


Racial Politics and the Presidency: Analyzing White House Visits by Professional Sports Teams

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Objectives. This article investigates the impact of racial politics on White House visits by professional sports teams. Given increasing political polarization and varying racial compositions of major sports leagues, we hypothesize increased visits and objections over time while the prevalence of nonwhite players in a league detrimentally affects visits with Republican presidents and objections to visiting with them. *Methods.* Utilizing an original data set, we employ binary logistic regression to examine White House visits and objections by champions of six major professional sports leagues between 1993 and 2019. *Results.* We find (1) increased visits and objections over time; (2) a negative relationship between a league's nonwhite composition and the likelihood of a White House visit; and (3) a positive relationship between a league's nonwhite composition and objections to visits with Republican presidents. *Conclusions.* This research provides a more nuanced understanding of how racial politics influences the relationship between the American presidency, society, and culture.

The president's Chief of State role involves hosting public events including honoring championship sports teams at the White House. This activity dates to the Civil War era, providing a long-term connection between the athletic and political realms. During his presidency, Donald Trump demonstrated conflicting feelings toward this time-honored practice, even doing so within the span of a few days. On June 4, 2018, the president released a statement through the Office of the Press Secretary announcing that "the Philadelphia Eagles are unable to come to the White House with their full team to be celebrated tomorrow." The statement asserted that "they disagree with their President because he insists that they proudly stand for the National Anthem, hand on heart, in honor of the great men and women of our military and the people of our country." Finally, the president said that "the Eagles wanted to send a smaller delegation, but the 1,000 fans planning to attend the event deserve better." In response, former Eagles wide receiver Torrey Smith tweeted, "There are a lot of people on the team that have plenty of different views. The men and women that wanted to go should've been able to go. It's a cowardly act to cancel the celebration because the majority of the people don't want to see you. To make it about the anthem is foolish."

Four days later, however, Trump expressed support for another sports team. On June 8, 2018, the president tweeted, "Congratulations to the Washington Capitals on their GREAT play and winning the Stanley Cup Championship...D.C. is popping, in many ways. What a time!" While Trump's statements certainly express varying personal

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viewpoints, this article analyzes the possible impacts of broader cultural and societal forces on these historic visits. Does the modern-day politicization of race and ethnicity play into this relationship between the president and sports teams? This article investigates the impact of racial politics on White House visits by professional teams in all major leagues from 1993 to 2019.

Utilizing an original data set cataloging team visits and objections made by individual players over their attendance, we hypothesize that visits and objections increase over time, while the prevalence of nonwhite players in a league has a detrimental effect on visits with Republican presidents and objections to visiting with them. We test these claims with binary logistic regression and they are supported. A negative relationship exists between the nonwhite percentage of a professional sports league and the likelihood of its championship team visiting the White House, while a positive relationship exists between nonwhite league composition and objections to visits with Republican presidents.

Visits to the White House by members of professional sports teams have become increasingly partisan over time. Once a largely ceremonial and amiable event, recent presidential invitations and team responses to visits signify an overtly hostile political environment. The increasing levels of partisanship and polarization surrounding the event reflect modern American society. National episodes of racial violence and brutality have led to rising political, social, and cultural tensions in the United States. These feelings have, in turn, influenced the relationship between the president and professional sports teams. This research allows for a more nuanced understanding of how racial politics influences the relationship between the American presidency, society, and culture.

History of White House Visits by Professional Sports Teams

Presidential engagement with professional sports teams dates back to the Civil War era, when in 1865, Andrew Johnson personally hosted two amateur baseball franchises, the Washington Nationals and Brooklyn Atlantics, in his home (Allen, 2018). His successor, Ulysses S. Grant, began the present-day tradition of welcoming professional teams to the White House when he met with baseball's Cincinnati Red Stockings (Neumann, 2016). Visits to Washington, DC, increased in the 20th century. The 1924 World Series champion Washington Senators met President Calvin Coolidge the next year (Allen, 2018), becoming the first title-winning professional team to visit the White House. In the following decades, athletes from varying professional sports franchises began meeting with the president. The NBA's Boston Celtics were honored by John F. Kennedy in 1963, while Jimmy Carter hosted a joint event in 1980 for the Pittsburgh Steelers, who had won the preceding year's Super Bowl, along with baseball's Pittsburgh Pirates (Stephens, 2017); this celebration served as a fitting tribute to teams hailing from the famed "City of Champions."

The era of sporadic championships ceremonies ended with the Reagan Administration. Since the 1980s, presidents have honored men's and women's sports teams at the professional and collegiate ranks at the White House with yearly regularity. Reagan added winning traditions with the victorious teams, including a Gatorade-like "popcorn bath" courtesy of the NFL's New York Giants in 1987. At another ceremony, perhaps harkening back to his acting career portraying George Gipp in 1940's *Knute Rockne, All American*, Reagan threw a pass to a Washington Redskins receiver (Neumann, 2016), victors in Super Bowl XXII. George H.W. Bush hosted the first Stanley Cup champions at the White House (Stephens, 2017). Modern presidents have associated themselves with sports in their

personal and professional lives; George W. Bush owned part of the Texas Rangers baseball team while Texas governor, while Barack Obama hosted British Prime Minister David Cameron in Dayton, Ohio at a 2012 March Madness basketball game (Reuters Staff, 2012), and Donald Trump attended Washington Nationals baseball games. Many professional and collegiate sports teams now routinely visit the White House. However, players' visits in Washington, DC have evolved beyond a presidential meet-and-greet photo opportunity, with many teams giving their time through participation in community service projects working with local schools and military personnel.

The Permanent Campaign and Presidential Expectations

Presidents typically invite most winning franchises who dominate in their sport. Due to their routine occurrence, it is logical to assume that hosting winning athletes would be a part of a president's "permanent campaign." This concept represents the state of modern-day presidential politics, arguing that chief executives do not solely strive to win elected office and then move toward governing and enacting preferred policy priorities. Rather, presidents will actively travel and fundraise (Doherty, 2007, 2012), give public speeches (Cook, 2002), and participate in other campaign-style events throughout their tenures. Does this continual flurry of activity help explain why presidents would meet with professional sports teams?

Two competing perspectives may illuminate a president's decision to celebrate a team's victory with a White House event. One line of thinking appears similar to the Hippocratic Oath taken by new doctors: "Do no harm." Politicians may extend invitations to professional sports teams as a way to demonstrate the traditional Chief of State role. Barger (1978) notes that this Rossiter (1956) "hat" is a direct link between a president and the people. Performing ceremonial duties are typically nonconfrontational, and so, presidents may surmise that hosting winning sports teams would not logically harm their public standing or political capital. This would be the expected tactic taken by Bill Clinton, George W. Bush, and Barack Obama. All served in lower-level political offices prior to the presidency (with Clinton and Bush serving in executive roles as state governors), and assumingly comprehended the value of these public events.

An alternative viewpoint would argue that hosting notable athletes would be a strategic maneuver toward elevating a president's image, resulting in a higher level of public acclaim. In this instance, however, team invitations may be utilized with an eye toward partisanship as a way to ignite or reignite a president's base of support. We would potentially expect to view this behavior with Donald Trump. Throughout his presidency, Trump engaged in a permanent campaign unlike any other; unique arena-style rallies served as extensions of his 2016 victory. Casting presidential actions as part of a larger political—and partisan—narrative, we could surmise that Trump's decisions to invite—or deny—a specific team's entry into the White House may come from more overt partisan motives than his direct predecessors.

With presidents engaged in a permanent campaign, the rise in the prevalence of social media usage offers another avenue for connecting with potential voters. Between March 2005 and February 2019, the proportion of U.S. adults who used at least one social media site grew from 5 to 72 percent (Pew Research Center, 2019). A majority of U.S. adults have used YouTube or Facebook, while more than one-third have used Instagram, and almost a quarter have used either Twitter or Snapchat (Perrin and Anderson, 2019). The scope of social media use by the general public provides an ample opportunity for politicians

to directly reach a large portion of potential voters in a manner of seconds outside of the traditional outreach efforts of television advertising, direct mail, automated “robo” calls, and door-to-door canvassing. Utilizing social media allows presidents to bypass the traditional media outlets and “*go directly public*” with their message (Ouyang and Waterman, 2020:15, emphasis in original). To that end, White House visits provide a key opportunity for presidents to seize upon the prevalence of social media use while availing themselves of the campaign potential by directly sharing with the electorate their actions as Chief of State.

Given the evolving prevalence of U.S. presidents inviting championship sports teams to the White House combined with the permanent campaign and increased social media usage, we hypothesize that

H₁: White House visits by championship professional sports teams increase over time.

The Rise of Political Polarization

Political polarization continues to increase among the American electorate (Bartels, 2000; McCarthy, Poole, and Rosenthal, 2006; Baldassarri and Gelman, 2008; Bafumi and Shapiro, 2009; Abramowitz, 2010; Jacobson, 2013; Abramowitz and Webster, 2016; Schier and Eberly, 2016). In his study of presidential and congressional election results from 1952 through 1996, Larry Bartels (2000) finds that the gap between partisan voters and partisan nonvoters doubled over this period. Partisan voting in presidential elections was 15–20 percent higher in 1996 when compared to presidential elections of the 1950s; most notably 77 percent higher in the 1996 Clinton–Dole race than the 1972 Nixon–McGovern contest (Bartels, 2000). These increases in partisanship and polarization continue, particularly among politically active individuals (Pew Research Center, 2017a, 2017b). Additionally, the increasing partisan loyalty that American voters exhibit results in a stark reduction in cases of split ticket voting—further solidifying the partisan divide in the electorate (Jacobson, 2013; Abramowitz and Webster, 2016).

This exponential growth in partisan polarization may be explained, in part, by the similar ideological polarization among Americans. Liberal Republicans and conservative Democrats are rare. A study by the Pew Research Center (2014) finds that “92 percent of Republicans are to the right of the median Democrat, and 94 percent of Democrats are to the left of the median Republican.” Schier and Eberly, 2016:40 assert that “this ideological sorting that has taken place translates into deeply divided political battles.” Along these lines, the increasing prevalence of issue partisanship among Americans provides similar support for the growing ideological divide (Baldassarri and Gelman, 2008; Bafumi and Shapiro, 2009). Bafumi and Shapiro (2009:19) note the arrival of this “New Partisan Voter” as resulting from the “array of economic, racial, and new social and religious values issues [that] have become aligned more visibly to partisanship and to liberal-conservative labels and cues, producing an increasingly issue-based and ideologically based partisan alignment.”

Another piece of the polarization puzzle involves the rise in negative partisanship whereby those identifying as supporters, or even independents who lean favorably toward one party, “have developed increasingly negative feelings about the opposing party and its candidates” (Abramowitz and Webster, 2016:12). This point is evidenced in a 2017 Pew Research Center study where both Democrats’ and Republicans’ disdain toward each other has exploded since the 1990s. Among Democrats, those expressing a “very unfavorable” view of the Republican Party grew from 16 percent in 1994 to 44 percent in 2017; by

nearly the same margin, Republicans with a “very unfavorable” view of the Democratic Party increased from 17 percent in 1994 to 45 percent in 2017 (Pew Research Center, 2017b).

Additionally, the prevalence of contemporary social media use exacerbates the ongoing polarization in the United States. Prior studies find that social media use promotes civic engagement and political participation (see Boulianne’s, 2015, meta-analysis). However, along with this engagement, social media participation creates ideological silos or “echo chambers” whereby individuals self-curate their exposure to content that aligns with their views (Goldie et al., 2014; Bakshy, Messing, and Adamic, 2015; Flaxman, Goel, and Rao, 2016; Bail et al., 2018; Levy, 2020). Furthermore, social media amplifies partisan news, which itself is more emotionally charged than nonpartisan news (Hasell, 2020). This type of exposure to likeminded news content motivates political participation (Stroud, 2011; Brundidge et al., 2014; Knobloch-Westerwick and Johnson, 2014; Wojcieszak et al., 2015), especially online political participation (Feezell, 2016).

Therefore, growing partisan and ideological polarization among Americans coupled with the rise in negative partisanship, increasing social media use, and the formation of ideological “echo chambers” creates a fertile environment in contemporary society for individuals to widely express both their political views—and their objections to others’ views. Accordingly, we hypothesize that

H₂: Overt political objections to White House visits by championship professional sports teams increase over time.

The Role of Race

Race and Voting Behavior

Race has long been a divisive topic in American politics. Since the post–Civil War era, electoral realignments have produced changing support by whites and minority groups toward the Republican and Democratic parties. The passage of the Fifteenth Amendment in 1870, giving suffrage rights to freed African-American¹ males, began to demonstrate these differences. For the remainder of the 19th century, African Americans championed the “party of Lincoln,” and as Schier and Eberly, (2016:34) note, the Republican Party became “regarded as the party of civil rights and equality for African-Americans.” This loyalty lasted until the 1932 election held in the aftermath of the Great Depression, where unemployment in the United States reached nearly 25 percent. The Democratic candidate, then-Governor Franklin D. Roosevelt (D-NY) assembled a diverse coalition of support to defeat incumbent Republican Herbert Hoover; this group included Jews, Catholics, farmers, and African Americans. The New Deal, Roosevelt’s domestic agenda, included social welfare programs causing members of lower socioeconomic classes to realign with the Democratic Party (Hershey, 2017), presently remaining a significant consistency prized by Democratic candidates.

By the 1960s, issues relating to racial equality permeated the United States. Billington (1977:26) writes that “history will award President Lyndon B. Johnson a prominent role in the legal advancement of civil rights for blacks.” Indeed, the former Senate majority leader and vice president worked to improve political and social equality for the African-American

¹While we use the term “African American” throughout this article, others may prefer to use the term “Black.” Both terms are interchangeable for the purposes of our analyses.

community during his tenure in office. His “Great Society” domestic agenda included passage of the Civil Rights Act (1964) and Voting Rights Act (1965) into law. For Milkis (1993), these legislative successes represented the dismantling of legal hurdles toward racial parity while ending the Jim Crow era. Johnson’s “War on Poverty” was further seen as an articulation of Roosevelt’s social welfare policies (Skowronek, 1997) and African Americans voiced their support of Johnson’s efforts at the ballot box as he ran for an elected term. Perhaps displaying the ideological split on societal integration, the Democratic incumbent won 94 percent of the Black vote in 1964, while Republican Barry Goldwater won five segregationist Deep South states (Library of Congress, n.d.).

Attitudes over racial integration precipitated an increasing degree of realignment to occur by the end the decade and beyond. Southern whites, buoyed by Richard Nixon’s “Southern Strategy” began to move closer to the Republican Party. Hershey (2017:154) notes the longer term implications of this movement; in 1952–1960, Southern whites represented a mere 8 percent of Republican supporters but by 2004–2012, this figure had grown to 33 percent. Racial and partisan lines had been drawn. Differing partisan attitudes regarding race and partisan identification began to make their way into campaign rhetoric as national candidates encouraged the voting preferences of particular racial groups. While publicly casting doubt on the credibility of opponent Michael Dukakis’ weekend prison furlough program, Mendelberg (2001) argues that the infamous “Willie Horton” advertisement was used by Republican George H.W. Bush during his 1988 campaign to subtly appeal to white voters without overtly using racist language.

More modern elections continue to highlight partisan differences through rhetoric on race and its impact on voting behavior. Barack Obama used the collectivistic and inclusionary statement of “Yes, We Can” during his historic 2008 campaign. While Obama received a significant 95 percent of the vote share by African Americans (Rosentiel, 2008), white sentiment for the nation’s first black president was not as strong. A list experiment by Redlawsk, Tolbert, and Franko (2010) finds that 30 percent of white respondents were wary of his election. This is also seen in final vote tallies, with Obama only receiving 43 percent of the white vote. (Rosentiel, 2008). Donald Trump took an opposing approach eight years later, specifically using exclusive language alienating many societal groups. As a result, Trump won only 8 percent of African-American voters (Tyson and Maniam, 2016) and 28 percent of Latinx² voters (Krogstad and Lopez, 2016). While race has traditionally played a significant role in understanding partisan support and division, it also contributes to a broader conversation on the direction of American society and culture.

Similar to African-American voters, Latinx voters routinely favor Democratic presidential candidates over Republican presidential candidates, as demonstrated in Table 1. Prior studies show that this pattern persists over presidential elections (Abrajano, Alvarez, and Nagler, 2008; Abrajano and Alvarez, 2010), midterm elections (Leal et al., 2005; Abrajano and Alvarez, 2010), gubernatorial elections (e.g., Jackson, 2011), and local elections (Barreto and Woods, 2005). These patterns of identifying as Democrats and voting for Democratic candidates are consistent across most Latinx subgroups, with Cuban Americans as notable exceptions exhibiting more support for Republicans (Leal et al., 2005; Abrajano and Alvarez, 2010).

However, Latinx voters are more dynamic than their African-American counterparts in their ability to pivot their support (Jackson, 2011). While Latinx voters are not entirely swing voters (Leal et al., 2005), discrimination is a key motivator for potential shifts in

²While we use the term “Latinx” throughout this article, others may prefer to use the term “Hispanic.” Both terms are interchangeable for the purposes of our analyses.

TABLE 1
 Presidential Vote by Race, 1992–2016

	Presidential Election Year						
	1992	1996	2000	2004	2008	2012	2016
Vote for Democratic candidate							
White (%)	39	44	42	41	43	39	37
African American	83	84	90	88	95	93	89
Latinx	61	73	62	53	67	71	66
Vote for Republican candidate							
White (%)	41	46	55	58	55	59	57
African American	10	12	9	11	4	6	8
Latinx	25	21	35	44	31	27	28

SOURCE: Data compiled from Roper Center for Public Opinion Research.

electoral preference as anti-Latino policies can drive Latino voters away from that political party (Segura, Falcon, and Pachon, 1997; Pantoja, Ramirez, and Segura, 2001; Barreto and Pedraza, 2009). Illustrated by Donald Trump’s rhetoric during his 2016 campaign and subsequent executive actions, Republicans recently have advocated for these policies. For instance, in his speech announcing his candidacy, Trump asserted that Mexican immigration was responsible for bringing “problems,” “drugs,” “crime,” and “rapists” to the United States effectively making the country a “dumping ground for everybody else’s problems” and proposed a wall be constructed along the U.S.-Mexico border (Time Staff, 2015). Support for a wall along the entirety of the U.S.-Mexico border was codified in the 2016 Republican Party platform (Republican National Convention, 2016). During his presidency, Trump enacted policies in line with his campaign rhetoric such as executive orders establishing penalties against localities operating as sanctuary cities for undocumented immigrants (Exec. Order. No. 13768, 2017) and authorizing the building of a U.S.-Mexico border wall (Exec. Order. No. 13767, 2017) as well as announcing the rescission of the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) policy initiated under the Obama Administration (U.S. Department of Homeland Security, 2017). Accordingly, the data in Table 1 for the 2016 presidential election illustrate this tendency of Latinx voters to detach from supporting candidates espousing anti-Latino rhetoric and policies. Only 28 percent of this subgroup voted for Trump in 2016—comparable to their support for Republican nominee Mitt Romney in 2012 but noticeably lower than in the 2000, 2004, and 2008 presidential contests.

Racial Composition of Players in Professional Sports Leagues

There are notable differences in the racial composition of players in different professional sports leagues, with some prior explorations employing ecology-derived measures of biodiversity to assess racial composition within professional sports (e.g., Johnson, 2014). Utilizing data on the racial composition of players in six predominant sports leagues in the United States since 1993, Table 2 indicates that nonwhite individuals make up the majority of players in the National Basketball Association (NBA), Women’s National Basketball Association (WNBA), and National Football League (NFL), while white players

TABLE 2
Racial Composition of Players in U.S. Professional Sports Leagues

League	White	Nonwhite	Racial Composition Gap
National Hockey League (NHL)	95.9	4.1	91.8
National Basketball Association (NBA)	20.3	79.7	59.4
Women's National Basketball Association (WNBA)	25.8	74.2	48.4
National Football League (NFL)	30.6	69.4	38.8
Major League Baseball (MLB)	60.1	39.9	20.2
Major League Soccer (MLS)	55.6	44.4	11.2

NOTE: NHL ($n = 21$), NBA ($n = 26$), WNBA ($n = 23$), NFL ($n = 27$), MLB ($n = 28$), MLS ($n = 22$), total ($n = 147$). For years with missing racial composition data and where there was existing data prior to and after the missing year(s), racial composition data for the missing years were imputed by taking the average of the racial composition of the year immediately preceding the missing year (or range of consecutive years) and of the year immediately following the missing year (or range of consecutive years).

SOURCE: NBA, WNBA, NFL, MLB, and MLS data compiled by the authors from reports from The Institute for Diversity and Ethics in Sport. NHL data compiled by the authors from reports from The Institute for Diversity and Ethics in Sport and from news reports during this period by the National Hockey League, WSB-TV(Atlanta), and *USA Today*.

are the majority in the National Hockey League (NHL), Major League Baseball (MLB), and Major League Soccer (MLS).

The racial composition gap between the composition of white and nonwhite players in each league is important to highlight. While there is substantial racial disparity in nearly every league, it is more pronounced in some leagues than in others. For instance, the NHL has the widest racial composition gap between white and nonwhite players; on average since 1993, the league is composed of 95.9 percent white players. Effectively, the NHL has a homogeneous racial composition in terms of its players.

Both professional basketball leagues have sizeable gaps in the racial composition of players, but in the opposite direction of the NHL. On average since 1993, the NBA consists of 20.3 percent white players and 79.7 percent nonwhite players, while the WNBA operates with 25.8 percent white players and 74.2 percent nonwhite players. These respective racial composition gaps of 59.4 and 48.4 percent for the NBA and WNBA indicate that nonwhite players are the overwhelming majority in both professional basketball leagues within the United States.

The NFL's racial composition gap of 38.8 percent is closer than the racial gaps in the aforementioned leagues, but professional football in the United States still possesses a notable racial disparity as 69.4 percent of NFL players are nonwhite. However, there is greater parity in professional baseball and soccer. The MLB has roughly a 60–40 percent split in terms of white and nonwhite players. The MLS is noteworthy for having the smallest racial composition gap between white and nonwhite players—11.2 percent. On average since 1993, white players make up 55.6 percent of the MLS with the remaining 44.4 percent consisting of nonwhite players.

Therefore, knowing that nonwhite voters overwhelmingly prefer Democrats to Republicans combined with the racial compositions of players within each of the six major professional sports leagues in the United States, we hypothesize that

H₃: Championship teams from professional sports leagues with a higher percentage of nonwhite players have fewer White House visits with Republican presidents compared to Democratic presidents.

H₄: Championship teams from professional sports leagues with a higher percentage of nonwhite players express significantly more objections to Republican presidents compared to Democratic presidents.

Methodology

Our study utilizes data on White House visits by champions of the six major professional sports leagues between 1993 and 2019.³ We select this time frame in order to provide multiple presidencies for analysis, testing visits occurring during two Democratic and two Republican administrations. We focus on championship teams from MLB, MLS, NBA, NFL, NHL, and WNBA. These represent the six major professional sports leagues operating in the United States.⁴

White House Visits

We measure White House visits as a dichotomous variable. If at least some members of a championship team appeared at the White House to celebrate with the sitting president we code that as a “visit” (coded as 1) and if there was no scheduled White House celebration or no appearance by any team members at the White House to celebrate we code this as “no visit” (coded as 0). We recognize that some visits might not happen due to nonpolitical reasons, such as scheduling conflicts with teams winning in the final months or weeks of a president’s last term or repeat championship teams simply not wanting to visit for a consecutive time. For instance, the Los Angeles Lakers did not visit the White House after winning a third consecutive NBA Finals title in 2002. However, we still penalize the sitting president with a “no visit” if he did not hold a celebration regardless of logistical hurdles. White House visits can and have occurred under condensed timeframes. Just days before leaving office, President Barack Obama held a celebration at the White House with the Chicago Cubs after they won a World Series title on November 2, 2016. However, we do not attribute a “no visit” against the incoming president if he did not honor the team that won a championship in the closing months of his predecessor’s term as there is no firm expectation that the new president must honor these teams. We compile the data on White House visits from the White House digital archives and popular news and sports media sources.⁵

³The ideal time horizon would begin in 1981 due to Ronald Reagan’s expansion of presidential visits with professional sports teams. However, racial composition data prior to 1993 is not available to our knowledge. Further, it would be difficult to obtain earlier league racial data with any consistency in accuracy.

⁴We exclude the four teams based in Canada that won league championship during this period—the 1993 Toronto Blue Jays (MLB), the 1993 Montreal Canadiens (NHL), the 2017 Toronto FC (MLS), and the 2019 Toronto Raptors (NBA). It is rare that a foreign-based team wins one of the six major professional league championships and while there may be a considerable number of U.S. citizens playing on these teams, there is no expectation for a U.S. president to honor a foreign-based championship team at the White House. Additionally, when a league did not crown a champion such as due to player strikes or lockouts, we exclude that season from our data set.

⁵Source: Boston.com, Deadspin, JoeBucsFan.com, NBA.com, News on 6, Twitter, *The Undeclared*, UPI, *USA Today*, *Washington Examiner*, *The Washington Post*, *Yardbarker*.

Objections to White House Visits

We measure objections as a dichotomous variable. If a member of the championship winning team (i.e., player, coach, manager, or ownership): (1) expressed an objection to visiting the White House to celebrate with the president, (2) expressed the objection prior to the visit taking place, and (3) cited overt political reasons, we code that as an “objection” (coded as 1). If there were no overt political objections prior to the championship team’s White House visit, we code that as “no objections” (coded as 0); this includes cases of team members providing nonpolitical rationales for their absences such as family obligations or having obligations as a member of a new team. We compile the data on objections from an online search of popular news and sports media sources.⁶

Racial Composition of Professional Sports Leagues

We measure the racial composition of white and nonwhite players as yearly ratio variables for each of the six major professional sports leagues. The white racial composition of a league consists of the percentage of white players in that specific league (MLB, MLS, NBA, NFL, NHL, or WNBA) for that year’s season. The nonwhite racial composition of a league consists of the percentage of nonwhite players in that specific league for that year’s season.⁷

We focus our analyses on the white–nonwhite composition of sports leagues, rather than on specific racial or ethnic components, for several reasons. First, as previously discussed, African-American and Latinx voters behave similarly at the polls as they substantially and consistently cast their ballots for Democratic candidates. Therefore, the two most prominent minority groups across each league exhibit similar voting behavior, functioning as consistent Democratic voting blocs. Second, both African-American and Latinx individuals previously and presently face discriminatory rhetoric and policies. While African-American athletes may cite issues with how presidents have addressed policing and Latinx athletes may express objections based on rhetoric or policies concerning immigration, these collective groups are similarly reacting to discriminatory elements. Third, these objections to White House visits come from players of all races, not just athletes who are racial minorities, as white athletes may also express objections to White House visits citing similar rationales.⁸ The focus of our analyses aims at investigating how the racial composition of professional sports leagues may create an environment that impacts the president’s Chief of State function, not how the specific race of players impacts players’ own decisions to visit with the president or make objections. If a league has a greater proportion of minority

⁶Source: 247Sports.com, 9News.com, *Baltimore Sun*, Bleacher Report, Boston.com, BulletsForever.com, CBC, CBS-Boston, CBS Sports, *Chicago Sun-Times*, Chron.com (*Houston Chronicle*), Complex, CNN, *Deseret News*, *Duluth News Tribune*, ESPN, Fox Sports, *Los Angeles Times*, Mashable, *The Mercury News*, *Miami Herald*, NBA.com, NBC Chicago, NBC Sports, *The New York Times*, NFL.com, NHL.com, *NY Daily News*, PennLive.com, People.com, *The Press-Enterprise*, RSL.com, SBNation.com, *The Seattle Times*, Slate, *Time*, *The Undeclared*, *USA Today*, *The Week*, *Washington City Paper*, *Washington Times*, WCVB.com. Additionally, we consulted *Baseball Meat Market: The Stories Behind the Best and Worst Trades in History* (Page Street Publishing Co., 2017) by Shawn Krest.

⁷The nonwhite racial composition of a league is calculated as 100 percent minus the percent of that league’s white composition for that year in order to be inclusive of the diversity of racial and ethnic minorities.

⁸For example, Sean Doolittle, a white pitcher for the Washington Nationals, cited Trump’s “divisive rhetoric” as well as the president’s impact on “widening the divided in this country” as rationale for objecting to and skipping his team’s visit with the president following their World Series championship in 2019 (Dougherty, 2019).

players, this presents an environment where (1) minority players may be emboldened to express their objections and (2) nonminority players may be motivated to support their minority teammates by expressing their own objections. Ultimately, these similarities allow us to be parsimonious in our research design by structuring our analyses of the impact of the racial composition of sports leagues along white–nonwhite distinctions.

We compile NBA, WNBA, NFL, and MLS racial composition data from reports produced by The Institute for Diversity and Ethics in Sport (TIDES).⁹ We compile NHL racial composition data from reports produced by TIDES and from news reports published by the NHL, WSB-TV (Atlanta), and *USA Today*. For years in which there were missing data on racial composition and where we had existing data prior to and after the missing year(s), we impute the data for those missing years by taking the average of the racial composition of the year immediately preceding the missing year (or range of consecutive years) and of the year immediately following the missing year (or range of consecutive years).

We test our hypotheses using binary logistic regression as this method allows us to examine the significance of the relationships between variables. The “White House visit” variable is coded as “1” if at least some members of a championship team appeared at the White House to celebrate with the sitting president and as “0” if there was no scheduled White House celebration or if there was no appearance by any team members at the White House to celebrate. The “objection” variable is coded as “1” if a team member (1) expressed an objection to visiting the White House to celebrate with the president, (2) expressed the objection prior to the visit taking place, and (3) cited overt political reasons. “Objection” is coded as “0” if there were no overt political objections prior to the championship team’s White House visit. The “year” variable is expressed as the year in which the team won their league championship. The “nonwhite” racial composition variable is expressed as the percentage of nonwhite players in that specific league (MLB, MLS, NBA, NFL, NHL, or WNBA) for that year’s season.

Results and Analysis

White House visits by championship professional sports teams appear to increase over time, but with a notable decline under the Trump Administration. As Figure 1 indicates, there is a rise in the number of visits each year by professional teams of the six major sports leagues following their championship victories between 1993 and 2008.

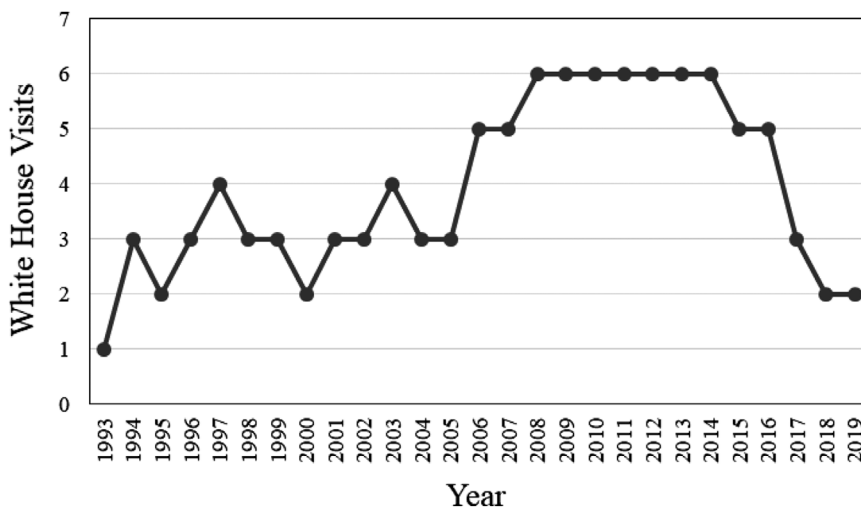
Bill Clinton welcomed 19 championship teams from the six major professional sports leagues during his presidency, averaging about two per year. Visits continued to increase under George W. Bush as he honored 31 championship professional teams over his two terms in office, averaging almost four per year.

This peaked with championship teams from all six leagues receiving a celebration at the White House nearing the end of George W. Bush’s term and through the six years of Barack Obama’s presidency. Since 1993, Obama holds the record for most White House visits by championship professional teams having hosted 48 teams over the course of his presidency, averaging six per year. He began his first term honoring three championship teams who won titles in the final months of the Bush Administration. Throughout Obama’s eight years in the White House, only three championship teams did not receive a celebratory visit with the president; however, the Seattle Sounders of the MLS and the Los Angeles Sparks

⁹The TIDES reports can be found at (<https://www.tidesport.org/>).

FIGURE 1

White House Visits by Professional Sports Teams, 1993–2019



NOTE: $n = 106$.

SOURCE: Data compiled by authors from White House digital archives and popular news media sources.

TABLE 3

Binary Logistic Regression Analysis of White House Visits by Years 1993–2019

	<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>	Wald	df	Sig.	Exp(<i>B</i>)	95% CI for Exp(<i>B</i>)	
							Lower	Upper
Year	0.047	0.024	3.715	1	0.054	1.048	0.999	1.099
Constant	−93.470	48.885	3.656	1	0.056	0.000		

NOTE: $n = 155$.

SOURCE: Data compiled by authors from White House digital archives and popular news media sources.

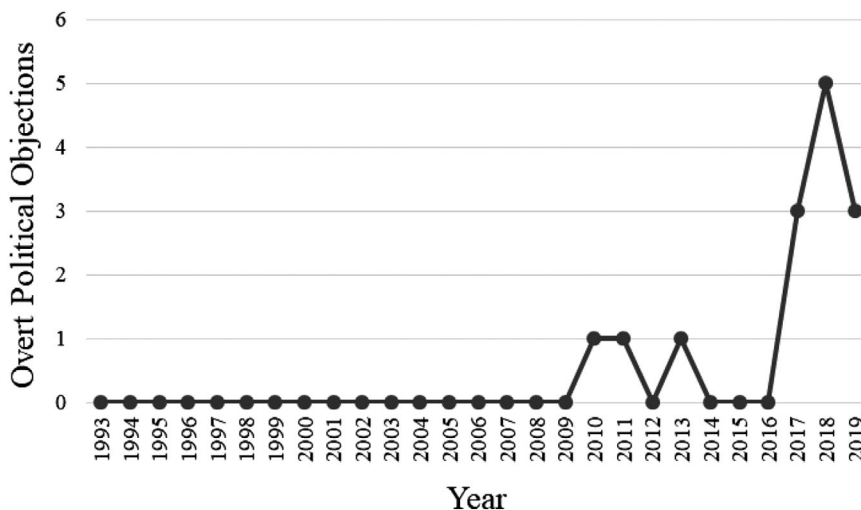
of the WNBA both won championships in the final months of the Obama Administration making a White House visit logistically difficult. He attempted to mitigate this for the Sparks by sending the team a congratulatory letter (White and Christovich, 2018).

However, the number of White House visits sharply declines beginning in 2017 with Donald Trump’s presidency. Figure 1 demonstrates this reversal, as Trump only hosted three championship teams in 2017 and two championship teams in each of the two subsequent years. A substantial portion of this decline is due to the lack of White House visits by championship basketball teams. Since Trump’s inauguration, no NBA or WNBA championship team visited the White House to celebrate its victory. However, the decline may be partially attributed to tensions between Trump and NFL teams over the President’s displeasure with players kneeling during the national anthem, as seen following Super Bowl LII in 2018 when Trump cancelled the Philadelphia Eagles visit in the wake of a projected low turnout by the team (Colvin and Lemire, 2018).

Additionally, a binary logistic regression of White House visits by year offers further evidence of this overall trend. The results in Table 3 demonstrate this positive relationship

FIGURE 2

Political Objections by Professional Sports Teams, 1993–2019



NOTE: $n = 14$.

SOURCE: Data compiled by authors from popular news media sources.

as the estimated log odds for a president to host a championship teams from one of the six major professional leagues increase by 0.047 units each year. Additionally, the odds ratio value of 1.048 indicates that each year the odds for a president hosting a championship team at the White House increase by 4.8 percent. These findings are statistically significant at the 0.10 level.

Accordingly, the results collectively offer substantial evidence supporting our hypothesis (H_1) that White House visits by championship professional sports teams increase over time since the beginning of the Clinton Administration in 1993.

Along with the increase in White House visits, overt political objections by championship team members to these invitations have proliferated. As seen in Figure 2, direct political objections did not noticeably increase until the Obama Administration. During both the Clinton and Bush Administrations, no overt political objections were reported in any major news outlets by players, coaches, managers, or ownership prior to a team’s White House visit. However, it is important to point out that both presidents had controversies worthy of political objections and not every team member was in attendance for these events. Some players, coaches, and managers were absent with prominent members giving nonpolitical reasons such as family obligations as their rationale for abstaining from the event (e.g., Lefort, 2008). There were some reports of comments after the visits by individuals pointing to political views as the catalyst for skipping the visit (e.g., Thigpen, 2000). However, none of these were made public prior to the event.

There were only three overt political objections by individuals from championship teams during the Obama presidency. For example, Tim Thomas of the 2011 Stanley Cup champion Boston Bruins avoided attending his team’s White House celebration citing his opposition to what he perceived as overreach by the federal government stating “I believe the Federal government has grown out of control, threatening the Rights, Liberties, and Property of the People. This is being done at the Executive, Legislative, and Judicial level.

This is in direct opposition to the Constitution and the Founding Fathers vision for the Federal government” (NHL, 2012). Matt Birk of the Baltimore Ravens also skipped the team’s visit to the White House following a Super Bowl victory in 2013. Birk cited his pro-life beliefs as being in direct opposition to Obama’s support for Planned Parenthood and pro-choice policies: “Planned Parenthood performs about 330,000 abortions a year. I am Catholic, I am active in the pro-life movement and I just felt like I couldn’t deal with that. I couldn’t endorse that in any way” (Sessler, 2013).

Despite the typically congenial nature of White House visits, the inauguration of Donald Trump brought a significant increase in overt political objections to these celebrations by individuals from championship teams. As Figure 2 indicates, each year of Trump’s presidency generated objections from at least three championship teams. Of the eighteen U.S.-based championship teams that won a championship since Trump’s inauguration in 2017, individuals on eleven teams (61.1 percent) expressed overt political objections to their team’s potential visit to the White House following the team’s victory. For instance, following the Golden State Warriors’ 2017 NBA Finals championship, star player Steph Curry expressed his displeasure and opposition to Trump by stating: “[W]e don’t stand for basically what our President has – the things that he’s said and the things that he hasn’t said in the right times, that we won’t stand for it...And by acting and not going, hopefully that will inspire some change when it comes to what we tolerate in this country and what is accepted and what we turn a blind eye to” (Amick, 2017). Similar sentiments existed in women’s professional basketball. Despite Trump’s failure to extend an invite to the Minnesota Lynx following its 2017 WNBA Finals championship, *The Washington Post* reported that player Rebekkah Brunson said “she would rather be invited to appear on ‘Ellen’ than attend a White House ceremony with Trump” (Wallace, 2018).

Even prior to his team’s Super Bowl LI championship in 2017, Martellus Bennett of the NFL’s New England Patriots told reporters that he would “Most likely not [visit the White House for a celebration if the Patriots won], because I don’t support the person in it” (Princiotti, 2017). The following year Chris Long of the Philadelphia Eagles conveyed similar sentiments to reporters prior to the Eagle’s Super Bowl LII victory by stating that he would not attend a White House visit if his team won (Kasinitz, 2018).

MLB champions also expressed objections to attending a post-season celebration at the White House with Trump. In one such case following the Washington Nationals’ World Series championship in 2019, pitcher Sean Doolittle said he would not attend his team’s White House visit citing objections to Trump’s divisive rhetoric: “There’s a lot of things, policies that I disagree with, but at the end of the day, it has more to do with the divisive rhetoric and the enabling of conspiracy theories and widening the divide in this country” (Dougherty, 2019).

The regression analysis in Table 4 provides further evidence of this trend. There is a positive relationship as the estimated log odds for a championship team to have an individual express an overt political objection to a White House visit increase by 0.482 units each year. Additionally, the odds ratio value of 1.619 indicates that each year the odds of a championship team member objecting to a White House visit increase by 61.9 percent. These findings are statistically significant at the 0.001 level. Therefore, these findings support our hypothesis (H₂) that overt political objections to White House visits by championship professional sports teams increase over time since the beginning of the Clinton Administration in 1993.

As seen in Table 5, Bill Clinton had a propensity for honoring the NHL’s Stanley Cup champions most frequently, followed closely by the NFL’s Super Bowl champions. Conversely, he only honored champions of professional soccer and professional women’s

TABLE 4

Binary Logistic Regression Analysis of Political Objections to White House Visits by Years 1993–2019

	<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>	Wald	df	Sig.	Exp(<i>B</i>)	95% CI for Exp(<i>B</i>)	
							Lower	Upper
Year	0.482	0.129	13.876	1	0.000	1.619	1.257	2.087
Constant	−972.595	260.842	13.903	1	0.000	0.000		

NOTE: $n = 155$.

SOURCE: Data compiled by authors from popular news media sources.

TABLE 5

Frequency of White House Visits by Professional Sports Leagues and Presidents, 1993–2019

League	Clinton		Bush		Obama		Trump	
	Visits	Percent	Visits	Percent	Visits	Percentage	Visits	Percentage
MLB	3	15.8	8	25.8	9	18.8	4	50.0
MLS	1	5.3	2	6.5	7	14.6	–	–
NBA	3	15.8	5	16.1	8	16.7	–	–
NFL	5	26.3	7	22.6	8	16.7	1	12.5
NHL	6	31.6	5	16.1	8	16.7	3	37.5
WNBA	1	5.3	4	12.9	8	16.7	–	–
Total	19	100	31	100	48	100	8	100

NOTE: $n = 106$; “–” indicates zero visits.

SOURCE: Data compiled by authors from White House digital archives and popular news media sources.

basketball once during his presidency. However, the MLS and the WNBA—founded in 1993 and 1996, respectively—were in their infancy at the time; this likely played a part in the lack of visits during the Clinton Administration.

Similar to his predecessor, George W. Bush frequently honored Super Bowl champions while limiting celebrations of MLS Cup champions. However, the 43rd president’s affinity for professional baseball—given his prior ownership of the Texas Rangers baseball club—was well reflected in his invites to World Series champions. Notably, MLB teams were among the most frequent visitors to the White House during Bush’s presidency. Bush honored the MLB championship team in every year of his presidency, except for the Philadelphia Phillies that won the World Series late in Bush’s final term on October 29, 2008.

Barack Obama ensured that the Phillies received a White House celebration and continued the yearly celebration of World Series champions throughout his presidency. Being from Chicago, Obama quickly scheduled a celebration for the Chicago Cubs after winning the team’s first World Series in 108 years (The White House, 2017). Obama elevated the practice of honoring championship teams by consistently hosting champions from all six major sports leagues throughout his presidency. In contrast to his two immediate predecessors, Obama routinely honored the champion teams from the NBA and WNBA. He also honored the MLS Cup champion substantially more frequently than Clinton or Bush. Only two MLS teams during his presidency did not get an opportunity to visit the White House in celebration—the Portland Timbers in 2015 and the Seattle Sounders in 2016; however, the Sounders won the MLS championship only a few weeks before Obama left

TABLE 6

Binary Logistic Regression Analysis of White House Visits by Racial Composition of Professional Sports Leagues, 1993–2019

		<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>	Wald	df	Sig.	<i>Exp(B)</i>	95% CI for <i>Exp(B)</i>	
								Lower	Upper
Democratic	Nonwhite	−0.005	0.011	0.226	1	0.625	0.995	0.974	1.016
	Constant	1.445	0.652	4.918	1	0.027	4.243		
Republican	Nonwhite	−0.021	0.011	3.574	1	0.059	0.980	0.959	1.001
	Constant	1.497	0.656	5.214	1	0.022	4.470		

NOTE: $n = 147$.

SOURCE: White House visit data compiled by authors from White House digital archives and popular news media sources. Racial composition data compiled by authors from reports by The Institute for Diversity and Ethics in Sport, the National Hockey League, WSB-TV(Atlanta), and *USA Today*.

office so scheduling a visit with Obama likely posed significant logistical challenges. The 44th president's propensity for celebrating the NHL's champion likely stems, at least in part, from the fact that the Chicago Blackhawks won the Stanley Cup three times during his presidency.

Donald Trump's single term in office lags behind in the number of championship teams honored at the White House. Of the eight teams hosted at the White House during Trump's presidency, half were World Series champions. Trump even gave the 2016 Cubs a second celebration early in his term. Every Stanley Cup champion since 2017 received a visit to White House under Trump. However, Trump has run into conflict with championship teams from the NFL, NBA, and WNBA. From these three leagues, Trump has only honored one champion during his presidency—the New England Patriots, following the team's Super Bowl win in 2017. Since taking office, Trump has not received any NBA or WNBA championship team at the White House.

As Table 6 indicates, there is a negative relationship between the nonwhite composition of a professional sports league and the likelihood of its championship team visiting the White House to celebrate its success. While this is true regardless of the president in office, the impact is more substantial and significant for Republican presidents compared to Democratic presidents. While there is a slight negative relationship, the estimated log odds for a Democratic president to host a championship team only decrease by 0.005 units for every percent increase in the nonwhite composition of a league. To put it another way, the odds ratio value of 0.995 indicates that for every percent increase in the nonwhite composition of a league, the odds of a Democratic president to host a championship team decrease by 0.5 percent. However, these findings for the two Democratic presidents during this period are not significant. Conversely, the estimated log odds for a Republican president to host a championship team decrease by 0.021 units for every percent increase in the nonwhite composition of a league. In this case, the odds ratio value of 0.980 indicates that for every percent increase in the nonwhite composition of a league, the odds of a Republican president to host a championship team decrease by 2 percent. These findings are statistically significant at the 0.10 level. Accordingly, this evidence affords some support for our hypothesis (H_3) that championship teams from professional sports leagues with a higher percentage of nonwhite players have significantly fewer White House visits with Republican presidents compared to Democratic presidents.

Simply looking at the data across Tables 2, 5, and 6, it is logical that Trump, a Republican president, would experience fewer visits with champions from majority–minority

TABLE 7

Frequency of Political Objections to White House Visits by Professional Sports Leagues and Presidents, 1993–2019

League	Obama		Trump	
	Objections	Percentage	Objections	Percentage
MLB	–	–	2	18.2
MLS	–	–	–	–
NBA	–	–	2	18.2
NFL	1	33.3	3	27.3
NHL	2	66.7	1	9.1
WNBA	–	–	3	27.3
Total	3	100	11	100

NOTE: *n* = 14. There were no overt political objections found prior to team's White House visits with Clinton or Bush. "–" Indicates zero objections.
 SOURCE: Data compiled by authors from popular news media sources.

leagues such as the NFL, NBA, and WNBA compared to majority-white leagues such as the NHL and MLB. However, why is it then that George W. Bush, another Republican president, was able to host seven NFL Super Bowl champions, five NBA Finals champions, and four WNBA Finals champions compared to Trump's lack of any NBA or WNBA champions and only one NFL Super Bowl champion? The prevalence of overt political objections by championship teams along with the nature of these objections specifically regarding Trump's rhetoric, actions, and policies while in office provides insight into answering this question.

As Table 7 indicates, Donald Trump received objections from championship teams across five of the major professional sports leagues. Among the 11 championship teams with individuals expressing objections and opposition to a visit with Trump, the majority minority NFL, NBA, and WNBA make up nearly 73 percent of these cases. Accordingly, it is not surprising that champions from these leagues frequently cite Trump's divisive, racially tinted political rhetoric when conveying an objection. For instance, following his team's Super Bowl LII championship in 2018, Malcolm Jenkins of the NFL's Philadelphia Eagles said he would not attend any White House visit in order "to avoid being used as any kind of pawn" by Trump, elaborating in reference to Trump's opposition to NFL players kneeling during the national anthem that those in the White House chose to "lie, and paint the picture that these players are anti-America, anti-flag, and anti-military" (Colvin and Lemire, 2018). Additionally, NBA Finals champions expressed similar objections and opposition to a White House celebration with Trump citing overt political rationales. As previously highlighted, Golden State Warriors star Steph Curry objected to a White House visit following his team's win in 2017 stating "[W]e don't stand for basically what our President has—the things that he's said and the things that he hasn't said in the right times, that we won't stand for it" (Amick, 2017). The Warriors maintained this position the following year when repeating as NBA champions. In the middle of the 2018 NBA Finals series, Warriors head coach Steve Kerr pointed to Trump's divisiveness stating "I think the President has made it pretty clear he's going to try to divide us, all of us in this country, for political gain...I think we all look forward to the day when we can go back to just having a celebration of athletic achievement and celebrate Americans for their achievement, their good deeds" (Reynolds, 2018).

TABLE 8

Binary Logistic Regression Analysis of Political Objections to White House Visits by Racial Composition of Professional Sports Leagues, 1993–2019

		<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>	Wald	df	Sig.	Exp(<i>B</i>)	95% CI for Exp(<i>B</i>)	
								Lower	Upper
Democratic	Nonwhite	−0.038	0.023	2.744	1	0.098	0.963	0.920	1.007
	Constant	−1.660	0.901	3.391	1	0.066	0.190		
Republican	Nonwhite	0.031	0.018	3.077	1	0.079	1.031	0.996	1.067
	Constant	−3.421	1.165	8.627	1	0.003	0.033		

NOTE: $n = 147$.

SOURCE: Objection data compiled by authors from popular news media sources. Racial composition data compiled by authors from reports by The Institute for Diversity and Ethics in Sport, the National Hockey League, WSB-TV(Atlanta), and *USA Today*.

Even World Series championship teams in the majority-white MLB had individuals express overt political objections and opposition to a White House visit with Trump. Again, the rationale often rests, in part, on these individual's perceptions of Trump's divisive and racially-tinted rhetoric. For example, Sean Doolittle, a pitcher for the 2019 World Series champion Washington Nationals, noted his concerns and objections to Trump's divisive rhetoric elaborating that “[m]y wife and I stand for inclusion and acceptance, and we’ve done work with refugees, people that come from, you know, the ‘shithole countries,’” in reference to Trump’s derogatory reference to several South American and African countries (Dougherty, 2019). Doolittle also pointed to Trump’s impact on race relations in the U.S. listing instances such as the president’s actions and comments concerning the Fair Housing Act, the Central Park Five, and the 2017 white supremacist/alt-right rally in Charlottesville, Virginia (Dougherty, 2019). Boston Red Sox manager Alex Cora articulated similar sentiments following his team’s 2018 World Series championship. Cora skipped his team’s White House visit with Trump and expressed displeasure with the federal government’s relief efforts in his native Puerto Rico after Hurricane Maria as part of the reason for his absence (Olmstead, 2019).

The findings in Table 8 offer additional evidence to this point. There is a positive relationship between the nonwhite composition of a professional sports league and the likelihood of an individual from the league’s championship team expressing an overt political objection to visiting a Republican-occupied White House to celebrate the team’s success. The estimated log odds for someone on the championship team to express an overt political objection to a White House celebration with a Republican president increase by 0.031 units for every percent increase in the nonwhite composition of a league. Alternatively, the odds ratio value of 1.031 indicates that for every percent increase in the nonwhite composition of a league, the odds of a championship team member objecting to a White House visit with a Republican president increase by 3.1 percent. These findings are statistically significant at the 0.10 level.

Additionally, the opposite is true regarding Democratic presidents. The estimated log odds for someone on the championship team to express an overt political objection to a White House celebration with a Democratic president decrease by 0.038 units for every percent increase in the nonwhite composition of a league. These findings are also significant at the 0.10 level. In this case, the odds ratio value of 0.963 indicates that for every percent increase in the nonwhite composition of a league, the odds of a championship team member objecting to a White House visit with a Democratic president decrease

by 3.7 percent. Accordingly, this supports our hypothesis (H₄) that championship teams from professional sports leagues with a higher percentage of nonwhite players express significantly more objections to Republican presidents compared to Democratic presidents.

Conclusion

Overall, the evidence is largely supportive of our stated hypotheses. White House visits have increased over time since 1993, as have overt political objections to such visits by members of championship teams from the six major professional sports leagues. Barring election of a president who presents a more bipartisan, moderate, or civil approach to national politics, both trends may likely continue given the nature of contemporary American politics and the intense partisanship that exists among the American public.

Additionally, there is a negative relationship between the nonwhite composition of a professional sports league and the likelihood of its championship team visiting the White House to celebrate the team's success. While this is true regardless of which party controlled the White House, the impact is significant and greater for Republican presidents compared to Democratic presidents during this period in accordance with our expectation that championship teams from sports leagues with a larger composition of nonwhite players will experience fewer White House visits to celebrate their victories.

Furthermore, Democratic and Republican presidents experience opposing trends regarding team members' overt political objections to White House visits when accounting for the racial composition of sports leagues. The negative relationship between the nonwhite composition of the league and objections to visits with Democratic presidents compared to the positive relationship between nonwhite league composition and objections to visits with Republican presidents offers significant support for our hypothesis that championship teams from professional sports leagues with a higher percentage of nonwhite players express significantly more objections to Republican presidents compared to Democratic presidents.

The election of Joseph R. Biden, Jr. as the 46th President of the United States provides a valuable opportunity to continue this assessment into a new administration. Given our findings, we expect to see a reversion back to pre-Trump levels of presidential engagement in White House visits with championship sports teams. Ultimately, the next four years appear to offer further opportunities to examine sports celebrations at the White House, allowing for greater insight into racial-political dynamics and the presidency.

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