

# NWC ATTITUDES TOWARDS KNEELING AND THE NATIONAL ANTHEM

SOC 340, Sociological Research, presented by Alex Currier, Catelin Haight, and Jaycee Vanderberg



## ABSTRACT

We provide a summary report of a survey on student attitudes toward kneeling during the national anthems prior to NFL games and other athletic events. The study consists of a representative sample of 268 NWC students. The data were collected through a randomized email distribution and computer-assisted interviews during the fall of 2017. Our findings suggest that although NWC students generally recognize systematic disadvantages against people of color in the United States, they have reservations about whether kneeling is an appropriate or effective form of protest; nearly two thirds indicated that kneeling was disrespectful to the country. We also examine whether and how these attitudes are influenced by three other factors: political attitudes, gender, and religiosity. Conservative political attitudes and approval of Donald Trump's presidential were both significantly associated with students' negative attitudes toward kneeling. Women were more likely to approve of kneeling than men, and the effect of gender was partially mediated by political attitudes. The importance of religion was generally associated with stronger disapproval of kneeling during national anthems, but there is some evidence that religious salience has mixed effects on whether students believed kneeling was appropriate, effective, or disrespectful to country. We discuss how these findings reflect and may contribute to a national conversation about the meaning of kneeling in the context of American race relations, patriotism, and religious commitment.

## METHODS

- A representative sample of 268 NWC students collected by random email distribution. 147 students (42%) responded to the email invitation.
- To supplement this sample, an additional 121 computer-assisted interviews were also conducted at locations throughout campus using random sampling techniques.
- Students were asked to indicate to what extent they agreed with each of the following statements:
  - Kneeling during the national anthem is disrespectful to the country.
  - Kneeling during the national anthem protected by the right to free speech.
  - Kneeling during the national anthem is an appropriate way to protest racial inequality.
- We also asked questions about politics, race relations, and demographic information.

## RESULTS

### "People of Color are put at a Disadvantage in the U.S."



71% of the students surveyed agreed to some extent that people of color are put at a disadvantage in the US.

### "Kneeling During the National Anthem is Disrespectful to the Country"



63% of students surveyed agreed in some form that kneeling during the national anthem is disrespectful to our country.

## DISCUSSION

### POLITICAL ATTITUDES

- Approximately 53% of students, reported they were conservative; 27% considered themselves moderate, and 20% considered themselves liberal.
- Gamma analyses confirmed statistically significant relationships (confirmed by a p-values of .000) between positions on the political spectrum (independent variable) and "Is kneeling the national anthem disrespectful to the country?" (dependent variable) and this dependent variable and our independent variable approval of Trump.
- Students who were conservative were more likely to agree with this statement kneeling during the national anthem is disrespectful to the country, while people at the liberal end of the political spectrum disagreed.
- Students that aligned themselves with approval of Trump were more likely to agree that kneeling during the national anthem disrespectful to the country while people at the disapproval end of the spectrum are more likely to disagree.

### GENDER

- To look at a direct relationship, we ran a bivariate analysis 2 times, separating conservatives and liberals in order to factor out political affiliation. We found p-values of 0.049 and 0.045.
- The indirect relationship we found was much more backed up by data: that is, gender had an influence on where one is likely to fall when it comes to political affiliation, which in turn may play a role in their stance on kneeling.
- In running a hypothesis test on the relationship between gender and political affiliation, we found a p-value of 0.011, which was statistically significant.
- In order to make our connection from gender to political affiliation return back to kneeling, we ran a cross tabulation to look at political affiliation in relation to kneeling.
- Our results showed that the people who believe kneeling is disrespectful are more often conservative, and the people who disagree are more liberal.

### RELIGIOSITY

- We examined the relationship between religious salience ("How important is religion to you?") and a question about whether kneeling during the national anthem was an appropriate form of racial protest.
- Our research hypothesis was: the stronger one's religiosity is, the more they will disapprove of kneeling for the national anthem as an appropriate form of protest.
- We were able to come very close to confirming this research hypothesis with a p-value of .051.
- Our data did show that there was a slight negative correlation between the two variables (Gamma = -.139).
- While we cannot formally reject our null hypothesis, the findings suggest more religious students are less likely to perceive kneeling as appropriate.

## CONCLUSION

While the majority of Northwestern students are likely to believe that people of color are put at a disadvantage in the US, they still see kneeling during the national anthem as disrespectful to the country. Political attitudes, gender, and religiosity all play a role in influencing students' stance on kneeling as a form of protest.

- Political attitudes were shown to have significant impacts upon opinions. Students with higher approval of Trump and those who considered themselves conservative were more likely to find kneeling disrespectful than those who did not approve of Trump and considered themselves liberal.
- There was a slight negative correlation between religiosity and whether people saw this form of protest as appropriate; this negative correlation approached statistical significance.
- Gender is likely to influence stance on kneeling most positively through an indirect relationship; gender plays a role in political affiliation, which plays a role in one's stance on kneeling.

## LIMITATIONS

Efforts to reduce potential sampling error caused by researcher bias and unrepresentativeness was conducted through the use of our simple random sampling method for the emailed surveys. If such error exists it could have occurred through inconsistencies in sampling methods in the computer-assisted self-interview portion of the surveys conducted or accidental duplication of responses from individuals taking the survey. Non-response errors were encountered in this study due to unrequited responses from emailed individuals of the sample, incomplete surveys, or specific uncompleted questions. Specific to the questions central to our research the following questions received the following amount of missing cases from as total 267 cases due to nonresponse error

### Contact Information

Research Advisor: [Dr. Chris Hausmann, Department of Sociology, chris.hausmann@nwc.edu](mailto:Dr.Chris.Hausmann@nwc.edu)  
Researchers: [Alex Currier alex.currier@nwc.edu](mailto:Alex.Currier@nwc.edu) [Catelin Haight catelin.haight@nwc.edu](mailto:Catelin.Haight@nwc.edu) [Jaycee Vanderberg jaycee.vanderberg@nwc.edu](mailto:Jaycee.Vanderberg@nwc.edu)

Thank you to the SOC 340 Sociological Research class for their contribution to this work.