (for instance, protecting the environment, human rights issues, opposing abortions, or preventing wars) via any of a large array of possible means, ranging, for example, from institutionalized acts such as starting a petition to unconventional acts such as civil disobedience (p. 757).

2. Historical context of athlete activism

Sociopolitical activism in sport has a long and well-documented history (Kaufman & Wolff, 2010). Of note, professional and Olympic athletes are not alone in their public engagement with social and political issues, as political protests have also occurred within amateur-level sports such as college and high school (Frederick et al., 2017; Ortiz, 2018). Over the years, sport-based activism has typically fallen into two camps: that which seeks change within sport itself, and that which uses the platform of sport to seek broader societal change (Bundon & Clarke, 2015; Darnell, 2012). Of course, these categories are neither distinct nor mutually exclusive, as it is often the case that an athlete's protest toward issues within sport can have broader societal implications (Bundon & Clarke, 2015). Nevertheless, examples of "within-sport" activism include the long history of advocacy for athletes with disabilities (Bundon & Clarke, 2015; Smith et al., 2016), protests of gender-based wage inequality (Das, 2018; Domonoske, 2017), and efforts to challenge sport-based ills such as doping, corruption, racism, sexism, and homophobia (Darnell, 2012). Examples of activism related to broader societal issues include the iconic protests against racial injustice by Tommie Smith and John Carlos during the 1968 Olympics in Mexico City, as well as actions by numerous other sports figures (e.g., Muhammad Ali, Billie Jean King, Kareem Abdul Jabaar, and Mahmoud Abdul-Rauf), who have risked their well-being and careers to speak out on a wide range of issues, including racial inequality, LGBTQ + rights, poverty, child labor, and war (Kaufman, 2008; Kaufman & Wolff, 2010).

It is also important to note that modern forms of athlete activism often use social media as a platform for propagating political beliefs. Athletes can now engage with the public instantaneously, and many have used these forums to speak out on various issues (Schmittel & Sanderson, 2015; Yan et al., 2018). On the other hand, social media also permits those who disapprove of athlete activism to share their discontent with athletes directly, and it has made this criticism, including that which is often racialized in tone or content (Frederick et al., 2017; Keum & Miller, 2017; Sanderson et al., 2016), more readily visible.

3. Attitudes toward athlete activism

The dearth of quantitative research on attitudes toward athlete activism yielded a limited backdrop for the current study. Nevertheless, a few recent qualitative studies (Frederick et al., 2017; Gill, 2016; Sanderson et al., 2016) have explored online reactions to athlete protest and identified a number of themes. Among them, there seems to be a widespread belief that sports and "politics" (defined broadly) are fundamentally incompatible. In some cases, critics have simply demanded that these domains be divorced and compartmentalized (e.g., "*Keep race and politics and sexual orientation out of sports, period*"; Frederick et al., 2017, p. 27). In other cases, outrage toward athlete protests seems to come from fans' sense of being cheated out of that which they paid money to come see (e.g., "*When I go to a concert and spend my hard earned money to watch [a band] … I don't want to hear their rants on political views … I feel the same about a game. I am there to be entertained.*"; Gill, 2016, p. 406). In a similar vein, research also points to a pattern of attitudes suggesting that political protest is not part of an athlete's job or responsibilities, that it is ineffective and futile, and in

some cases, that it even reflects a lack of sportsmanship or professionalism (Kaufman, 2008; Sanderson et al., 2016).

There are also criticisms suggesting that athletes are neither intelligent nor informed enough to voice credible opinions on political issues (Butterworth, 2014; Gill, 2016; Sanderson et al., 2016). For a recent example, consider the Fox News commentator who described political statements by NBA player LeBron James as "… *barely intelligible, not to mention ungrammatical*", and cautioned viewers about taking "… *political advice from someone who gets paid $100 million a year to bounce a ball … Keep the political commentary to yourself … shut up and dribble*." (Sullivan, 2018). Comments like this, directed toward a Black athlete, are consistent with racial stereotypes related to Black athleticism and White intelligence that often serve to organize and reinforce racial power dynamics in sport (Ferber, 2007; Schmittel & Sanderson, 2015; Smith & Martiny, 2018).

There are also those who feel that an individual athlete's political actions are disruptive to or undermining of a team's culture or success (Frederick et al., 2017). While it is the case that certain examples of athlete activism have triggered within-team discord (Kaufman, 2008), other examples show that athletes who engage in protest (e.g., Kaepernick) are often valued and admired by their colleagues (Maiocco, 2016). In other words, the perceived incompatibility between politics and team cohesion may have more to do with widespread athletic norms that prioritize a team's collective identity and interests over those of the individual (Schroeder, 2010).

Finally, behavioral reactions toward athlete activism often include calls for these athletes to be punished, benched, cut from a team, or lose their scholarships (Frederick et al., 2017; Gill, 2016; Sanderson et al., 2016). In this sense, many attitudes seem to include a behavioral dimension (Hogan, 2015), such as a call for action ("*We must hit them in the wallet … boycott all games and merchandise*"; Sanderson et al., 2016, p. 311).

4. The current study

The existing research on athlete activism (only a small subset of which has been quantitative in nature) has offered up a preliminary understanding of the kinds of reactions these athletes can face and has raised a number of important research questions concerning the psychosocial factors underlying these reactions (Frederick et al., 2018). Given the limited methodological tools available to examine this phenomenon using quantitative methods and larger samples, the current study developed and tested the psychometric properties of the Attitudes Toward Athlete Activism Questionnaire (ATAAQ). It was our intention to develop a scale that can be used to measure reactions toward athlete political behavior across a range of competitive levels of sport (i.e., professional, Olympic, collegiate, amateur, high school).

We first developed an initial pool of items and conducted exploratory and confirmatory factor analyses to determine the most suitable factor structure. We also examined construct validity by testing the relationships between ATAAQ scores and several other theoretically relevant variables. We designed the ATAAQ so that higher scores indicate more negative attitudes toward athlete activism.

To test convergent validity, we examined several constructs and orientations that should converge or overlap with the ATAAQ. First, we hypothesized that ATAAQ scores would correlate negatively with social justice attitudes (i.e., more favorable attitudes toward athlete activism would be associated with more favorable attitudes toward social justice) given that both constructs share a foundation of social justice interests. Items in the ATAAQ were purposefully designed to be politically or socially "neutral". Nevertheless, as most of the well-known examples of athlete activism in recent years have been oriented toward social justice, we predicted that many participants would inevitably be "primed" to respond to ATAAQ items accordingly. Second, we also expected ATAAQ scores to be negatively correlated with political orientation, such that individuals who held more negative attitudes toward athlete activism would self-report more conservative political identities. This hypothesis was based in part on research and theory around social dominance orientation (or one's preference for inequality among groups), which has been shown to be positively and significantly correlated with conservatism (Pratto, Sidanius, Stallworth, & Malle, 1994). Third, we also predicted ATAAQ scores to be negatively correlated with subjective social class. This hypothesis was informed by prior research on system justification theory, which seeks to explain how people from disadvantaged groups are often psychologically motivated to legitimize or rationalize the status quo, even though it is against their best interests, because it serves to alleviate any anxiety or discomfort toward perceived inequality (Jost & Hunyady, 2002).

We also tested criterion validity by examining several constructs as expected or theory-driven precursors or outcomes to ATAAQ. We hypothesized that ATAAQ scores would negatively correlate with social justice subjective norms (e.g., social just norms around one's social circle). We based this prediction on prior research showing that individuals who sense greater support for activism among surrounding peers are more likely to report an intention to engage in activism themselves (Fielding, McDonald, & Louis, 2008). While the ATAAQ does not measure one's personal intention to engage in activism, we expected a similar effect for one's attitudes toward *others'* engagement in activism.

Some of our other hypotheses drew on the theory of planned behavior (Ajzen, 1991), which posits that one's intention to engage in a particular behavior can be predicted by, among other variables, one's attitudes toward that behavior (Ajzen, 1991; Torres-Harding, Siers, & Olson, 2012). Research using the theory of planned behavior has also explored individuals' perceived behavioral control when it comes to social justice issues, but such studies have yielded mixed results, indicating that this variable is an inconsistent predictor of one's intention to engage in activism (e.g., Fielding et al., 2008; Kelly & Breinlinger, 1995). In the current study, we hypothesized that a lack of perceived control regarding issues of social justice would be positively correlated with unfavorable attitudes toward athlete activism. We also hypothesized that one's belief in a just world would correlate positively and significantly with ATAAQ scores, given findings from other scale development papers that suggested that just world beliefs are associated with less favorable attitudes toward social justice and lower personal intention to engage in social justice-related behaviors (Dalbert & Yamauchi, 1994; Torres-Harding et al., 2012).

Finally, in line with the theory of planned behavior (Ajzen, 1991), we tested predictive validity by exploring whether ATAAQ scores would predict one's intention to engage in activism behaviors. As attitudes toward sport-based activism might also be related to one's attitudes toward activism and social justice more broadly, we thought that they might also predict one's *intention* to engage in activism or social justice behaviors. As such, we hypothesized that ATAAQ scores would negatively and significantly predict scores on one's personal activism orientation and behavioral intentions related to social justice, such that higher ATAAQ scores (i.e., less favorable attitudes) would predict lower personal activism intentions.

5. Method

5.1. Scale development

Definitions for the constructs underlying this scale were carefully selected to demarcate clear criteria for item development and ultimately maximize the utility of the scale with regard to ecological validity and content representation (see recommendations for scale development put forth by Clark & Watson, 1995; DeVellis, 2016; Worthington & Whittaker, 2006). In addition to the aforementioned definition of "activism" (Klar & Kasser, 2009), we defined "athlete", broadly, as an individual who participates in organized sport. We intentionally avoided further specification, in the interest of maximizing

scale utility for future researchers who may wish to explore athlete protest outside of professional sports (e.g., Frederick et al., 2017).

Drawing on a review of the extant literature as well as survey of content from online social media platforms, the lead author developed an initial pool of 50 items. Items were written to reflect a tripartite understanding of attitudes (Hogan, 2015), as having a cognitive dimension (someone's thoughts, especially conscious, about an object or issue), an affective dimension (someone's feelings or emotions about an object or issue), and a behavioral dimension (someone's actions or likely actions toward an object or issue).

Using this as a foundation, we gradually identified six theoretical domains. In addition to an affective domain (emotional reactions) and a behavioral domain (actions or desired actions in response to athlete activism), we identified four other main content areas, drawing primarily on findings from several recent qualitative studies (Frederick et al., 2017; Gill, 2016; Sanderson et al., 2016). These included: social duty or effectiveness of athlete activism (whether athletes have a duty to speak out and whether such activism is thought to be ineffective); qualifications or credibility of athletes (perceiving athletes to be politically ignorant or misinformed); incompatibility with sports (that sports should be kept apolitical); and incompatibility with team cohesion or success (that activism disrupts a team's performance or the team culture). In our review of the literature and in the process of developing this scale, we anticipated these theoretical domains to capture the multidimensionality of this construct and constitute the overall attitudes toward athlete activism.

The initial pool of items was subject to several rounds of revision with other research lab members. Throughout this process, items were intentionally phrased to maintain political neutrality (Corning & Myers, 2002; Klar & Kasser, 2009), in the interest of maximizing scale utility. We incorporated the neutral stem "… *athletes who speak out on political or social issues* …" into all items, with the exception of one alternatively-worded item ("I think sports and politics should not mix") which was drawn directly from social media content. Efforts were made to avoid "double-barreled" items and to generate items that were relatively concise and clear. The goal throughout this process was to generate a pool of items that clearly and comprehensively assessed the construct (Clark & Watson, 1995; Worthington & Whittaker, 2006). We chose to only include negatively worded items, in order to avoid complications that can arise from the use of reverse scoring (Roszkowski & Soven, 2010; Woods, 2006).

In accordance with best practices in scale development (Worthington & Whittaker, 2006), a revised pool of 40 items was subsequently distributed to three subject matter experts (SMEs) in the areas of sport and exercise psychology, sport sociology, and social justice in sport for review and qualitative feedback. Reviewer feedback did not result in the deletion of any further items, but adjustments were made to the phrasing of several items across the pool.

When completing the ATAAQ, participants indicated, on a 7-point Likert type scale, the degree to which they disagreed or agreed with each item (i.e., *Strongly Disagree, Moderately Disagree, Slightly Disagree, Neutral, Slightly Agree, Moderately Agree, Strongly Agree)*. The prompt read: "*People have different beliefs and feelings about athletes who speak out publicly on political or social issues. Below is a list of items reflecting* ***your own*** *beliefs and feelings. Please answer each item as honestly as possible. There are no right or wrong answers.*"

5.2. Procedure

Following approval by our university institutional review board (#1101435-2) participants were recruited through a combination of targeted advertising on social media (e.g., Facebook, Reddit) and snowball sampling. Research advertisements offered individuals over the age of 18 the opportunity to complete a set of surveys on "athlete protest" in exchange for the chance to win one of four $25 Amazon gift cards. These ads also included a neutral sport-related image (e.g., sport equipment), as the authors wished to avoid any priming effects that might result from using an image of an athlete engaged in political/social activism. Participants were given the option of opting out of the survey at anytime.

Following informed consent, participants completed a set of online questionnaires, including the ATAAQ item pool, several measures to test construct validity, two attention check items (e.g., "Please select Strongly Agree"), and a number of demographic items.

5.3. Participants

We recruited a sample of 713 participants, ranging in age from 18 to 82 years old (M = 32.51, SD = 12.95) with 64.8% of them self-identifying as male, 21.7% as female, 0.3% as genderqueer/non-binary, and 1.3% reporting another gender identity. Approximately 1.5% of the sample identified as transgender. A majority of participants (67.9%) self-identified as White/Caucasian, and other participants identified as American Indian/Alaskan Native (0.8%), Asian/Asian American (3.8%), Black/African American (2.2%), Hispanic/Latino/a/x (2.8%), Middle Eastern/Arab (0.7%), or another race/ethnicity (1.3%). About 8.6% of the sample identified as multiracial and 11.9% did not report a racial or ethnic identity. A majority of the sample (76.6%) identified as heterosexual, with the remainder identifying as lesbian/gay (2.1%), bisexual (5.6%), asexual (1.3%), or another sexual orientation (2.5%). In terms of political orientation, the sample leaned slightly liberal, with 3.4% identifying as "very conservative", 5.6% conservative, 12.1% moderately conservative, 10.5% moderate, 15.7% moderately liberal, 19.5% liberal, 13.3% very liberal, 8.4% another political orientation, and 11.5% not providing a response. Most participants identified as atheistic (24.7%), agnostic (23.8%), Protestant (15.1%), or Catholic (11.1%). When asked to report their highest level of athletic experience, 41% of participants indicated high school, 22.2% of participants indicated recreational, and 12.7% indicated collegiate or higher (semi-professional, professional, or Olympic). Approximately 78.5% of participants reported being born in the United States. Only 13.3% of participants indicated that sports were "not at all important" in their lives, with the remainder reporting that sports were either slightly, moderately, or extremely important.

5.4. Measures

Activism Orientation Scale (AOS). The AOS is a 35-item scale measuring individuals' "propensities to engage in activist behaviors" (Corning & Myers, 2002, p. 723). Respondents indicate on a 4-point Likert scale (*Extremely Unlikely, Unlikely, Likely,* or *Extremely Likely*) the extent to which they are likely to engage in a given activist behavior in the future. In addition to an overall score, responses on the AOS can be calculated to reflect two subscales: 28 items measuring an individual's likelihood of engaging in "Conventional" forms of activism (e.g., *"Boycott a product for political reasons"*) and the other seven items measuring one's likelihood of engaging in "High-Risk" forms of activism (e.g., *"Engage in a political activity in which you feared for your personal safety"*). Higher scores on the AOS indicate greater propensity for engaging in activist behaviors. Across six separate samples, researchers found strong support for internal consistency of the overall AOS (Cronbach's α ranged from 0.87 to 0.97), as well as the High-Risk (alphas ranging from 0.87 to 0.92) and Conventional (alphas ranging from 0.81 to 0.96) scales. Activism orientation has been shown to correlate positively and significantly with an individual's awareness that they are at a disadvantage in relation to other individuals or groups as well as one's sense of sociopolitical control and one's past engagement in issue-specific activism (Corning & Myers, 2002). For the current study, we used the Total AOS score as a measure of construct validity, as our ATAAQ items did not specify whether an athlete's activism was "high-risk" or "conventional". We calculated McDonald's omega reliability coefficients rather than Cronbach's alphas for each of the scales

(including the ATAAQ) in the current study, given recent recommendations in the psychometric literature (Dunn, Baguley, & Brunsden, 2014). The McDonald's omega for the AOS in the current study was 0.96.

General Belief in a Just World Scale (BJWS). The BJWS (Dalbert, Montada, & Schmitt, 1987) is a six-item scale measuring the degree to which an individual believes that the world is a just place and people in it get what they deserve. Individuals respond to each item (e.g., "*I am confident that justice always prevails over injustice*.") using a 6-point Likert scale ranging from *Strongly Disagree* (1) to *Strongly Agree* (6). Total scores are calculated by averaging responses across all six items. The original scale development article cites a high reliability coefficient for the BJWS ($\alpha = 0.82$), and subsequent studies have shown that individuals who believe in a just world are more likely to view the situation of a particular disadvantaged group as just (Dalbert & Yamauchi, 1994). The McDonald's omega for the current study was 0.84.

Social Justice Scale (SJS). The SJS is a 24-item scale designed to "measure favorable attitudes toward intentions to engage in social action" (Torres-Harding et al., 2012, p. 80). Items are rated on a 7-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (*Strongly Disagree*) to 7 (*Strongly Agree*). The SJS is divided up into four subscales: Attitudes Toward Social Justice (11 items; e.g., *"I believe that it is important to respect and appreciate people's diverse social identities."*); Social Justice Perceived Behavioral Control (5 items; e.g., *"I am confident that I can have a positive impact on others' lives."*); Social Justice Subjective Norms (4 items; e.g., *"Other people around me are supportive of efforts that promote social justice."*); and Social Justice Behavioral Intentions (4 items; e.g., *"In the future I intend to engage in activities that will promote social justice."*). The SJS is based on the theory of planned behavior (Ajzen, 1991), which conceptualizes how attitudes inform individual behaviors. Internal consistency for each of the four subscales has been shown to be strong, with coefficient alphas ranging from 0.82 to 0.95. Furthermore, scores on all four SJS scales have significantly and positively correlated with motivation to engage in public service, and have shown significant negative relationships with subtle racism, neosexism, and just world beliefs (Torres-Harding et al., 2012). McDonald's omegas for all four SJS scales in the current sample were above 0.89.

Demographics. Participants also completed a series of demographic items designed to assess age, gender identity, racial/ethnic identity, political orientation, social class, etc. Participants were also asked to indicate their highest level of athletic experience, and the extent to which sports are "important in your life" using a 4-point Likert scale (Not at All Important – Extremely Important). Participants were asked to select the option that best described their social class among: lower class, working class, middle class, upper middle class, and upper class.

5.5. Data cleaning and preparation

Data collection yielded an initial pool of 945 respondents. Of the 945 cases, we removed 204 cases in which participants dropped out of the study before completing the full ATAAQ (the first survey), as well as 28 cases in which participants responded to both attention check items incorrectly. All participants in the remaining total sample ($N = 713$) had completed 100% of the ATAAQ. This total sample ($N = 713$) was randomly split, so that approximately half ($N = 394$) of the participants could be used for the EFA and the other half ($N = 319$) could be used to conduct a CFA (Schreiber, Nora, Stage, Barlow, & King, 2006). A slightly larger number of our sample was assigned to EFA as EFA is a large-sample procedure and generalizable or replicable results in the CFA are unlikely if the sample is too small (Costello & Osborne, 2005). No significant differences between the two samples were found across any of the demographic variables (race/ethnicity, gender, age, etc.).

For tests of construct validity (using the full sample, $N = 713$), we further removed cases that were missing more than 10% of the data on other variables and demographic items (Schlomer, Bauman, & Card, 2010), leaving a total sample of $N = 629$ (an additional 84 cases removed). We examined minimum and maximum scores for each item and missing values. Of this sample, 20 cases still had *at most* 10% missing data. We handled missing data with full-information maximum likelihood in Mplus 7.11 (Enders, 2010), which computes a casewise likelihood function using full information of available sample rather than replacing or imputing missing data. Little's missing complete at random (MCAR) test in SPSS was significant, suggesting that missing data in our sample are not completely random, $\chi^2(3626) = 3986.53$, $p < .001$. We examined our dataset ($N = 629$) more closely and found that no items on any of the validity scales had more than 4 missing data points. We determined that the significant MCAR test could be attributable to respondent fatigue, given the combined length of the questionnaires. Furthermore, of the limited missing data, certain participants seemed to be missing multiple items on multiple scales, suggesting that this may be due to individual variance rather than item variance.

6. Results

6.1. Step I: exploratory factor analysis

We conducted an exploratory factor analysis (EFA) in SPSS 24.0 for data driven identification of an initial factor structure for the ATAAQ (DeVellis, 2016). Bartlett's test of sphericity was significant ($\chi^2(780) = 23638.91$, $p < .01$), and the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) test yielded a value of 0.98, suggesting that the sample was adequate and sufficiently factorable (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2001). We conducted parallel analysis (1000 simulations), a simulated factor retention technique, to determine the appropriate initial number of factors to be retained and interpreted (O'Connor, 2000).

Factor structure. Results from parallel analysis (initial scree plot and eigenvalues) suggested that a two-factor structure may potentially be the best fit. The screeplot indicated a sharp bend of the elbow at the second factor mark. Based on 1000 random data sets, the first two factors had raw data eigenvalues (28.48, 1.78, 1.07, 0.84, 0.73, 0.65) that were greater than the simulated random eigenvalues (1.53, 1.47, 1.42, 1.38, 1.35, 1.19). Together, this initial two-factor solution accounted for 76.98% of the total variance in the 40-item pool. We employed principal axis factoring with direct oblimin rotation for our EFA as we expected the factors to correlate with each other as part of the shared attitudes concerning athlete activism. We extracted and examined the suggested two-factor solution but the resulting model lacked conceptual interpretability or clarity across the two factors. All 40 items loaded on one of the factors, and five of the items registered cross-loadings on both factors. Given this poor fit to the data, we proceeded to examine three-, four-, five-, and six-factor models that were more relevant to our theoretical six-factor model.

We examined the pattern matrix coefficients for each model to remove items that were psychometrically and conceptually inadequate, and to optimize scale utility and length. Each problematic item was removed on a case-by-case basis and sequentially after each refactoring. In examining the fit of each model, we approached item removal based on the following criteria (Worthington & Whittaker, 2006): (a) items had to load onto a single factor with a coefficient greater than 0.40 while loadings on other factors remained below 0.40; (b) if an item did load on multiple factors, the difference between the absolute values of the coefficients had to exceed 0.20; and (c) any items failing to noticeably load onto a single factor (> 0.30) or with ambiguous loadings on multiple factors (< 0.20 difference between coefficients) were to be removed entirely. We also aimed to ensure that any one factor had at least three items, that factors were relatively comparable sizes (i.e., similar number of items), and that the overall number of items was not too high. We also emphasized conceptual clarity in our removal process following the suggestion of Worthington and Whittaker (2006), who

noted that, "Conceptual interpretability is the definitive factor-retention criterion. In the end researchers should retain a factor only if they can interpret it in a meaningful way no matter how solid the evidence for its retention …" (p. 822).

Of these four models, the three-, four-, and five-factor models each exhibited a number of issues (cross-loadings, lack of factor interpretability, and lack of conceptual clarity). The six-factor model showed the cleanest pattern matrix and made the most conceptual sense in line with our theoretical model; however, no items loaded onto the sixth factor. Based on the pattern matrix, and prior to any item removal, this initial six-factor model showed items to be grouped largely according to five of the six theoretical domains we used in item development.

In hindsight, the "disappearance" of a sixth domain was unsurprising. A few of the original themes had been somewhat similar in definition/content and items were subsumed under other factors. Six out of the seven items from the domain titled "compatibility of political activism with sport" were ultimately removed due to issues with cross loading, no loading, or lack of conceptual fit. The remaining item ("*I think that it's not part of an athlete's job to speak out publicly on political or social issues*") loaded under the factor reflecting "athlete role".

Ultimately, the process yielded a five-factor model that showed the greatest conceptual clarity and interpretability, while resembling our original theoretical structure based on prior research. Twenty-one items were deleted using the aforementioned criteria: 14 items were removed for failing to meet the loading threshold, four items for cross loadings with less than 0.20 difference, and three items were removed for lacking content validity/conceptual fit. We examined the 21 items that were not retained in the final scale and could not discern a systematic pattern in the removal process, with the exception of the disappearance of a sixth domain and the removal of all but one of the items in this domain. We attributed the removal of some of these items to differences in structure (e.g., "*I think sports and politics should not mix*.").

This ultimately yielded a 19-item, five-factor solution. Together, this five-factor solution accounted for 86.41% of the total variance in the 19-item pool (83.23% of the 40-item pool). Variance explained by each factor was 68.51%, 7.43%, 4.12%, 3.67%, and 2.68%, respectively. As shown in Table 1, all 19 remaining items had significant loadings of 0.53 or higher, with a minimum difference of 0.31 in cross loadings between items. All five of the scales showed strong internal consistency as indicated by reliability coefficients ranging from 0.88 to 0.97 and were correlated with each other at moderate to high effect sizes. McDonald's omegas for each of the five factors and factor intercorrelations are presented in Table 3.

Factor labeling. We selected factor names by discussing content representation and items with highest loadings within each factor, while drawing upon phrasing used in prior literature (e.g., Frederick

Table 2
CFA factor loadings for the 19-item ATAAQ.

Item	Factor				
	1	2	3	4	5
Factor 1: Affective Reactions					
Item 4	.93				
Item 13	.93				
Item 18	.95				
Item 36	.92				
Item 28	.90				
Factor 2: Perceived Conflict With Team					
Item 16		.88			
Item 38		.92			
Item 33		.92			
Item 12		.83			
Factor 3: Athlete Role					
Item 35			.79		
Item 17			.85		
Item 30			.90		
Factor 4: Lack of Political Credibility/Qualifications					
Item 15				.93	
Item 2				.86	
Item 7				.75	
Factor 5: Desired Consequences/Punishment					
Item 40					.91
Item 37					.93
Item 25					.95
Item 20					.82

Note. All loadings are significant at $p < .01$

Table 1
EFA factor loadings (Pattern matrix coefficients) for the 19-item ATAAQ.

Item	Factor					
	1	2	3	4	5	h^2
Factor 1: Affective Reactions						
4. When athletes speak out on political or social issues, it makes me upset.	**.83**	.06	-.01	.03	.04	.84
13. When athletes speak out on political or social issues, it makes me angry.	**.82**	-.01	-.01	.05	.11	.88
18. It bothers me when athletes speak out on political or social issues.	**.79**	.08	.09	.05	.00	.90
36. It disgusts me when athletes speak out on political or social issues.	**.74**	-.01	.02	-.01	.23	.87
28. I get annoyed when athletes speak out on political or social issues.	**.74**	.08	.17	.07	-.05	.87
Factor 2: Perceived Conflict With Team						
16. When athletes speak out publicly on political or social issues, I think it causes tension among teammates.	-.14	**.91**	.07	.01	.05	.80
38. I think that it creates issues in the locker room when athletes speak out on a political or social issue.	.04	**.86**	-.00	-.03	.02	.78
33. I think that it disrupts the team culture when athletes speak out on a political or social issue.	.10	**.79**	.04	.01	.04	.85
12. When athletes speak out on political or social issues, I think it can hurt their team's performance.	.15	**.71**	-.06	.09	-.03	.70
Factor 3: Athlete Role						
35. I don't think athletes have a duty to speak out publicly on political or social issues.	-.02	-.03	**.91**	-.03	.06	.78
17. I think that it's not part of an athlete's job to speak out publicly on political or social issues.	.02	.09	**.68**	.08	.01	.67
30. I don't think it is important for athletes to speak out publicly on political or social issues.	.22	.08	**.53**	.12	-.03	.69
Factor 4: Lack of Political Credibility/Qualifications						
15. I don't think that athletes have the necessary expertise to speak out on political or social issues.	.13	.04	.06	**.83**	-.10	.88
2. I don't think that athletes are informed enough to speak out publicly on political or social issues.	-.02	.09	.06	**.81**	.01	.82
7. I don't think that athletes are intelligent enough to speak out on political or social issues.	-.02	-.03	-.02	**.71**	.19	.65
Factor 5: Desired Consequences/Punishment						
40. I think that athletes who speak out on political or social issues should be cut from their team.	.06	.03	.07	-.03	**.88**	.93
37. I think that athletes who speak out on political or social issues should face negative consequences.	.10	.11	.11	.03	**.69**	.86
25. I think that athletes who speak out on political or social issues should be benched.	.18	.07	-.02	.12	**.67**	.89
20. When athletes speak out on political or social issues, I think they should be shunned by their teammates.	.04	.07	.02	.19	**.66**	.79

Note. Bold indicates which factor item loaded on.

Table 3
Latent variable correlations, descriptive statistics, and reliability coefficients for ATAAQ scales, validity measures, Politics, and socioeconomic status (N = 629).

Scale	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14
1. Affect	–													
2. Conflict	.78**	–												
3. Role	.77**	.82**	–											
4. Credibility	.81**	.74**	.80**	–										
5. Punish	.90**	.72**	.68**	.75**	–									
6. ATAAQ	.94**	.88**	.85**	.85**	.88**	–								
7. AOS	-.28**	-.28**	-.36**	-.29**	-.18**	-.34**	–							
8. BJWS	.48**	.45**	.48**	.45**	.45**	.46**	-.26**	–						
9. SJS-A	-.64**	-.57**	-.64**	-.63**	-.58**	-.64**	.34**	-.40**	–					
10. SJS-PBC	-.23**	-.24**	-.29**	-.24**	-.15**	-.23**	.38**	.01	.45**	–				
11. SJS-N	-.44**	-.42**	-.48**	-.42**	-.37**	-.45**	.41**	-.24**	.59**	.49**	–			
12. SJS-BI	-.65**	-.58**	-.68**	-.63**	-.57**	-.62**	.48**	-.40**	.85**	.60**	.71**	–		
13. Politics	-.60**	-.49**	-.47**	-.53**	-.54**	-.63**	.21**	-.36**	.15**	-.02	.14*	.18**	–	
14. Class	-.14**	-.12**	-.09	-.12**	-.16**	-.10*	-.00	-.05	-.01	.13**	.11**	.09*	.10*	–
M	2.23	3.33	3.80	2.49	1.82	2.67	2.27	2.92	5.91	5.43	4.91	4.99	5.07	6.07
SD	1.76	1.85	2.00	1.70	1.51	1.55	.59	1.01	1.23	1.21	1.57	1.63	1.87	1.65
ω	.97	.93	.88	.89	.95	.97	.96	.84	.94	.89	.93	.91	–	–

Note. Affect = ATAAQ Affective Reactions scale; Conflict = ATAAQ Perceived Conflict With Team scale; Role = ATAAQ Athlete Role scale; Credibility = ATAAQ Lack of Political Credibility or Qualifications scale; Punish = ATAAQ Desired Consequences or Punishments scale; ATAAQ = Total ATAAQ scale; AOS = Activism Orientation Scale; BJWS = Belief in a Just World Scale; SJS-A = Social Justice Attitudes scale; SJS-PBC = Social Justice Perceived Behavioral Control scale; SJS-N = Social Justice Subjective Norms scale; SJS-BI = Social Justice Behavioral Intentions scale; Politics = political orientation; Class = Social class
M = mean; *SD* = standard deviation; **ω** = McDonald's omega reliability coefficient
$^{**}p < .01$, $^{*}p < .05$

et al., 2017; Sanderson et al., 2016). The first factor was named *Affective Reactions*, as all five items captured a particular affective response and reflected emotional dimensions of attitudes toward athlete activism (e.g., "When athletes speak out on political or social issues, it makes me upset."). The second factor, consisting of four items, was named *Perceived Conflict with Team*, representing the degree to which people feel that activism undermines a team's culture or success (e.g., "When athletes speak out publicly on political or social issues, I think it causes tension among teammates."). The third factor was labeled *Athlete Role*, and consisted of three items representing whether one feels that activism should be part of the role of "athlete" (e.g., "I don't athletes have a duty to speak out publicly on political or social issues."). The fourth factor was named *Lack of Political Qualifications or Credibility*, and consisted of three items reflecting the belief that athletes are unqualified to have a voice (e.g., "I don't think athletes have the necessary expertise to speak out on political or social issues."). The fifth and final factor was labeled *Desired Consequences or Punishments*, and comprised four items representing the stance that athletes should be punished for engaging in activism (e.g., "I think that athletes who speak out on political or social issues should be cut from their team.").

6.2. Step II: cross-validation

CFA. We conducted a confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) in Mplus 7.11 to test whether the 19-item five-factor model was a good fit for the data, using the second half ($N = 319$) of the randomly divided sample. We employed maximum likelihood estimation that are robust to non-normality as the omnibus test of multivariate normality (Small, 1980) suggested that the CFA sample was not normal, $\chi^2(80) = 5953.39$, $p < .001$. We assessed the model fit of the correlated five-factor first order model and the following a priori alternative models: an uncorrelated five-factor first order model, a one-factor model, and a five-factor second order model (single higher order factor representing the five first order factors). Though we anticipated a multidimensional structure for the ATAAQ, it is possible that a single factor may better represent overall attitudes. In terms of multidimensionality, we also tested the second order model as we theorized and anticipated that the five factors may collectively reflect a higher order ATAAQ construct that represents overall attitudes.

As recommended by Hu and Bentler (1999) and Worthington and Whittaker (2006), we examined model fit as indicated by the comparative fit index (CFI; > 0.95 for good fit; 0.92 to 0.94 for adequate fit), the root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA; close to < 0.08 for acceptable fit), and the standardized root-mean-residual (SRMR; close to < 0.08 for acceptable fit). Both the correlated five-factor first order model ($\chi^2(142) = 317.93$, $p < .0001$, CFI = 0.96, RMSEA = 0.06, 90% CI [0.05, 0.07], and SRMR = 0.03) and the second order model ($\chi^2(147) = 378.61$, $p < .0001$, CFI = 0.95, RMSEA = 0.07, 90% CI [0.06, 0.08], and SRMR = 0.05) demonstrated good fit. As shown in Table 2, all 19 items had significant loadings of 0.75 or higher. The uncorrelated model demonstrated poor fit according to all indices, $\chi^2(152) = 1195.76$, $p < .0001$, CFI = 0.76, RMSEA = 0.15, 90% CI [0.14, 0.16], and SRMR = 0.50. The one-factor model also indicated poor fit, $\chi^2(152) = 1222.63$, $p < .0001$, CFI = 0.76, RMSEA = 0.15, 90% CI [0.14, 0.16], and SRMR = 0.08. Between the first order and second order models, we ultimately chose the second order model (see Fig. 1) as it preserves the multidimensionality of the construct and also allows the use of a total scale score that represents overall attitudes toward athlete activism.

6.3. Step III: construct validity

We examined construct validity for the ATAAQ through latent variable modeling in Mplus 7.11, using the second order five-factor model and maximum likelihood estimation for robust standardization. We hypothesized and tested theory-based correlations between the five ATAAQ scales and a total score, and eight related constructs: activism orientation (AOS), four social justice scale (SJS) variables (attitudes, perceived behavioral control, norms, and behavioral intentions), belief in a just world (BJWS), political orientation, and social class. We used the total sample ($N = 629$) for validity testing. Latent variable correlations, descriptives, and reliability coefficients (Cronbach's alpha) for ATAAQ and validity scales can be found in Table 3. Effect size thresholds were informed by Cohen, Cohen, West, and Aiken (2003).

Convergent evidence. As hypothesized, social justice attitudes (SJS-A) were negatively and significantly correlated with all five ATAAQ scales and the total ATAAQ score, such that participants with positive attitudes toward social justice reported more favorable attitudes toward athlete activism (i.e., lower ATAAQ scores). Effect sizes were all large (Table 3), with the smallest being for the correlation

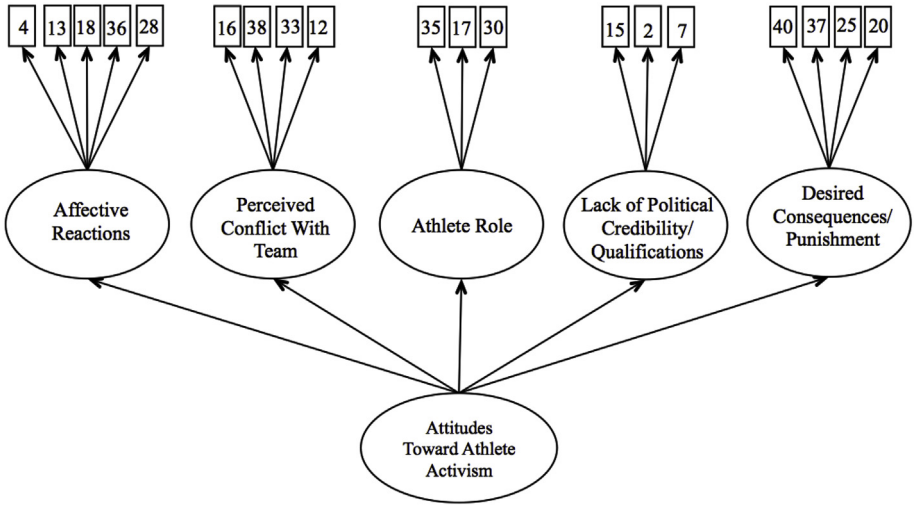

Fig. 1. Five-factor model of the Attitudes Toward Athlete Activism Questionnaire.

between SJS-A and the Perceived Conflict with Team factor, and the largest for correlations with Affective Reactions and Athlete Role. ATAAQ scores were also found to be significantly and negatively correlated with political identity, such that those with conservative political ideologies tended to hold unfavorable attitudes toward athlete activism. Effect sizes ranged from medium to large, with the smallest being Athlete Role and the largest being Affective Reactions.

Finally, the total ATAAQ score and four out of five of the scales (with the exception of Athlete Role) were negatively and significantly correlated with reported social class, such that those who reported a higher social class were also less likely to report negative emotional reactions toward athlete activism, less likely to view athlete activism as incompatible with team interests, less likely to doubt the political credibility of athletes, less likely to express a desire to punish athletes who speak out, and were less likely to report negative overall attitudes. Effect sizes for significant relationships were all small.

Criterion-related evidence. Consistent with our hypotheses, we found that all ATAAQ scores (five scales and total score) correlated negatively and significantly with one's perceived behavioral control when it comes to engaging in social justice. In other words, participants who perceived greater behavioral control were less likely to hold negative attitudes toward athlete activism. All of the effect sizes for relationships between ATAAQ scores and SJS-PBC were small, with the smallest effect found for the Desired Consequences or Punishments factor and the largest effect found for the Athlete Role factor. Similarly, attitudes toward athlete activism were negatively and significantly correlated with social justice subjective norms (a measure of the degree to which someone's social circle is supportive of social justice). Effect sizes for the relationships between ATAAQ scores and SJS-N were all medium. Finally, we observed positive relationships between just world beliefs (BJWS) and all ATAAQ scores, with medium effect sizes.

Predictive evidence. Results from latent regressive paths also supported our hypotheses concerning the predictive validity of ATAAQ scores. Overall ATAAQ scores significantly and negatively predicted scores on the AOS ($b = -0.29$, $p < .01$, $R^2 = 0.09$) and SJS-BI ($b = -0.69$, $p < .01$, $R^2 = 0.47$). The Perceived Conflict factor significantly and negatively predicted AOS ($b = -0.28$, $p < .01$, $R^2 = 0.08$) and SJS-BI ($b = -0.58$, $p < .01$, $R^2 = 0.33$). The Affective Reactions factor significantly and negatively predicted AOS ($b = -0.28$, $p < .01$, $R^2 = 0.08$) and SJS-BI ($b = -0.65$, $p < .01$, $R^2 = 0.43$). The Lack of Political Qualifications or Credibility factor significantly and negatively predicted AOS ($b = -0.29$, $p < .01$, $R^2 = 0.08$) and SJS-BI ($b = -0.63$, $p < .01$, $R^2 = 0.40$). The Athlete Role factor significantly and negatively predicted AOS ($b = -0.36$, $p < .01$, $R^2 = 0.13$) and SJS-BI ($b = -0.68$, $p < .01$, $R^2 = 0.47$). The Desired Consequences or Punishments factor significantly and negatively predicted AOS ($b = -0.18$, $p < .01$, $R^2 = 0.03$) and SJS-BI ($b = -0.57$, $p < .01$, $R^2 = 0.32$). Effect sizes for SJS-BI were all large, while effect sizes for the AOS ranged from small to medium, with the smallest effect for the Desired Consequences or Punishments factor and the largest effect for Athlete Role.

7. General discussion

Professional athletes are playing increasingly prominent roles within public discourse on some of the most significant political and social issues of our time. Yet, despite the many ways sports can serve to both reflect and influence societal consciousness, there have been few scholarly attempts to study the complex relationship between athletes and the broader public, specifically with regard to political activism in sport. To advance research on this topic, we developed the Attitudes Toward Athlete Activism Questionnaire (ATAAQ) to assess different dimensions of attitudes toward athletes who speak out on social or political issues, using best practices in measurement development (DeVellis, 2016; Hu & Bentler, 1999; Worthington & Whittaker, 2006). Exploratory and confirmatory factor analyses on an initial pool of 40 items yielded a finalized 19-item five factor second order model as the most conceptually and psychometrically robust. Each of the five scale scores is calculated by averaging responses among respective items within each factor. The Affective Reactions factor (five items) reflected emotional responses (e.g., angry, upset, annoyed) to athlete activism. A second factor (Perceived Conflict With Team; four items) reflects the perception that athlete activism is incompatible or in conflict with the success or cohesion of the team. The Athlete Role factor (three items) reflected attitudes concerning whether sociopolitical activism is part of an athlete's job or duty. A fourth factor (Lack of Political Qualifications or Credibility; three items) captured attitudes regarding athletes' perceived lack of credibility around political or social issues. Finally, a fifth factor (Desired Consequences or Punishments; four items) represented individuals' belief that athletes who engage in activism should face some sort of repercussion. We also found that these five scales can be represented in a higher order factor, such that total scores on the ATAAQ (calculated by averaging scores across all 19 items) reflect overall attitudes toward athlete activism. All five factors and the total ATAAQ score showed sufficient internal consistency, as evidenced by Cronbach's alpha coefficients of 0.88 and higher.

All five ATAAQ scales and the total scale score demonstrated, for the most part, strong correlations in expected directions with related constructs such as activism orientation, belief in a just world, and social justice attitudes, perceived behavioral control, subjective norms, and

behavioral intentions. First, we found that attitudes toward athlete activism had a significant negative relationship with attitudes toward social justice. Given that much of the recent activism in sport has been focused on issues of injustice (e.g., police brutality), this finding was not surprising. We found similar relationships among ATAAQ factors and political beliefs, such that those who reported unfavorable attitudes toward athlete activism also reported more conservative political ideologies. This raises parallel questions for future research on how ATAAQ scores might be affected by exposing participants to vignettes of athletes who advocate *against* social justice causes (or *for* traditionally conservative ones).

We also found a positive relationship between unfavorable attitudes toward athlete activism and a belief that the world is just and equal. This could suggest that negative views toward athlete activists partly arises from a belief that individuals and groups in society are, for the most part, treated fairly, and that athletes do not have a reason to protest.

Given the relationship between just world beliefs and attitudes toward athlete activism, future research might also explore how people justify the punishment of athletes who take a political stand. For example, system justification theory (SJT) posits that people who believe that systems of inequality are rationalized or justified are more likely to accommodate certain outcomes if they fit into their worldview, and that this effect is especially prevalent among individuals in traditionally disadvantaged groups (Jost & Hunyady, 2002). Similarly, participants in the current study who reported a lower social class were more likely to endorse negative attitudes. It would also be valuable to explore how attitudes are informed by intersections of social class and race, given that our sample was predominantly White. SJT posits that the motive to rationalize an unjust system is often stronger for members of disadvantaged groups, because it serves a palliative effect for any anxiety or discomfort toward an oppressive system (Jost & Hunyady, 2002). We speculate that individuals from socioeconomically disadvantaged backgrounds might be more likely to oppose political protests in sports, because such protests undermine their own psychological motive to buy-in to, and rationalize, a system that oppresses them.

Finally, consistent with our expectations, attitudes toward athlete activism (across all five scales and the total ATAAQ score) significantly predicted personal intentions to engage in activism-related behaviors, as measured by the AOS and SJS-BI scale. Participants who held unfavorable views toward athletes who partake in political behavior also reported lower likelihood of engaging in activism themselves. This aligns with research that has used the theory of planned behavior (Ajzen, 1991), to explain how attitudes toward political activism can predict one's own intentions to engage in political action.

7.1. Limitations

There are several noteworthy limitations to this study that should be considered when interpreting the results. First, the finalized scale was developed within the political, social, educational, and economic context of a western culture, and used a sample made up mostly of White men. Although we avoided common issues related to homogeneity in undergraduate student samples (Peterson, 2001), and made concerted efforts to balance out the sample demographically, people of color and women were still underrepresented. In a review of measures of attitudes toward social justice and advocacy (including the AOS and SJS used in the current study), Fietzer and Ponterotto (2015) noted demographic homogeneity as a concern across the scale development literature: "… there appears to be a philosophical inconsistency in creating a scale for social justice that does not include those populations most impacted by societal inequality … [which risks] unintentionally silencing their voices and furthering institutional power structures" (p. 32). Future research is needed to further validate the ATAAQ with more diverse populations, particularly with those with traditionally marginalized identities.

A second limitation in the current study concerns the integrity of the five-factor structure. Of note, inter-correlations among the five ATAAQ factors were all quite high (nine out of ten of the values were > 0.70; See Table 3). Furthermore, many of the correlations with construct validity variables across factors are all similar (i.e., rows 7–12 in Table 3). While we understand the five ATAAQ factors to be conceptually distinct based on prior literature (Frederick et al., 2017; Sanderson et al., 2016) with regard to their respective underlying constructs (and results from our EFA support this), the data suggest that some of these factors may be statistically more similar than they are distinct. It is important to monitor the degree to which using these scales together can potentially yield multicollinearity and examine the uniqueness of each factor in future studies.

We also recognize that many of our selected construct validity variables in this study are conceptually similar, which may have hindered our ability to discern meaningful statistical differences across the scales. Further research is needed to tease out how these factors may differentially "behave", or relate to other constructs. For example, we might expect some constructs, such as stereotypes and biases people may hold concerning athletes' lack of intelligence or academic ability (Engstrom, Sedlacek, & McEwen, 1995; Sailes, 1993), to be associated more strongly with some ATAAQ scales (e.g., Lack of Political Credibility/Qualifications) than others. We are also curious about whether any of these scales would "perform" differently across certain sub-populations. For example, as a group, athletes and coaches may be more likely to endorse unfavorable attitudes related to potential team conflicts than desired punishment or consequences, since team dynamics are potentially a more salient concern for this group.

Furthermore, we did not examine test-retest reliability for the ATAAQ, resulting in a lack of evidence to support the assumption that ATAAQ scores would be consistent over time. There are also potential limitations associated with Internet sampling and selection bias (i.e., participants who took part in this study because they have an interest in or strong opinions on this issue). Finally, we were not able to test measurement invariance across relevant demographic variables such as political orientation, social class, and race/ethnicity due to sample size. Recruiting larger and more diverse samples and examining test-retest reliability and measurement invariance of the ATAAQ are important directions for further validating this scale.

7.2. Implications for research

These limitations notwithstanding, the ATAAQ offers a new and valuable tool for future research that will deepen our understanding of issues related to athlete activism. The scale was deliberately designed to accommodate research on athlete activism regardless of competitive level of sport (e.g., professional or amateur). Researchers can use the ATAAQ subscales or the total score, depending on the nature of the research question or hypotheses. For example, future research might explore the attitudes of coaches or athletes toward athlete protest, in which case, we might predict the "team conflict" dimension of attitudes to hold greater weight among these populations, given the value tied to team unity and cohesion when it comes to performance and success (Schroeder, 2010). On the other hand, this factor would likely hold less relevance for athletes who compete in more individualized sports (e.g., track and field, golf, boxing).

Alternatively, studies seeking to understand or predict behavioral backlash on the part of coaches, teammates, or fans, might use the Desired Consequences or Punishments scale of the ATAAQ. Furthermore, several of the ATAAQ scales may be useful for examining racialized dynamics between Black athletes and White fans. Given common stereotypes in sport around the perceived athleticism of Black athletes and intelligence of White athletes (Ferber, 2007; Smith & Martiny, 2018), research aimed at exploring these dynamics might utilize the Lack of Political Qualifications or Credibility scale as a measure of perceived athlete ignorance.

We also expect the ATAAQ to support research on people's reactions to different methods of political activism as well as activism for different social and political causes (Darnell, 2012). Given that prior research has suggested that some *methods* of activism, irrespective of the social issue, may be more acceptable than others (Bundon & Clarke, 2015; Schmittel & Sanderson, 2015), future research might use this scale to explore the palatability of certain forms of political expression (e.g., speaking at a rally, kneeling during the anthem, posting to social media, wearing a t-shirt with a political message), by exposing participants to different vignettes or images, followed by administration of the ATAAQ. Similarly, future studies might use certain ATAAQ scales to study differences in attitudes toward traditionally "neutral" causes (e.g., breast cancer awareness) and activism tied to specific ideologies (e.g., Black Lives Matter).

Finally, in order to avoid complications in internal consistency (Roszkowski & Soven, 2010), we omitted "positively-worded" items that would have reflected favorable attitudes toward this issue. While lower ATAAQ scores do suggest more favorable views of athlete activism, this does not necessarily capture the range of *positive* attitudes that have been identified in prior qualitative research (Frederick et al., 2017; Gill, 2016). We chose to develop a scale comprised solely of negatively worded items partly because the preponderance of publicity and existing research around this issue has focused on backlash these athletes face. Nevertheless, future research might also benefit from the development of a corresponding scale of positively worded attitudinal items (e.g., "By speaking out on political or social issues, I think athletes can make a positive difference in the world.").

7.3. Implications for practice

The ATAAQ may also serve as a potential tool for mental health professionals working with athletes in a clinical or consultation capacity. Given the increased relevance of social media in the modern age, some athletes may wish to post their political views online (Schmittel & Sanderson, 2015), and others may express an interest in more radical forms of protest. Drawing on the theory of planned behavior (Ajzen, 1991), the ATAAQ may help facilitate a discussion around this decision, by exploring one's attitudes toward activism, while the AOS (Corning & Myers, 2002) may help guide conversations around other forms of political engagement the athlete might explore. Finally, for consultants working with teams or organizations, the ATAAQ might also be a useful tool for facilitating group dialogue, should conflicts arise within a team around some members' desire to engage in political protest during an upcoming competition.

Declarations of interest

None.

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