



White American Historical Memory and Support for Native Appropriation

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Abstract

Research demonstrates that appropriation of aspects of American Indian cultures, pseudo-culture, and ethno-national identities is harmful to American Indians. Yet, when American Indians strive to eliminate this appropriation, they are often met with resistance from White Americans who are attached to the appropriation. Using a survey of 517 White Americans, we explored whether settler colonial collective memory was associated with this attachment. More specifically, we examined the associations between five ideologies that are part of this memory—glorification of U.S. colonialism, nationalism, militarism, masculine toughness, and White identity pride—and support for American Indian mascots and other types of appropriation. We found that these five ideologies are associated with each other, as well as with support for American Indian mascots and the other types of appropriation. In addition, we found that glorification of U.S. colonialism mediated between belief in each of the other four ideologies and support for appropriation. We situate our findings in the context of settler colonial collective memory and discuss how our findings can inform change.

Keywords American Indians · Appropriation · Collective memory · Colonialism · Nationalism · Native Americans

Introduction

The Massachusetts state flag/seal features an image of an American Indian (AI) man holding a bow and arrow, with the arrow pointed toward the ground, likely signifying pacification. Above the head of this AI, is the arm of a colonist man holding a sword pointed down toward the AI. This man is believed to be Miles Standish, military commander of the Pilgrims, who fought AIs. In Latin, the flag/seal says: “By the sword we seek peace, but peace only under liberty.” This flag/seal seems to celebrate White men’s colonial military victory. Further, since many believe Massachusetts is

the birthplace of the United States, this flag/seal also seems to celebrate U.S. nationalism. For over 50 years, American Indian leaders have called for elimination of this flag/seal. Only recently was a formal process initiated to determine whether to change this flag/seal, although presently the flag/seal remains.

This flag/seal is one example of Native appropriation (NA), which occurs when people who are not American Indian utilize aspects of American Indian cultures, stereotypical pseudo-culture, and/or ethno-national identities for their own purposes (Keene et al., 2023). Types of Native appropriation are too numerous to list, but examples include appropriation of spiritual practices (e.g., Whitt, 1995), adornment (e.g., White, 2017), names for geographical locations (e.g., Blee, 2016), and names and images for consumer products (e.g., Merskin, 2014), sport mascots (e.g., Davis-Delano et al., 2022), and military operations and weapons (Yellow Bird, 2004).

American Indian objections to Native appropriation are sometimes covered in U.S. mainstream media, including objections to: mascots, adornment, place names, consumer products, museums possessions, art fraud, and identity claims. Thus, some people who are not American Indian

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are aware of American Indian objections to NA. Yet, some are surprised, confused, and angered when American Indian people object to Native appropriation (e.g., Clark et al., 2011; White, 2017). Further, many people who are not American Indian defend NA, ignore American Indian concerns about NA, and continue to engage in Native appropriation (e.g., Davis-Delano, 2007; Riley & Carpenter, 2016).

This resistance to American Indian concerns about Native appropriation may be rooted in settler memory, which is collective memory prevalent in settler colonial societies (Bruyneel, 2021). We undertook research to explore whether White American support for Native appropriation is rooted in five ideologies that are components of U.S. settler memory: glorification of U.S. colonialism, nationalism, militarism, masculine toughness, and White identity pride. It is important to study sources of this resistance because research reveals that Native appropriation is harmful.

The Harmful Nature of Native Appropriation

Studies on the effects of American Indian mascots demonstrate they are harmful. For American Indian participants, exposure to these mascots increases negative feelings (i.e., distress, depression, dysphoria, and hostility) (LaRocque et al., 2011) and decreases self-esteem, perceptions of future achievement, and faith in American Indian communities (Fryberg et al., 2008). For participants who are not American Indian, American Indian mascots are associated with prejudice and stereotypes (Chaney et al., 2011) and increase prejudice/stereotyping (Angle et al., 2017; Burkley et al., 2017). Further, supporters of American Indian mascots are less supportive of American Indian Peoples than opponents (e.g., Davis-Delano et al., 2022; Kraus et al., 2019).

Epperson and colleagues found that Native appropriation via American Indian imagery on Natural American Spirit cigarette packages is harmful to both American Indian and people who are not American Indian. More specifically, Epperson and Prochaska (2023) found that many of their American Indian participants incorrectly believed this brand is owned by an American Indian tribe and grown on American Indian lands. Among American Indian participants who smoke, those who hold these incorrect beliefs are more apt to believe this brand is healthier than other brands and intend to purchase it. Parallel to these findings, Epperson et al. (2019) found that participants who are not American Indian are more apt to incorrectly believe this cigarette brand is owned by an American Indian tribe, grown on American Indian land, and donates to American Indian organizations. Cigarette smokers who are not American Indian and who hold these beliefs are more apt to believe this brand is healthier and intend to purchase it.

The only research publication focused on *multiple* types of Native appropriation reveals that White American support

for Native appropriation is associated with more prejudice against AIs and less support for American Indian rights (Davis-Delano et al., 2022). Keene et al. (2023) analyzed written responses from 362 tribally enrolled American Indian participants. They found these participants witness many types of Native appropriation on a regular basis. While a small percent expressed support for NA, the vast majority voiced opposition, most often because they perceive Native appropriation as disrespectful, ignorant, and oppressive. Many described negative feelings they experience when encountering NA, especially anger. Findings from this study reveal that Native appropriation functions as a form of microaggression, generating a hostile climate for American Indian Peoples. Thirty-eight percent described action they have taken to eliminate NA.

Settler Colonialism

Given the harmful nature of NA, we believe it is important to determine reasons some non-AIs support Native appropriation and resist American Indian calls to eliminate it. Toward this end, we posit that settler colonial memory undergirds White American support for NA. Before we explain the nature of settler memory, we provide a basic explanation of settler colonialism and how Native appropriation is one aspect of settler colonialism.

Basic Explanation of Settler Colonialism

Settler colonial societies are those with large numbers of settlers who take the land of Indigenous Peoples via processes of eliminating these Peoples. These processes, many of which are ongoing, include the following: killing, removal, confinement, assimilation, adopting Indigenous children, imposition of private property regimes, and various other efforts to destroy or weaken Indigenous sovereignty (e.g., Glenn, 2015; McKay et al., 2020; Steinman, 2022; Veracini, 2010; Wolfe, 2006). Settler colonial ideologies legitimate material settler colonial processes. Settler ideologies include dehumanization, racialization, stereotypes, religious justifications, mythology about empty lands, and belief Indigenous Peoples are “of the past” (e.g., Glenn, 2015; Johnston & Lawson, 2000; McKay et al., 2020; Steinman, 2022; Veracini, 2010).

Native Appropriation and Settler Colonialism

Scholars have theorized that Native appropriation is an aspect of settler colonialism, as it involves settlers taking and controlling American Indian resources for themselves (e.g., Huhndorf, 2001; Riley & Carpenter, 2016; Whitt, 1995). Coombe (1998) explained that Native appropriation must be understood in the context of colonial goals to suppress and

eradicate American Indian cultures and identities. Smith-Rosenberg (2010) argued that early “Indian play”—a type of Native appropriation—conveyed that European Americans had replaced American Indian Peoples as rulers of lands and controlled conceptions of American Indian Peoples. Other scholars maintain that settlers believe aspects of American Indian cultures belong to them (Root, 1996; Todd, 1990). Also related to settler colonialism, Native appropriation often represents AIs as “a people of the past,” rendering contemporary AIs invisible (e.g., Coombe, 1998; Root, 1996).

Representations and Beliefs: American Indians as “a People of the Past”

Consistent with the settler colonial ideology that AIs are “a people of the past,” content analyses by various scholars (some mentioned below) reveal that when American Indian people are included in mainstream U.S. representations, they are often portrayed as “a people of the past” in: school curricula (e.g., Shear et al., 2015), news (e.g., Miller & Ross, 2004), television (e.g., Fitzgerald, 2014), films (e.g., Raheja, 2010), and images on the internet (Leavitt et al., 2015). Aligned with these content analyses, Davis-Delano et al. (2021) found that their participants who were not American Indian had much more knowledge of famous deceased AIs than famous living AIs. Further, regarding films with American Indian characters, participants were more apt to recall films set in the past than in the contemporary time period. Also consistent with the content analyses, some non-AIs believe AIs are “a people of the past” (e.g., Erhart & Hall, 2019; Senter & Ling, 2017).

Collective Memory

Given the prevalence of the settler colonial ideology that “Indigenous Peoples are of the past,” which is evident in beliefs, representations, and Native appropriation in the United States, we turn to the concept of collective memory in an effort to explain White American support for—and resistance to eliminating—NA. Collective memory is historical memory that is shared by a group (e.g., Halbwachs, 1992; Zerubavel, 2003). It is essential to the formation and maintenance of present-day groups and associated identities (e.g., Wertsch & Roediger, 2008; Zerubavel, 2003).

Although there are group differences in collective memory, Halbwachs (1992) contends that the existence of society requires sufficient unity of memory, and thus recollections are shaped to generate this unity. Collective memory often emphasizes heroism of group members and other positive mythology, while downplaying negative and inconsistent messages about the group (Roediger & Abel, 2015; Wertsch & Roediger, 2008).

Collective memory is shaped by the cultural tools created and made available in a given social context (e.g., Halbwachs, 1992; Wertsch & Roediger, 2008). Cultural tools include written narrative, oral narrative, rituals, and material culture (Zerubavel, 2003). Wertsch (2002) argued that people are active agents who use cultural tools developed by others to construct collective accounts of the past.

Powerful people, including but not limited to government leaders, often use their power to influence culture to encourage acceptance of dominant memories and deter the development of counter memories (Wertsch, 2002). The influence of cultural tools developed by powerful people on collective memory is substantial, but not deterministic (Wertsch, 2002), as people sometimes contest dominant collective memories (Wertsch & Roediger, 2008). For example, in the United States, governments (and others) developed holidays, statues, and narratives depicting Christopher Columbus as a hero, and yet some American Indian activists and their allies challenge these narratives and work to eliminate these holidays and statues.

Settler Memory

Bruyneel (2021) introduced the term settler memory, which we use in this article. Scholars argue that settler memory tends to ignore Indigenous history prior to settler arrival (Blee & O’Brien, 2021; Veracini, 2010; Zerubavel, 2003), erase or minimize settler colonial violence (e.g., Blee & O’Brien, 2021; Veracini, 2010), and erase or ignore contemporary Indigenous Peoples (e.g., Bruyneel, 2021; O’Brien, 2010; Veracini, 2010).

Cothran (2015) argued that the “Indian wars” (i.e., settler wars with AIs) are central to U.S. collective memory and that memory of these wars justify settler violence and convey settler innocence via portraying Indigenous Peoples as aggressors. Maher (2016) argued that the “western frontier complex,” in which AIs are depicted as violent and uncivilized, is celebrated and a part of the collective American psyche. When settler violence or other oppression of AIs is too obvious to deny, contemporary settlers sometimes condemn the past, especially condemning particular settler individuals from the past, while depicting other past settlers as heroes and the present as civilized and unbiased (Calhoun, 2012; Denson, 2017).

Scholars argue that U.S. settler memory is evoked and reproduced via narratives (e.g., Bruyneel, 2021; Kurtiş et al., 2010; O’Brien, 2010), media (e.g., Bruyneel, 2021; Cothran, 2015; Maher, 2016), holidays (Bruyneel, 2021; Eason et al., 2021; Kurtiş et al., 2010), place names (Blee, 2016; Brown & Kanouse, 2015; Bruyneel, 2021), consumer products (Brown & Kanouse, 2015; Bruyneel, 2021), mascots (Bruyneel, 2021), the military (Bruyneel, 2021), tourism (Denson, 2017; Maher, 2016), and commemorations such as statues,

parks, museums, and events (e.g., Blee & O'Brien, 2019; Denson, 2017; Waziyatawin, 2015).

In terms of effects, scholars posit that settler memory legitimates settler possession of land and governance (e.g., Blee & O'Brien, 2021; Brown & Kanouse, 2015; Bruyneel, 2021). Several scholars argue that settler memory undermines the possibility of taking actions to address settler colonial harm (e.g., land back; Bruyneel, 2021; Denson, 2017; Waziyatawin, 2015). Related to this point, Bruyneel (2021) asserted that settler memory “undercuts...political relevance...by disavowing the presence of Indigenous people as contemporary agents and of settler colonialism as a persistent shaping force” (p. xiii).

Relevant Elements of U.S. Settler Colonial Memory

Historians have described some aspects of the U.S. past that are pertinent to the elements of settler memory we examine in our study. Slotkin (1985) and Rogin (1991) revealed that the origin of U.S. identity derives from perceived-to-be heroic White settler colonial combat with—and elimination of—American Indian Peoples. Further, Rogin (1991) and Bederman (1995) found that prior to the “closing of the frontier” (i.e., the end of martial resistance by American Indian Peoples), combat with and killing American Indian people was associated with White American manhood. More specifically, Bederman (1995) explained that entering the late 1800s there was a common White perception that heroic White American men gave genesis to the U.S. nation, proved their manhood, and forged an American-specific White race on “the frontier” via their violent elimination of savage AIs. In the late 1800s and early 1900s, Theodore Roosevelt generated a societal ideal of American-specific White masculinity in which White American men were encouraged to model themselves after the masculine race of Indian fighters, with the strength Whites associated with the perceived violent savagery of AIs accompanied by the perceived superior civilization of White men.

Scholars have argued that these same historical themes are evident in contemporary settler memory. Gahman's (2020) participants from rural communities in the U.S. heartland glorified past U.S. settler colonialism. Scholars assert that settler memories in the U.S. are associated with White American settler masculinity (Bruyneel, 2021; Gahman, 2020; Maher, 2016), including courage and toughness. Maher (2016) maintains that settler memories in the U.S. elevate White men and legitimate their power. Cothran (2015) contended that collective memory associated with the “Indian wars” undergirds U.S. imperial militarism beyond the United States, while Gahman (2020) described the association between U.S. settler memory and gun ownership among his participants. Many scholars observe that U.S. settler memory is associated with nationalism (e.g., Bruyneel,

2021; Eason et al., 2021; Kurtiş et al., 2010). Despite the dominance of U.S. settler memory, American Indian people challenge this memory (e.g., Blee & O'Brien, 2021; Calhoun, 2012; Waziyatawin, 2015).

Settler Memory and Native Appropriation

In this article, we posit that U.S. settler memory is associated with support for NA. Relatedly, several scholars have observed that Native appropriation is one of the oldest forms of distinct U.S. culture (Deloria, 1998; Green, 1988; Smith-Rosenberg, 2010; Todd, 1990). Yet, Green (1988) argued that Native appropriation became more prevalent after the end of wars with AIs, because success in Native appropriation depends on the belief that “real Indians” are dead. A few scholars have described rising concern about masculinity among U.S. White men (i.e., concern that White boys and men were becoming weak and effeminate) in the late 1800s and early 1900s that was partly related to the end of these wars (Bederman, 1995; Kimmel, 1987; Macleod, 1983). During this time, there were concerted efforts by White men to create organizations and activities aimed to inculcate masculinity among White boys and young men, including the Boy Scouts, YMCA, and organized sport. Toward this end, many of these organizations and activities included Native appropriation (e.g., Davis, 1993; Macleod, 1983).

We agree with Stuckey and Morris (1999), that Native appropriation in the contemporary period operates as raw material to serve multiple White American interests. Scholars assert that these interests include gaining profit (e.g., Root, 1996), experiencing spirituality (e.g., Koffman, 2018), associating themselves with nature (e.g., Deloria, 1998), and creating the illusion of innocence relative to settler oppression of American Indians (rather than taking responsibility for this oppression) (Huhndorf, 2001). For example, many people who are not American Indian appropriate the spiritual practice of smudging with sage—practiced by some American Indian Peoples—to enhance their own spiritual experiences. More pertinent to this study, scholars suggest that these interests may also include celebration of U.S. colonial history (e.g., Davis, 1993; Green, 1988), U.S. nationalism (e.g., Coombe, 1998; Deloria 1998), militarism (Davis, 1993; Yellow Bird, 2004), masculine toughness (e.g., Barbour, 2016; Davis, 1993), and Whiteness (Bruyneel, 2021).

The Present Study

Given the harmful nature of NA, it is important to understand sources of resistance to its elimination. The purpose of this study is to explore whether settler memory is associated with the support for NA. Since Native appropriation can operate as a signifier that is associated with multiple different ideologies related to settler memory, we predict

that support for Native appropriation will be associated with multiple ideologies. In other words, different participants, who endorse different ideologies related to settler memory, may support Native appropriation for different reasons. More specifically, based on the findings of scholars who study settler memory, we predict that belief in four ideologies rooted in U.S. settler colonialism will be associated with support for NA: nationalism, militarism, masculine toughness, and White identity pride. Although we predict that these four ideologies will be directly associated with NA, we also predict that they will operate through a fifth ideology—glorification of U.S. colonialism, which we use as a mediator. Glorification of U.S. settler colonialism is—by definition—associated with beliefs about past AIs, while the other four ideologies may or may not be associated with past AIs. We predict that the four ideologies will be associated with glorification of U.S. settler colonialism because these ideologies originated during the U.S. settler colonial past. Thus, we test four models. Our independent variables are the four ideologies, our mediator in all four cases is glorification of U.S. colonialism, and our two dependent variables are support for American Indian mascots in particular and other types of Native appropriation more generally. We examine American Indian mascots separately from other types of Native appropriation because American Indian mascots are associated with American Indian warriors from the past, while other types of Native appropriation are more varied in their associations with American Indian cultures, pseudo-culture, and/or identities.

Method

Positionality

The authors of this article include two White American individuals and three American Indian individuals who are enrolled in federally recognized American Indian nations. These identities and associated experiences informed the conception of this research project, research design, and discussion of findings.

Procedures

We used our social networks to pilot the survey we wrote, to make sure that our measures were clear, and we revised our survey based on feedback from pilot participants. To secure our survey participants, we paid the online data collection company CloudResearch \$3.50 per participant, and they paid panel providers who supplied and compensated the participants. This company offered our survey—titled “Cultural Beliefs About the United States”—to those who identified as White and did not reside in Alaska or Hawaii. We received

597 completed surveys. This figure does not include those automatically removed from the survey for not meeting the study criteria of identifying as only White ($n = 124$), living their entire lives (excluding military service) in the United States ($n = 177$), and not currently residing in Alaska or Hawaii ($n = 6$). Also, this figure does not include those who were automatically removed for failing two traditional attention checks that directed participants to select particular answers ($n = 196$ & 142) and neglecting to notice obvious contradictions in items within five measures ($n = 41, 41, 10, 9, \text{ and } 4$). After data collection was complete ($n = 597$), we developed criteria to manually examine the surveys, and as a result of this examination, we removed participants who took less than half the median time to complete the survey ($n = 26$), engaged in excessive straight-lining ($n = 14$), and had an excessive number of contradictory answers ($n = 40$), which left us with a final sample of 517 participants. We engaged in the screening techniques mentioned above because such an approach is recommended by scholars who study the quality of survey data. Toward the goal of enhancing study validity by improving data quality, these scholars recommend using varied screening techniques (e.g., Arndt et al., 2022; Belliveau & Yakovenko, 2022; DeSimone & Harms, 2018; DeSimone et al., 2015). For the final sample ($n = 517$), the median time to take the survey was 15 min.

Participants

All participants in the final sample had lived their entire lives in the United States and identified as only White. They were 51% men, 47% women, and 2% another gender identity. Age ranged from 18 to 90, with a median of 44 and mean of 48. Participants lived the longest in all 48 contiguous states except Delaware and Rhode Island, at percentages close to actual percentages who reside in these states. Mean and median political ideology were “moderate,” and mean and median education level were “some college or associates degree.”

Materials

Below, we describe possible control variables, followed by our two dependent variables: attitudes toward American Indian mascots and attitudes toward other types of NA. We also describe our mediator, which is a settler colonial ideology we call glorification of U.S. colonialism. Lastly, we describe our four independent variables, which are the ideologies of nationalism, militarism, masculine toughness, and White identity pride.

So that measures overtly focused on race and American Indian Peoples would not color participant answers to other

measures (e.g., nationalism), we presented the latter measures first. We later introduced measures focused on race and whiteness. The last set of questions was focused on American Indian Peoples. In most measures, items were randomized and reverse-scored items were included.

Possible Control Variables: Demographic Variables and Interpersonal Contact

We wrote all of our demographic questions, which included age, gender identity, level of education, and political ideology. Participants indicated their age using a list of numbers that ranged from “18” to “90 or older.” Participants selected from the following gender identity categories: man, woman, non-binary or genderqueer, gender-questioning, and other. Participants marked their highest level of education using a list of six choices that ranged from “less than a high school degree” to “doctorate or professional degree.” Participants responded to a 5-point scale that ranged from “very conservative” to “very liberal” to indicate their political beliefs. We also asked participants how many American Indian individuals they had close relationships with, with close relationships defined as “for over a year you shared personal information and engaged in social activities with them on a regular basis.” Answer categories ranged from “0” to “10 or more.”

Support for Native Appropriation (Other than Mascots)

This measure, which was reviewed by two experts, was adapted and modified from Keene et al. (under review). Participants read “Please indicate how you feel when people who are **NOT** American Indian...,” followed by 21 statements. They were asked to reply using a 5-point scale that ranged from “strongly oppose” to “strongly support.” The statements were focused on many types of NA, such as: “create art that is perceived to be American Indian art,” “wear American Indian regalia or ceremonial clothing,” “engage in American Indian spiritual practices (e.g., smudging),” and “purchase or use consumer products (not made by American Indians) with American Indian names and images (e.g., “Indian motorcycles,” brand with a teepee logo).”

We removed two items focused on American Indian mascots from this measure to include in the measure discussed directly below, which left 19 items in this measure. A principal components analysis with Varimax rotation yielded three factors with Eigenvalues larger than 1.0 (9.79, 1.79, and 1.20). However, the first factor explained the largest portion of the variance (48.96% vs. 8.97% and 5.99%, respectively), and there was substantial cross-loading across the factors. Further, Cronbach’s alpha indicated very high agreement among the 19 items (.95), so we calculated one total score for Native appropriation as the average of all 19 items, with higher scores indicating more support for NA.

Support for American Indian Mascots

This 5-item measure included the two items mentioned directly above, one focused on American Indian sport team nicknames and the other focused on American Indian sport team logos. These two items were combined with a 3-item measure that was previously used in Davis-Delano et al. (2022). An example of an item in this measure is: “American Indian mascots should not be eliminated.” For these three items, participants replied using a 5-point scale that ranged from “strongly disagree” to “strongly agree,” with high scores indicating support for American Indian mascots. A principal components analysis with Varimax rotation yielded one factor with an Eigenvalue of 3.83, explaining 76.57% of the variance. Item loadings ranged from .85 to .92 and the measure yielded an alpha of .92.

Glorification of U.S. Colonialism

Participants read “The history of the settlement and creation of United States society is...,” and then were asked to respond to six descriptors: “glorious,” “inspirational,” “heroic,” and “cause for celebration,” along with the reverse-scored items of “horrific” and “immoral.” Participants replied using a 5-point scale that ranged from “strongly disagree” to “strongly agree.” Principal components yielded one factor (Eigenvalue = 4.26, 70.95% of the variance explained). Item loading ranged from .72 to .90 and the scale yielded an alpha of .91.

Nationalism

We created this 6-item measure of support for the ideology of nationalism,¹ but borrowed some themes and wording from measures created by the following other scholars: Cameron (2004), Kosterman and Feshbach (1989), Roccas et al. (2006), Schatz et al. (1999), Schwartz et al. (2012), and Taylor and Wilcox (2021). Participants responded, using a 5-point scale that ranged from “strongly disagree” to “strongly agree.” Principal components analysis with Varimax rotation yielded two factors with Eigenvalues larger than 1.0 (3.53 and 1.10). The three items in factor one clearly measured idealized attitudes toward the United States (e.g., “The United States is the greatest nation of all time.”), while the second factor appeared to measure willingness to hear criticism of the United States (e.g., “There are some good reasons to criticize the United States.”—reverse scored). Since our aim was to assess perceptions that the

¹ Our measure of nationalism is focused on national glorification. We are aware that there are other measures of nationalism, such as those focused on national attachment (Roccas et al., 2006).

United States was superior to other societies, we calculated a nationalism score as the average of the three items that loaded on factor one ($\alpha = .91$).

Militarism

We created this 7-item measure of support for the ideology of militarism, combining themes and items from other scholars (Bliss et al., 2007; Cohrs et al., 2005; McConochie, 2007; Özdemir & Uğurlu, 2018). Using a 5-point scale that ranged from “strongly disagree” to “strongly agree,” participants responded to items such as “War is an indispensable means to solve international conflicts.” Principal components analysis with Varimax rotation yielded one factor (Eigenvalue = 3.71, 52.93% of variance explained). Item loadings ranged from .52 to .85 and the scale yielded an alpha of .84.

Masculine Toughness

Using themes developed by other scholars (Levant et al., 2020; Levant et al., 2013; Parent et al., 2020; Saucier et al., 2016; Thompson and Pleck, 1986), we developed a measure of support for the ideology of “masculine toughness.” This measure had 16 items, four focused on emotional toughness, four on physical toughness, four on courageous toughness, and four on fighting toughness. The measure used a 5-point scale, ranging from “strongly disagree” to “strongly agree.” A principal components analysis with Varimax rotation yielded three factors with Eigenvalues greater than 1.0 (6.80, 1.96, and 1.19). The first factor accounted for 42.47% of the variance, with the eight items assessing physical toughness and courageous toughness loading from .48 to .81. The four items assessing emotional toughness loaded on to the second factor (12.26% of the variance), and the four items assessing fighting toughness loaded on the third factor (7.54% of the variance, although one had high cross-loading with the first factor). Given the centrality of courage and physical toughness in the narrative of settler heroes and the strength of the first factor relative to the other two, we calculated our “masculine toughness” variable as the average of the scores for the eight items measuring physical toughness (e.g., “When situations are physically challenging, men should get tough”) and courageous toughness (e.g., “Men should be courageous”) ($\alpha = .90$).

White Identity Pride

We used themes and wording from other scholars (Cameron, 2004; Earle & Hodson, 2022; Sellers, 2013) to create this measure of support for the ideology of White identity pride. Using a 5-point scale ranging from “strongly disagree” to “strongly agree,” participants responded to four statements,

including “I am proud to be White.” Principal components analysis with Varimax rotation yielded one factor (Eigenvalue = 2.79, 69.73% of variance explained). Item loadings ranged from .80 to .87 and the scale yielded an alpha of .85.

Results

Descriptive Statistics and Bivariate Correlations

Survey logistics prevented participants from moving forward if they did not answer the measures used in this study, so there were no missing data points. To determine whether we needed to include demographic variables as control variables, we first calculated bivariate correlations between the two dependent variables (i.e., support for American Indian mascots and support for other NA) and age, educational attainment, political beliefs, and number of close American Indian relationships. Age and political beliefs were significantly associated with support for mascots ($r = .142, p = .001$ and $r = -.417, p < .001$, respectively) and political beliefs were associated with the support for other Native appropriation ($r = -.278, p < .001$), such that more liberal beliefs and younger age were associated with less support for NA. Educational attainment and number of close American Indian relationships were not related to either dependent variable. Independent samples *t*-tests indicated no differences between men and women for support for mascots, $t(506) = 0.25, p = .81$, or other forms of NA, $t(506) = 1.45, p = .15$. Because only nine participants identified outside the gender binary, we were unable to assess the differences between men, women, and non-binary participants. Thus, age and political beliefs were used as control variables in all subsequent analyses.

Table 1 presents descriptive statistics for all primary variables. The average score for support for Native appropriation other than mascots was slightly below the mid-point on the scale, while average scores for all other variables hovered above the mid-points of the scales. Scores were observed across the full possible range.

Table 2 presents partial correlations among all study variables, controlling for the effects of age and political beliefs. Significant, moderate to large correlations emerged between the two Native appropriation support measures and all ideologies. Further, all five ideological variables were significantly intercorrelated with each other, with moderate to large associations.

Table 1 Means and standard deviations for all variables

	Median	Mean	SD	Skewness (SE = .107)	Kurtosis (SE = .214)	Min.	Max.
Support for Native Appropriation	3.00	2.95	0.77	−.016	.251	1	5
Support for Native Mascots	3.60	3.37	1.09	−.463	−.415	1	5
Nationalism	3.67	3.61	1.14	−.642	−.453	1	5
Militarism	3.57	3.50	0.79	−.738	.428	1	5
Masculine Toughness	3.25	3.23	0.82	−.113	−.272	1	5
White Identity Pride	3.75	3.75	0.91	−.658	.297	1	5
Glorification of U.S. Colonialism	3.67	3.51	0.96	−.641	.081	1	5

Table 2 Bivariate correlations controlling for age and political views

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1. Support for Native Appropriation	1	.601	.316	.331	.322	.329	.358
2. Support for Native Mascots	–	1	.384	.470	.271	.361	.446
3. Nationalism	–	–	1	.590	.386	.514	.661
4. Militarism				1	.412	.485	.613
5. Masculine toughness					1	.381	.362
6. White Identity Pride						1	.490
7. Glorification of U.S. Colonialism							1

p < .001 for all correlations

Table 3 Multiple regression models predicting support for appropriation

Dependent variable	Effect	<i>R</i> ²	<i>F</i>	<i>p</i>	Beta	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
Support for Native Mascots							
Block 1		.18	55.67	<.001			
	Age				.06	1.54	.125
	Political Beliefs				−.41	−9.93	<.001
Block 2		.40	49.53	<.001			
	Nationalism				.02	0.33	.745
	Militarism				.27	4.85	<.001
	Masculine Toughness				.08	1.82	.070
	White Identity Pride				.10	2.08	.038
	Glorification of U.S. Colonialism				.21	3.678	<.001
Support for Broad Native Appropriation							
Block 1		.07	21.51	<.001			
	Age				.01	−0.33	.740
	Political Beliefs				−.28	−6.36	<.001
Block 2		.26	25.98	<.001			
	Nationalism				.02	0.25	.800
	Militarism				.07	1.20	.231
	Masculine Toughness				.22	4.62	<.001
	White Identity Pride				.12	2.38	.018
	Glorification of U.S. Colonialism				.19	2.95	.003

Table 4 Direct and indirect effects of four ideologies on support for Native mascots through glorification of U.S. colonialism

Effect	<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>	LLCI	UPCI
Direct effects						
Nationalism > Support for Mascots	.16	.05	3.03	<.001	.06	.26
Glorification > Support for Mascots	.40	.06	6.53	<.001	.28	.52
Indirect Effect of Nationalism on Support						
Through Glorification of Colonialism	.23	.04			.15	.30
Direct effects						
Militarism > Support for Mascots	.46	.07	6.55	<.001	.32	.60
Glorification > Support for Mascots	.29	.06	5.26	<.001	.18	.40
Indirect Effect of Militarism on Support						
Through Glorification of Colonialism	.23	.05			.13	.33
Direct effects						
Masculine Toughness > Support for Mascots	.22	.05	4.13	<.001	.11	.32
Glorification > Support for Mascots	.44	.05	9.04	<.001	.35	.54
Indirect Effect of Masculine Toughness on Support						
Through Glorification of Colonialism	.18	.03			.12	.24
Direct effects						
White Identity Pride > Support for Mascots	.22	.05	4.22	<.001	.12	.33
Glorification > Support for Mascots	.41	.05	7.94	<.001	.31	.51
Indirect Effect of White Identity Pride on Support						
Through Glorification of Colonialism	.21	.04			.14	.27

Forced Entry Multiple Regression Models Predicting Support for Appropriation

Two multiple regression models assessed the cumulative effect of the five ideologies on support for mascots and other Native appropriation, respectively. Age and political beliefs were entered as covariates in a first step. Then all five ideologies were entered in a second step. Table 3 summarizes the results, using an alpha of .05 to determine statistical significance. Controlling for age, political beliefs, and the other ideologies in the models, support for American Indian mascots was associated with higher levels of militarism, White identity pride, and glorification of U.S. colonialism. Support for other Native appropriation was associated with masculine toughness, White identity pride, and glorification of U.S. colonialism.

Tests of Indirect Effects of Four Ideologies Through Glorification of U.S. Colonialism

Tests of both direct and indirect effects were conducted using the PROCESS macro in Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (Hayes, 2018; IBM Corp, 2017). The PROCESS macro utilizes bootstrapping (a random sampling technique to test model fit) and ordinary least squares regression to calculate direct effects of the independent variables (nationalism, militarism, masculine toughness, and White identity pride) on the dependent variables (support for mascots and other NA), as well as the indirect effect of the predictor through the mediator (glorification of U.S.

colonialism). The significance of indirect paths is tested using confidence intervals. Confidence intervals that do not contain zero indicate statistically significant indirect paths.

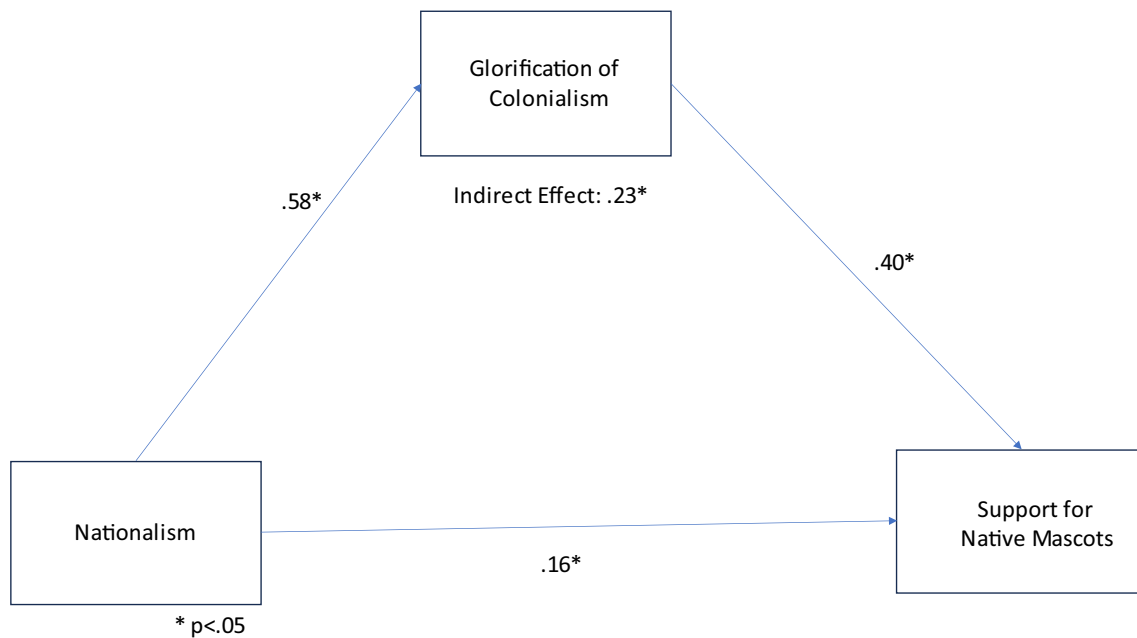
Table 4 presents the results of four regression models testing the direct and indirect effects (through glorification of U.S. colonialism) of the four ideologies on support for American Indian mascots. In each model, there were strong and significant direct effects from the ideology (i.e., nationalism, militarism, masculine toughness, and White identity pride) to support for mascots and from glorification of U.S. colonialism to support for mascots. In addition, the indirect effects through glorification of U.S. colonialism were also significant, suggesting that glorification of colonialism is one pathway by which the other ideologies are associated with attitudes about American Indian mascots.

Table 5 presents a similar set of regression models, testing the same direct and indirect pathways from the four ideologies to our broader, general measure of support for NA. The pattern of results is the same—strong direct, positive effects emerged from all four ideologies, as well as from glorification of U.S. colonialism, to support for NA. Also, indirect paths from all four ideologies to glorification of U.S. colonialism to support for Native appropriation were significant.

See Fig. 1 for a representative image of the pattern of direct and indirect effects. Figure 1 presents direct and indirect effects from Nationalism to Support for Native Mascots through Glorification of Colonialism. The pattern observed was the same for all eight regression models.

Table 5 Direct and indirect effects of four ideologies on support for appropriation through glorification of U.S. colonialism

Effect	<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>	LLCI	UPCI
Direct effects						
Nationalism > Support for Appropriation	.11	.04	2.59	.010	.03	.19
Glorification > Support for Appropriation	.23	.05	4.84	<.001	.14	.33
Indirect Effect of Nationalism on Support Through Glorification of Colonialism						
	.13	.03			.08	.19
Direct effects						
Militarism > Support for Appropriation	.19	.06	3.45	.001	.08	.31
Glorification > Support for Appropriation	.22	.05	4.82	<.001	.13	.30
Indirect Effect of Militarism on Support Through Glorification of Colonialism						
	.17	.04			.10	.24
Direct effects						
Masculine Toughness > Support for Appropriation	.25	.04	6.16	<.001	.17	.32
Glorification > Support for Appropriation	.22	.04	5.98	<.001	.15	.30
Indirect Effect of Masculine Toughness on Support Through Glorification of Colonialism						
	.09	.02			.05	.13
Direct effects						
White Identity Pride > Support for Appropriation	.18	.04	4.35	<.001	.10	.26
Glorification > Support for Appropriation	.22	.04	5.58	<.001	.15	.30
Indirect Effect of White Identity Pride on Support Through Glorification of Colonialism						
	.11	.02			.07	.16

**Fig. 1** Representative model of direct and indirect effects of ideology on attitudes about appropriation

Discussion

Research reveals that Native appropriation is harmful to American Indian people (e.g., Keene et al., 2023; Davis-Delano et al., 2022; Fryberg et al., 2008). Given this, it is not surprising that

some American Indian individuals, organizations, and nations act to eliminate Native appropriation (Keene et al., 2023). When doing so, AIs often encounter resistance that seems to evidence deep White American attachment to Native appropriation (e.g., Davis, 1993; Riley & Carpenter, 2016). We undertook this study to examine the sources of this attachment and resistance.

Given that Native appropriation is often associated with AIs from the past (e.g., Coombe, 1998; Root, 1996), we focused on U.S. settler collective memory. Other scholarship suggests that this memory involves glorification of U.S. colonialism that is associated with nationalism, militarism, masculine toughness, and White identity pride (e.g., Bruyneel, 2021; Davis, 1993). Thus, we examined the relationship between these five ideologies and support for American Indian mascots specifically and other types of Native appropriation more generally.

Controlling for relevant variables, we found that all five interrelated ideologies (i.e., glorification of U.S. colonialism, nationalism, militarism, masculine toughness, and White identity pride) were associated with support for Native appropriation (both in general and specific to American Indian mascots). First, bivariate correlations demonstrated consistent moderate (i.e., around .30, Cohen, 1992) associations between all five ideologies and support for NA. Second, forced entry multiple regression models highlighted the salience of White identity pride and glorification of U.S. colonialism. Lastly, given the conceptual proximity of glorification of U.S. colonialism to attitudes about NA, we also tested indirect effects from the other four ideologies through the mediator glorification of U.S. colonialism to support for appropriation, finding partial mediation effects in every case. That the findings on support for American Indian mascots parallel the findings on support for the other types of Native appropriation, reveals that mascots do not differ from other types of Native appropriation with regard to their association with the settler colonial ideologies we examined.

These findings suggest that Native appropriation is intertwined with settler memory. Settler memory plays a role in generating NA. It also plays a role in resistance to American Indian efforts to eliminate NA and thus contributes to continuance of NA. Part of settler memory is the belief that settlers now own—without question—American Indian resources. Beyond land, this includes American Indian cultures. White Americans have generated representations of American Indian people and practices of NA, which feature their own version of past AIs and settler colonial history. Toward what end? Our findings suggest that Native appropriation is aligned with glorification of U.S. settler colonial history. This history involved genocide and was a horrific experience for American Indian Peoples. Glorifying U.S. settler colonial history is celebration of the suffering and near demise of American Indian Peoples. Comfort with celebration of U.S. settler colonial history is only possible if one ignores (i.e., erases) both past and present-day American Indian Peoples or dehumanizes them. We suspect that both phenomena play a role.

It seems reasonable to assume that people who are not American Indian will be less likely to support initiatives to address settler colonial harm to American Indian Peoples (e.g., land back, honoring treaty rights, allowing greater

American Indian nation sovereignty) if they ignore or dehumanize contemporary American Indian Peoples. Aligned with this point, Davis-Delano et al. (2022) found that White Americans who are more supportive of Native appropriation (compared to those who are more opposed) are less apt to support American Indian nation sovereignty, the trust relationship with the U.S. government, and American Indian efforts to address the oppression they face.² In summary, Native appropriation is associated with glorification of U.S. colonialism, glorifying U.S. colonialism requires ignoring or dehumanizing American Indians, and thus, it is not surprising that Native appropriation is associated with less support for American Indian Peoples.

We found that glorification of U.S. colonialism is associated with the support of four other ideologies: nationalism, militarism, masculine toughness, and White identity pride. These ideologies are associated with U.S. settler colonial memory, as the settler-generated history of U.S. colonialism conveys that the U.S. nation was created via military conquest of American Indians by tough White American men (e.g., Bederman, 1995; Gahman, 2020). Thus, it is not surprising that these four ideologies are both directly, and indirectly via the mediator of glorification of U.S. colonialism, associated with support for Native appropriation. Of course, it is possible that individuals may endorse one or two of these four ideologies and not the others. For example, one may endorse militarism and not White identity pride.

Related to this last point, we found that Native appropriation operates as a signifier that people with commitments to any—but not necessarily all—of these ideologies may use for their own purposes. In other words, while Native appropriation is defined as people who are not American Indian using American Indian ethno-racial identities, aspects of cultures, and pseudo-culture *for their own purposes*, these purposes are multiple. For example, those committed to nationalism may support Native appropriation in the U.S. military because they associate it with nationalism, while those committed to masculine toughness may support the same Native appropriation because they associate it with masculine toughness. In addition, the purpose of Native appropriation may depend on the type of Native appropriation and social context in which the Native appropriation occurs. For example, it is possible that town seals are more often associated with nationalism, mascots in sport

² Although not related to the research questions in the present study, in this data set we observed small to moderate significant bivariate correlations between support for Native appropriation and less support for American Indian nation sovereignty, the trust relationship with the U.S. government, and American Indian efforts to address the oppression they face, buttressing previous findings linking support for Native appropriation to less supportive attitudes toward American Indian Peoples (Davis-Delano et al., 2022). Bivariate correlations from the data set used in the present study are available upon request.

with militarism, and “Indian Motorcycles” with masculine toughness.

Implications

Because our findings—and the findings of others—reveal that Native appropriation is problematic, it is important to consider how our findings can inform social change. Toward this end, we believe there are two practical implications of our findings. First, it is necessary to teach accurate and thorough versions of U.S. settler colonial history to challenge settler memory. If people in the U.S. who are not American Indian can learn about the horrors of U.S. colonial history from the perspective of American Indian nations, then this should result in less comfort with NA, as U.S. colonialism would be nothing to celebrate. Learning this history would also reduce national hubris, weaken White identity pride, create more realistic perceptions of the consequences of militarism, and challenge perceptions that masculine toughness is always admirable.

Second, Davis-Delano et al. (under review) demonstrated that the belief that American Indian people are “of the past” is associated with less support for contemporary American Indian Peoples, and more belief that American Indian Peoples are contemporary is associated with more support. Further, they find that belief that American Indian Peoples are “of the past” is associated with more support for Native appropriation and belief that American Indian Peoples are contemporary is associated with more opposition. Thus, it is necessary to challenge perceptions and depictions of AIs as (primarily) “a people of the past.” Doing so requires infusion of a multitude of accurate narratives about and representations of contemporary AIs in media and education curriculum. In U.S. schools, in every grade, children should learn about *contemporary* American Indian Peoples, including American Indian nation sovereignty, governments, economies, and cultures, and including both strengths and challenges. These same topics should be included on a regular basis in mainstream news and fiction media.

Limitations and Future Research

There are several limitations of this research. First, our sample is not representative of White Americans, and does not include participants of color. Thus, we recommend future research utilizing a representative sample. Second, we did not investigate all purposes of NA, such as securing monetary profit, and associating oneself with nature or spirituality. In the future, researchers could explore other reasons individuals and groups who are not American Indian support Native appropriation. In contrast, it would also be useful to explore the backgrounds of individuals and groups who are

not American Indian and who oppose—and take actions to eliminate—Native appropriation.

Conclusion

While Native appropriation is harmful, many White Americans resist American Indian calls to eliminate NA. The goal of our research was to explore ideologies associated with this resistance. Toward this end, we surveyed 517 White Americans to explore whether five ideologies that are aspects of U.S. settler colonial collective memory are associated with support for NA: glorification of U.S. colonialism, nationalism, militarism, masculine toughness, and White identity pride. We found that these five ideologies are directly associated with support for NA. In addition, glorification of U.S. colonialism mediates between each of the other four ideologies and support for NA.

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Data Availability The dataset generated for the current study is available from the corresponding author on reasonable request.

Declarations

Conflict of interest We have no conflict of interest to disclose. We have full control of primary data and agree to allow the journal to review these data if requested.

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