

Americans' Attitudes Towards the U.S. Women's National Soccer Team

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Due to funder restrictions/ethical considerations, the supporting dataset for this research is currently unavailable.

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Abstract

The United States Women's National Soccer Team has been the recent subject of public celebration and critique, reflecting responses to the team's competitive successes and activist efforts amid heightened political polarization in the U.S. Yet while studies have considered fandom of the team or trends in media, no research has examined patterns of public attitude towards the USWNT. We use data from a 2023 national survey of U.S. adults ($N=2,032$) to examine public attitudes and their demographic predictors, positioning patterns in context of the cultural and political environment in professional sport. Findings show moderately positive views of the team, with just over half of respondents agreeing that they view the team positively and feel positively about team players as role models. Gender, education, and political orientation predict attitudes in regression models, with men, those with lower levels of education, and political conservatives holding more negative attitudes.

Keywords: Women; Soccer; U.S. Women's National Team; Attitudes

Introduction

The United States Women's National Soccer Team (USWNT) has enjoyed a notably high public profile in the last decade because of their wins in 2015 and 2019 FIFA Women's World Cup tournaments, the team's protracted battle with the United States Soccer Federation for equal pay and improved contract conditions, and player activism in support of antiracist and LGBTQ+ causes¹. Much of the activism among well-known players such as Alex Morgan and Megan Rapinoe occurred at a similar time to when Donald Trump's Republican Party were elected to power in the U.S. (2016-2020) – a time which also saw the Women's March demonstration across the U.S. and beyond after Trump's inauguration, with protesters supporting women's rights and civil rights more widely. The team's profile has been further enhanced by substantial, perhaps increasing attention in mainstream mass media and by rising viewership of the domestic National Women's Soccer League (NWSL)². However, the team has been variously celebrated and criticized in the public sphere. Sometimes the team is presented as the pinnacle of sporting

accomplishment and a champion of women's rights, yet at others it is presented as disrespectful to opponents or as an example of a supposedly inappropriate imposition of politics into sport³. Of course, these varied perspectives mirror broader patterns of political polarization in the U.S., with those aligned with progressive politics supportive of the team and conservatives often more critical⁴. These divisions were heightened during the 2019 Women's World Cup given President Trump's social media taunting of player Megan Rapinoe following her assertion that she would not visit the White House⁵.

Yet while scholars have considered perspectives on the team or its players among those who are already fans, or have analyzed trends in media coverage or social media commentary⁶, no research to date has examined patterns of attitude towards this team among the public more generally. In this exploratory analysis, we leverage unique survey data from a national sample of U.S. adults ($N= 2,032$) to examine attitudes towards the USWNT and their demographic predictors. We draw from literature on the cultural position of this team, analyses of the marketing of women's soccer in the U.S., recent studies of U.S. women's soccer fans, and research on the highly polarized political environment in the U.S., to consider whether and how gender, race, sexuality, socioeconomic status, and political orientation shape individuals' attitudes. We build on analyses of how contemporary cultural and political climates impact patterns of attitude towards issues in men's sport by examining a women's soccer team that has become a touchstone for discussions of women's position in professional sport.

Literature

Since its formation in the mid-1980's, the United States Women's National Soccer Team (USWNT) has been one of the top-performing women's teams in the world, having won four FIFA Women's World Cup tournaments and earned five Olympic gold medals. As Markovits

and Hellerman argue, women's soccer in the U.S. has occupied a space of 'exceptional' success given the historically marginal position of men's soccer in the U.S. professional sporting landscape⁷. Beginning in the second half of the 20th century and buoyed by Title IX legislation in the 1970's, girls and women have evinced high rates of participation in soccer amid swelling cultural support for girls' participation in sport, and soccer was quickly adopted at both high school and collegiate levels⁸. These factors, in part, enabled the early competitiveness of the USWNT. Yet the team labored in relative obscurity until the mid to late 1990's, when the 1996 Olympic Games and 1999 Women's World Cup hosted in the United States drew enormous public and media attention and generated new discussion of the changing cultural and economic status of women in sport. Gozillon and Bréhon (2024) note that the hosting of mega-events and federal public policies, in particular, are crucial "levers" that contribute to the growth and development of elite women's football⁹. Professional and commercial growth is perhaps best illustrated in examples of the establishment of several fully professional leagues after 1999, including the current National Women's Soccer League (NWSL), which began play in 2013.

Yet as women's soccer has professionalized and commercialized in the U.S., not all have been equally welcomed or represented either as players or fans. Participation has developed disproportionately among white and affluent girls and women, in no small part due to the emergence of a pay-to-play pipeline into collegiate soccer programs, and current professional players come from more socioeconomically and racially privileged places than the national average¹¹. For many years, the sport was sold as "family friendly" entertainment, marketing efforts were designed with class-privileged, suburban soccer-playing girls and their parents in mind, and many NWSL teams have played their home games in suburban locales, rather than city centers¹². As a result, girls and women represent a slight majority of fans of women's

professional soccer and audiences have been disproportionately white and affluent. In the U.S., the sport of soccer takes on a gender-neutral or even ‘feminine’ gender typing, in distinct contrast to its ‘masculine’ status in many other countries, signaling that participation is gender-typical for women¹³. Despite the alignment of gender typicality with heterosexuality, however, women’s soccer has always drawn sizeable numbers of queer-identified fans. While both player and fan groups are growing more diverse over time, these dynamics of gender, race, class, and sexuality have evident implications for how the public perceives the USWNT.

While women’s sport remains underrepresented in mainstream mass media, the USWNT today routinely receives substantial media coverage and high game attendance and viewership numbers, especially during international tournaments¹⁴. In addition, many players enjoy widespread recognition, large social media followings, and partnerships with major brands. For example, team star Alex Morgan had nearly 13 million social media followers in 2019, was featured in national Nike ad campaigns and the 2019 *Sports Illustrated* Swimsuit Edition and received the 2019 Icon Award at the Teen Choice Awards from American pop superstar Taylor Swift. Within a renewed wave of athlete activism in the U.S., women’s soccer players have used their influence to advocate for causes, notably for women’s rights, racial justice, and LGBTQ+ equality. In addition, while team members have long been advocates for improved pay, training, and competitive conditions, these efforts became more public with several lawsuits and official complaints filed against soccer organizing bodies starting around 2015, often accompanied by public relations and social media campaigns to garner support. Ultimately, a settlement reached with U.S. Soccer in 2022 marked accomplishment of the team’s goal of equalizing pay with the men’s National Team¹⁵.

Given the USWNT's competitive successes, the celebrity status of many players, and record U.S. viewership numbers for recent Women's World Cup tournaments, it is fair to assume that attitudes towards the team on the part of the public are generally favorable. However, research suggests that perspectives may in fact be divided as a response to the team's activist efforts and within a larger climate of acute political polarization. Though sport and politics have always been mutually influential, issues and events in U.S. sport have become overtly politicized in recent years in an environment of high political polarization; sporting events or figures have been used to inflame public sentiment and thus mobilize political support¹⁶. This was certainly the case for the USWNT when President Trump critiqued the team on social media following Megan Rapinoe's comment during an interview that she would not visit the "f---ing" White House were the team to win the 2019 Women's World Cup. President Trump had previously been critical of athletes who kneeled during the playing of the national anthem to protest racist police brutality, including Rapinoe, and returned to denigrate the team as unpatriotic again in 2023 following their elimination from that year's Women's World Cup¹⁷. In addition to the cultural meanings attached to women's soccer, then, the vocal disapproval of the team expressed by a conservative U.S. President has likely made political identity acutely salient to public attitudes towards this team, and in ways unique to the U.S.¹⁸

In the scholarly literature on women's soccer, some studies have focused on those who already identify as fans of U.S. women's soccer, including of the USWNT. This research finds that existing fans are predominately politically liberal and identify women's soccer positively with values such as gender equality and the acceptance of sexual minorities that are often coded as liberal¹⁹. Many fans perceive women's soccer players positively as talented athletes, committed activists, and important role models for younger generations²⁰. Some even see their

own consumption and participation in fan communities as a form of activism that contributes to improving the status of women in professional sport²¹. Other studies have considered media content, whether mainstream coverage of the team or social media commentary. These studies tend to demonstrate greater and more respectful attention in mainstream media over time, though certainly gender disparities in media treatment are by no means past²². Research on social media commentary, in contrast, has demonstrated both positive and negative appraisals of the USWNT, with themes of discussion including the definition of nationalism, the role of activism among athletes, the treatment of opponents, and expectations for performance²³.

Perhaps most like the current analysis is Lindner and Hawkin's (2012) assessment of U.S. attitudes towards the sport of soccer and their predictors. This study found moderate attitudes towards soccer, with just over 22 percent of respondents agreeing that they "enjoy playing or watching soccer" and just under 41 percent disagreeing²⁴. Attitudes were predicted by education, political ideology, religiosity, and children in the home. The more educated, those who attended religious service more often, and those with more children in the home reported more "pro-soccer" attitudes, while political conservatives held more negative attitudes toward the sport than others. However, this study relied on data collected only in Nebraska and asked about the sport, rather than about women's soccer or about a specific team.

Collectively, existing research suggests generally positive attitudes towards the USWNT but also important variation, with political orientation, gender, sexuality, race, and socioeconomic status existing as possible fault lines given the demographic composition of player and fan groups, the complex set of cultural meanings that surround women's soccer in the U.S., and the current political climate as inflected in and through sport. Building on this body of

scholarship, this exploratory study is the first to consider public attitudes towards the USWNT in the U.S. Specifically, we address the following research questions:

- 1) How do U.S. adults view the USWNT and its players as role models?
- 2) How do gender, race, sexuality, socioeconomic status, and political orientation shape U.S. adults' views on the USWNT and its players as role models?

Methods

Data

Much of the scarcity in academic research on society-wide attitudes towards the USWNT can be attributed to a shortage of accessible data for academic scholars. This study leverages a novel and contemporary dataset that captures such views from a national sample of the US population. The dataset for this study was created through a national survey designed by academics and commissioned to Momentive/SurveyMonkey, who distributed it to a large online survey taking population in December of 2023. Respondents were recruited, compensated, and monitored for quality assurance by Momentive/SurveyMonkey. The survey process involved initial random selection within this population, followed by an algorithmically stratified random adjustment during collection to ensure final representativeness of the sample for gender and age, as determined against the latest US Census data. Therefore, the survey ultimately employed methods of stratified random sampling in this specific population. This resulted in general representativeness of gender, age, geographic region, and income for the US population. However, there was some overrepresentation in the sample for white respondents (68% in sample vs. 59% in latest Census) and those with graduate degrees (25% in sample vs. 13% in latest Census), a consistent phenomenon in contemporary national survey science (Spitzer, 2020). Survey takers primarily did so on mobile devices. In total, 2,032 responses are used in the analyses of this paper.

Measures and analysis

We include two dependent measures of attitudes towards the USWNT. The first is based on the question, “The U.S. women’s national soccer team has been a prominent example of women’s sports in the United States. For you personally, how positive or negative are your views of the U.S. women’s national soccer team?” The second dependent measure is based on the question, “How do you feel about U.S. Women’s National Soccer Team players as role models?” Response options for these questions included very positive, somewhat positive, neither positive nor negative, somewhat negative, and very negative. These were re-coded into positive (very positive and somewhat positive), neutral (neither positive nor negative), and negative (very negative and somewhat negative) categories.

Independent variables include gender, race, sexuality, socioeconomic status, and political orientation. Respondents were asked, “What is your gender identity?” with response options of man, woman, and non-binary. The few non-binary respondents (N= 12) were re-coded as either man or woman based on how they were classified according to the Census for the purposes of stratifying the sample. Respondents’ race was assessed from the responses to the prompt, “Please choose the option below that best describes your race/ethnicity.” As 68.2 percent of the sample identified as ‘White/European,’ with small numbers in other categories, response options were coded as white and nonwhite. The category of ‘nonwhite’ includes the response options American Indian or Alaska Native, Asian or Asian American, Black or African American, Hispanic or Latina/o, Middle Eastern or North African, Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander, and Other. Just under 85 percent of respondents answered the question “What is your sexual identity?” with ‘heterosexual or straight,’ and so this variable was coded into heterosexual and LGBTQ+ categories, with LGBTQ+ representing the response options asexual, bisexual, gay,

lesbian, pansexual, queer, and ‘other’, with the only answers to a prompt for specification being demisexual and omnisexual. We measure socioeconomic status as educational attainment based on the question, “What is the highest level of education that you have completed?” Categories include high school (some high school and high school diploma), some college (some college and associate’s degree), bachelor’s degree, and graduate degree (master’s or doctoral degree). The independent variable for political identity is based on responses to the question, “Generally speaking, do you consider yourself a Republic, a Democrat, an Independent, or what?” Response options were coded as Democrat (strong Democrat and not very strong Democrat), Independent (Independent who leans towards Democrat, Independent who does not lean towards any party, and Independent who leans towards Republican), Other, and Republican (strong Republic and not very strong Republican). Finally, we also include a variable on political views, which is based on the question, “Political belief in the United States has often been broken down into ‘liberals’ on the left and ‘conservatives’ on the right. Please choose the answer which you feel best describes your position on this spectrum.” Response options were coded as liberal (very liberal, liberal, and slightly liberal), moderate (moderate-in the middle of the political spectrum), and conservative (very conservative, conservative, and slightly conservative).

In regression models we control for age, relationship status, the number of children in the household, and region. Respondents were asked to indicate their age, which is coded into categories of 18-29, 30-44, 45-59, and 60+. “Which of the following best describes your current relationship status was coded into categories of married, single, and other (cohabiting, separated, divorced, and widowed). “How many children are you parent or guardian for and live in your household (aged 17 or younger only)?” was measured in categories of 0, 1, 2, and 3 or more. Region was defined as the U.S. Census divisions East North Central, East South Central, Middle

Atlantic, Mountain, New England, Pacific, West North Central, West South Central, and South Atlantic.

To carry out this analysis we first present descriptive statistics that summarize attitudes, first for all respondents and then separately by our independent and control variables. We display these summary results in Table 1 and Table 2. Then, because our dependent variables have more than two categorial levels, we perform multinomial regression analyses to predict attitudes towards the USWNT and players, respectively, as a function of independent variables and controls. We use responses representing ‘negative’ views towards the USWNT and players as the reference category and run a separate regression model for each dependent variable. Table 3 displays the results of both regression analyses.

Results

Table 1 About Here

Table 1 presents descriptive results for responses to the question about general views on the USWNT, overall and by independent variables and controls Table 2 presents descriptive results for responses to the question about feelings towards USWNT players as role models. These tables show that attitudes towards the USWNT are generally more positive than negative but are not overwhelmingly positive. 52.9 percent of respondents agree both that they hold positive views of the USWNT and of players as role models. Comparatively small percentages of respondents report negative views of the team (9.3 percent) or of players as role models (11.5 percent). Consequently, over a third of respondents report neutral views, signaling that they hold neither negative nor positive attitudes towards the USWNT or its players as role models.

Table 2 About Here

Tables 1 and 2 also demonstrate attitudinal variation by independent variables, though differences are often small. The views represented by the relative frequencies for the independent variables in both tables are discussed below primarily for those results that are different from each other to statistically significant levels, unless stated otherwise. For views towards the USWNT (Table 1), men have more positive and negative views than women, while women have more neutral views. White respondents have more neutral views than nonwhite respondents, while there are no significant differences between the frequencies of LGBTQ+ and heterosexual respondents for any of the categories. Education shows more positive and less neutral views towards the team, especially at the bachelor's and graduate degree level, with bachelor's degree holders more positive and less neutral towards the team than respondents with high school or some college, and graduate degree holders more positive and less neutral than all other groups. Respondents with graduate degrees were also significantly less negative towards the team than those of any other education level. Republicans have more neutral and negative views of the team than Democrats or Independents, while Democrats and Independents have more positive views than Republicans. Democrats also have more positive and less neutral and negative views of the team than do Independents. Those of 'other' political party identification have more negative views than Democrats while having less positive and more neutral views than Democrats, Republicans, or Independents. Regarding political ideology, liberals have more positive views of the USWNT than moderates, who in turn have more positive views than conservatives. Liberals have less neutral views of the team than either moderates or conservatives, while conservatives have more negative views of the team than liberals or moderates. Turning to control variables, respondents in the youngest and oldest age categories have the most negative views towards the team, while the two middle age categories have more

positive views than the oldest and especially youngest age categories, with the 45–59-year-old age group having the most positive views. Married respondents have more positive and less neutral views than those who are single or in other relationship statuses. Those with no minor children living at home have the least positive views of the USWNT and more negative views than those with one or two children, while those with two children have the most positive views and the least neutral views of the team. Finally, respondents living in the Middle Atlantic region that includes northeastern states such as New York have the most positive views of the team compared to other regions, while respondents in the East South Central U.S. have the most negative attitudes.

Regarding views towards the team members as role models (Table 2), men have more negative views than women, while women again have more neutral views than men. There are again no significant differences in the views towards the players as role models according to sexuality, while white respondents have more negative views than nonwhite respondents. Patterns of views by education again show similar relationships to views towards the team, with the only difference being that the difference between the percent of neutral views towards the USWNT as role models for graduate degree holders and bachelor's degree holders was not significant as it was for views of the team. The patterns for political identity and political ideology mirror those for the views of the team. However, in some cases, this is to an even stronger and polarized degree, especially in terms of negative views by Republicans and conservatives, who view the players more negatively than they view the team as a whole and show more difference from Democrats and liberals. This is also the case for age, where older respondents again have more negative views, especially compared to 30–59-year-olds, but are again also more negative for the players than for the team. Patterns of views for the number of

minor children at home are again similar to views of the USWNT broadly, with those with no children and three or more children having more negative views than those with one child, or one to two children, respectively. Middle Atlantic respondents have generally positive views of team members as role models (70% positive), while those living in the Mountain region showing the highest percentages of negative attitudes.

Table 3 About Here

Table 3 presents results of multinomial regression models predicting attitudes towards the USWNT, with ‘negative’ attitudes as the reference category for both dependent variables.

Reference categories for independent variables include women, White, heterosexual, graduate degree, Republican, and conservative. The results from the first of our two regression analyses in Table 3 reveal that, compared to those with negative views, the strongest predictors of positive views towards the USWNT are political ideology, party identification, educational attainment, and gender. These variables generally exhibit greater predictive strength for positive attitudes towards the USWNT than for neutral ones, relative to negative views. Individuals with graduate degrees and those identifying as Democrats are significantly more likely to hold positive views of the USWNT than their counterparts from other educational backgrounds or political affiliations, though Independents also tend to view the team more favorably than negatively. Both liberals and moderates are substantially more inclined than conservatives to express either positive or neutral views rather than negative ones towards the USWNT. Women are more likely than men to harbor positive or neutral sentiments towards the team. We do not find that region is a consistent predictor of attitudes.

The second regression analysis (Table 3), focusing on perceptions of the USWNT players as role models, identified the same key predictors. Political affiliation and ideology emerge as

even more potent predictors in shaping perceptions of the team's players as role models. Democrats and Independents are more likely to hold positive or neutral views of the USWNT as role models than Republicans, who thus tend to have more negative views. However, the results suggest that those with 'other' political party IDs harbor even more negative views than Republicans relative to positive views of the players as role models. Similarly, individuals with liberal or moderate political orientations are more inclined to view the USWNT players positively or neutrally compared to their conservative counterparts. The influence of gender and educational attainment on views of the USWNT players as role models mirrors their impact on general attitudes towards the team, albeit with slightly stronger predictive results for women's positive perceptions of the players as role models compared to men's. Finally, single respondents are more likely to have positive than negative views compared to those in 'other' relationship statuses, while those with one minor child at home are more likely to be positive on the players as role models than those with no children and 30–44-year-olds are more likely to be neutral than older respondents (60+). Again, region does not predict attitudes.

Discussion

Building on previous research on public perceptions of U.S. women's soccer, including studies of existing fans and media commentary²⁵, we use unique data from a national survey to provide the first assessment of attitudes towards the USWNT among American adults. Importantly, survey data collection took place several months following the USWNT's disappointing elimination from the 2023 Women's World Cup in the round of 16 and subsequent social media criticism of the team's performance and politics by former President Trump²⁶. These events followed victories in the two prior tournaments, a public and ultimately successful battle for greater resource equality with the U.S. men's team, and activist work in support of

antiracism and LGBTQ+ equality on the part of many well-known players like Alex Morgan and Megan Rapinoe²⁷. We argue that the context of activated political sentiment through sporting events within a climate of high political polarization, the team's longstanding record of superior athletic performance, and the complex gendered, racialized, and classed meanings attached to the sport of women's soccer in the U.S. (as evidenced in historical marketing efforts) support both positive overall attitudes towards the USWNT but also substantial variation by gender, race, class, sexuality, and political orientation.

Our findings show moderately positive attitudes overall, with just over half of U.S. adults feeling positively towards the USWNT and its 'role model' players and only about a tenth of respondents reporting negative attitudes. Yet it is notable that a third of respondents reported neutral attitudes towards the team and its players as role models. While we cannot definitively account for this pattern, it may reflect a lack of awareness of the team, disinterest in the team among those aware of its existence, or a true lack of opinion even among the well-informed. While U.S. women's soccer has experienced recent, even rapid professionalization, commercialization, and mediatization, gender disparities in media coverage and resources persist and soccer largely remains a less prominent member of the U.S. 'sports space' than (men's) football, basketball, and baseball²⁸. Consequently, it is possible that some possess limited information about the team that would prompt either a positive or negative assessment. Attitudes towards sporting objects are associated with fan engagement behaviors²⁹. Thus, among those committed to the growth and development of women's soccer, this finding suggests possible inroads to make among the sizeable group of adults with no opinion on this women's team but who could be reached through greater exposure and access to the sport. More positive attitudes in this group would likely lead to increased consumption activity.

We also find that gender, education, and political orientation (both identity and ideology) are consistent predictors of attitudes towards the USWNT and its players as role models, with men, the less well educated, and political conservatives holding more negative attitudes. Women and the highly educated have been central within marketing efforts in women's professional soccer, presumed to be part of a 'core' audience of wealthy soccer-playing girls and their parents³⁰. It may be, then, that more positive attitudes reflect greater feelings of belonging and inclusion among women and the well educated in women's soccer fan communities. However, Lindner and Hawkins (2012) found that education and political orientation predicted Nebraskans' attitudes towards the sport of soccer, with more "pro-soccer" attitudes among liberals and the highly educated. Thus, attitudinal divisions may reflect how education and politics shape attitudes towards the sport generally rather than to women's soccer alone. Gemar (2020) holds that patterns of sport consumption reflect social class orientations, with the more affluent using unique approaches to sports consumption to signal class position. This argument aligns with scholarship on the ways that soccer has developed as a signifier of wealth and status of among white suburbanites³¹. We find that attitudes are most positive among those with the highest levels of education (graduate degrees), perhaps suggesting that perspectives on U.S. women's soccer operate as a form of class distinction. It is also unsurprising to see that political orientation is strongly predictive of attitudes given that the team has been vocal on political issues, that a conservative political figure (Trump) has actively sought to direct the wrath of his supporters towards the team, and that fans of the USWNT are typically politically liberal³².

Our finding of gender difference was not mirrored in Lindner and Hawkins' (2012) study of attitudes towards the sport of soccer, suggesting that gender may uniquely influence perspectives on women's soccer. In regression models, men held less positive or neutral and

more negative attitudes towards the USWNT than women even after other independent variables and all controls. While we are unable to assess exactly why this is the case, elite-level sport has long been a masculine defined and male dominated space that has enabled men to (re)affirm their power and privilege over women³³. More negative attitudes may thus reflect perceptions of threat to the status quo from a competitively dominant women's team and/or men's preferences for supporting men's sport over women's. At the same time, descriptive results suggest another quite interesting pattern, that of greater attitudinal polarization among men than women. Higher percentages of men than women held either positive or negative attitudes, while a higher percentage of women than men held neutral attitudes. This pattern may reflect men's greater investment in and knowledge about sport in general, despite a heavily female fanbase for women's soccer. In fact, Allison and Knoester (2024) recently found that men self-reported slightly higher levels of the consumption of women's sport than women.

Interestingly, regression results do not show that attitudes vary by either race or sexuality in this sample. However, these factors warrant further investigation for reasons that include the growing diversity of players and fans, player and fan activism in support of racial justice and LGBTQ+ rights, and the historical unfriendliness of many sport contexts to racial and sexual minorities³⁴. In summary, this study illustrates generally positive attitudes towards the USWNT but also substantial attitudinal neutrality, as well as small, but significant differences by education, gender, and political orientation. One important limitation to this work is that we are unable to fully explain these demographic patterns, though existing literature and an understanding of historical context provide some direction. The current investigation would thus be complemented by qualitative studies that seek to understand how and why attitudinal differences develop and with what consequences for adults' investments in women soccer. In

particular, the roles of awareness and knowledge of the team, as well as patterns of sport fandom, would be important to parse as prospective influences on attitudes in an evolving sport media landscape. And as the USWNT prepares for the 2027 Women's World Cup, it remains to be seen how their competitive performance affects perspectives on the team over time.

Notes

1. Culvin et al., 'The price of success.'
2. McConnell, Christopherson, and Janning, 'We've come a long way, but we could be doing better'; Pope, Allison, and Petty, 'Gender equality in the 'next stage' of the 'new age?'
3. Dubinsky, 'Revolutionary or arrogant?', Mack and English, 'A 'ruthless' victory?'
4. Cavalier and Allison, 'Standing up for what she believes in'
5. Frederick, Pegoraro, and Schmidt, 'I'm not going to the f***ing white house'
6. Allison, Culvin, and Pope, 'They are doing it because they love it,' Burch, Billings, and Zimmerman, 'Comparing american soccer dialogues,' Guest and Luitjen, 'Fan culture and motivation,' Schmidt et al., 'An analysis of colin kaepernick and megan rapinoe'
7. Markovits and Hellerman, 'Women's soccer in the united states'
8. Allison, '*Kicking center*,' Markovits, '*Women in american soccer and european football*,' Markovits and Hellerman, 'Women's soccer in the united states'
9. Gozillon and Bréhon, 'Cultural anchoring of women's football.'
10. Allison, '*Kicking center*,' Markovits and Hellerman, 'Women's soccer in the united states'
11. Allison and Barranco, 'A rich white kid sport,' Eckstein, '*How college athletics are hurting girls' sport*'
12. Allison, Culvin, and Pope, 'They are doing it because they love it,' Chahardovali, Watanbe, and Dastrup, 'Does location matter?'
13. Allison, '*Kicking center*,' Markovits, '*Women in american soccer and european football*,' Markovits and Hellerman, 'Women's soccer in the united states'
14. Bell and Coche, 'Victory on their own terms,' McConnell, Christopherson, and Janning, 'We've come a long way, but we could be doing better,' Pope, Allison, and Petty, 'Gender equality in the 'next stage' of the 'new age?'
15. Culvin et al., 'The price of success.'
16. Cavalier and Allison, 'Standing up for what she believes in,' Lindner and Hawkins, 'America's most divided sport,' Schmidt et al., 'An analysis of colin kaepernick and megan rapinoe'
17. Frederick, Pegoraro, and Schmidt, 'I'm not going to the f***ing white house,' Zidan, 'Donald trump gloats'
18. Meier, Konier, and Strauß, 'Identification with the women's national soccer in germany'
19. Allison, '*Kicking center*,' Guest and Luitjen, 'Fan culture and motivation'
20. Allison, Culvin, and Pope, 'They are doing it because they love it,' Allison and Pope, 'Becoming fans,' Giachino et al., 'Women's football'
21. Cavalier and Allison, 'Standing up for what she believes in'

22. Bell and Coche, 'Victory on their own terms,' McConnell, Christopherson, and Janning, 'We've come a long way, but we could be doing better'; Pope, Allison, and Petty, 'Gender equality in the 'next stage' of the 'new age?'
23. Dubinsky, 'Revolutionary or arrogant?', Frederick, Pegoraro, and Schmidt, 'I'm not going to the f***ing white house,' Mack and English, 'A 'ruthless' victory?', Schmidt et al., 'An analysis of colin kaepernick and megan rapinoe'
24. Lindner and Hawkins, 'Globalization, culture wars, and attitudes toward soccer in america'
25. Allison and Pope, 'Becoming fans,' Frederick, Pegoraro, and Schmidt, 'I'm not going to the f***ing white house,' Guest and Luitjen, 'Fan culture and motivation', McConnell, Christopherson, and Janning, 'We've come a long way, but we could be doing better'; Pope, Allison, and Petty, 'Gender equality in the 'next stage' of the 'new age?'
26. Zidan, 'Donald trump gloats'
27. Cavalier and Allison, 'Standing up for what she believes in', Culvin et al., 'The price of success.'
28. Allison, '*Kicking center*,' Markovits and Hellerman, 'Women's soccer in the united states'
29. Katz, Baker, and Du, 'Team identity'
30. Allison, '*Kicking center*,' Allison, Culvin, and Pope, 'They are doing it because they love it,'
31. Swanson, 'Complicating the 'soccer mom'
32. Cavalier and Allison, 'Standing up for what she believes in', Frederick, Pegoraro, and Schmidt, 'I'm not going to the f***ing white house'
33. Cooky and Messner, '*No slam dunk*'
34. Allison, '*Kicking center*,' Allison and Barranco, 'A rich white kid sport,' Eckstein, '*How college athletics are hurting girls' sport*'

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Table 1. Views on the USWNT, Overall and by Independent Variables

“The US women's national soccer team has been a prominent example of women's sports in the United States. For you personally, how positive or negative are your views of the US women's national soccer team?”

	<u>Positive</u>	<u>Neutral</u>	<u>Negative</u>
<i>Overall</i>	52.9%	37.8%	9.3%
<u>Gender</u>			
Men	55.8%	32.5%	11.7%
Women	50.5%	42.5%	7.0%
<u>Race</u>			
Nonwhite	55.7%	34.4%	9.9%
White	51.6%	39.4%	9.0%
<u>Sexuality</u>			
LGBQ+	55.4%	34.4%	10.2%
Heterosexual	52.6%	38.2%	9.1%
<u>Education</u>			
High School	41.3%	48.7%	9.9%
Some College	43.3%	45.9%	10.8%
Bachelor’s Degree	56.0%	32.7%	11.4%
Graduate Degree	69.6%	25.3%	5.1%
<u>Political Identity</u>			
Democrat	73.4%	23.3%	3.3%
Independent	44.8%	46.8%	8.4%
Other	21.1%	61.4%	17.5%
Republican	39.4%	40.8%	19.8%
<u>Political Views</u>			
Liberal (left)	68.0%	27.1%	4.9%
Moderate (middle)	44.8%	43.1%	5.1%

Conservative (right)	38.7%	37.8%	19.2%
<u>Age</u>			
18-29	46.9%	41.6%	11.5%
30-44	53.3%	38.9%	7.7%
45-59	60.9%	31.9%	7.2%
60+	48.8%	39.7%	11.4%
<u>Relationship status</u>			
Married	59.5%	31.3%	9.2%
Other	41.7%	48.6%	9.8%
Single	46.0%	44.7%	9.3%
<u>Children</u>			
Three or more	53.5%	35.6%	10.9%
Two	70.8%	22.1%	7.1%
One	54.5%	38.9%	6.6%
Zero	44.3%	44.9%	10.8%
<u>Region (Census division)</u>			
East North Central	42.9%	47.9%	9.3%
East South Central	47.2%	34.0%	18.9%
Middle Atlantic	71.6%	22.8%	5.6%
Mountain	42.7%	45.6%	11.7%
New England	53.1%	39.5%	7.4%
Pacific	53.0%	39.0%	7.9%
West North Central	47.9%	38.5%	13.5%
West South Central	48.9%	39.2%	11.8%
South Atlantic	45.9%	45.1%	8.9%

N = 2,032

Table 2. USWNT Players as Role Models, Overall and by Independent Variables

“How do you feel about U.S. Women's National Soccer Team players as role models?”

	<u>Positive</u>	<u>Neutral</u>	<u>Negative</u>
<i>Overall</i>	52.9%	35.6%	11.5%
<u>Gender</u>			
Men	54.0%	31.1%	15.0%
Women	52.2%	39.6%	8.2%
<u>Race</u>			
Nonwhite	55.4%	35.8%	8.8%
White	51.7%	35.6%	12.7%
<u>Sexuality</u>			
LGBQ+	57.7%	33.8%	8.5%
Heterosexual	52.1%	35.8%	12.1%
<u>Education</u>			
High School	42.6%	45.4%	12.0%
Some College	46.3%	41.0%	12.8%
Bachelor's Degree	55.6%	30.7%	13.7%
Graduate Degree	65.6%	27.0%	7.4%
<u>Political Identity</u>			
Democrat	74.0%	23.2%	2.8%
Independent	46.7%	43.1%	10.2%
Other	17.5%	63.2%	19.3%
Republican	35.2%	37.8%	27.0%
<u>Political Views</u>			
Liberal (left)	68.9%	27.0%	4.1%
Moderate (middle)	47.0%	45.7%	7.3%
Conservative (right)	35.4%	39.0%	25.6%
<u>Age</u>			
18-29	50.3%	37.2%	12.4%
30-44	50.3%	40.5%	9.3%
45-59	59.6%	30.6%	9.8%
60+	51.2%	33.6%	15.2%
<u>Relationship status</u>			
Married	57.5%	30.2%	12.3%

Other	44.0%	44.8%	11.2%
Single	49.2%	41.3%	9.5%
<u>Children</u>			
Three or more	53.5%	32.2%	14.4%
Two	65.8%	24.2%	10.0%
One	55.4%	37.3%	7.2%
Zero	46.2%	40.8%	12.9%
<u>Region (Census division)</u>			
East North Central	43.6%	41.8%	14.6%
East South Central	51.9%	35.8%	12.3%
Middle Atlantic	70.0%	21.2%	8.8%
Mountain	43.7%	38.8%	17.5%
New England	51.9%	37.0%	11.1%
Pacific	53.0%	38.7%	8.3%
West North Central	45.8%	40.6%	13.5%
West South Central	50.5%	35.5%	14.0%
South Atlantic	46.2%	42.0%	11.8%

N = 2,032

Table 3. Log odds ratios for full multinomial regression models of views towards USWNT and USWNT as role models.^{ab}

	USWNT Views		USWNT as Role Models	
	Positive	Neutral	Positive	Neutral
<u>Gender</u>				
Men	-.579**	-.778***	-.739***	-.834***
Women	0 ^b	0 ^b	0 ^b	0 ^b
<u>Race</u>				
Nonwhite	-.199	-.570**	.215	.103
White	0 ^b	0 ^b	0 ^b	0 ^b
<u>Sexuality</u>				
LGBQ+	-.244	-.372	.084	-.036
Heterosexual	0 ^b	0 ^b	0 ^b	0 ^b
<u>Education</u>				
High School	-1.065***	-.277	-.999***	-.363
Some college	-1.101***	-.471	-.919***	-.517*
Bachelor's degree	-.883**	-.696*	-.742**	-.679**
Graduate degree	0 ^b	0 ^b	0 ^b	0 ^b
<u>Political Identity</u>				
Democrat	1.411***	.767*	1.791***	1.018***
Independent	.480*	.691**	.677***	.658***
Other	-.952	-.020	-1.045*	.017
Republican	0 ^b	0 ^b	0 ^b	0 ^b
<u>Political Views</u>				
Liberal (left)	1.433***	.735**	1.715***	1.036***
Moderate (middle)	1.453***	1.258***	1.360***	1.107***
Conservative (right)	0 ^b	0 ^b	0 ^b	0 ^b
<u>Age</u>				
18-29	-.379	-.009	-.448	-.082
30-44	.022	.369	.036	.646*
45-59	.169	.209	.140	.338
60+	0 ^b	0 ^b	0 ^b	0 ^b
<u>Relationship status</u>				
Married	-.291	-.450	-.462	-.488
Other	-.551	-.183	-.582*	-.162
Single	0 ^b	0 ^b	0 ^b	0 ^b
<u>Children</u>				

Three or more	.019	-.233	-.151	-.561
Two	.492	-.239	.272	-.358
One	.544	.376	.737**	.423
Zero	0 ^b	0 ^b	0 ^b	0 ^b
<u>Region (Census division)</u>				
East North Central	-.128	-.093	-.331	-.295
East South Central	-.645	-1.093**	.300	-.074
Middle Atlantic	.378	-.312	.215	-.481
Mountain	-.096	-.131	-.269	-.388
New England	-.111	-.426	-.490	-.621
Pacific	-.050	-.167	.011	-.008
West North Central	-.308	-.768	-.042	-.154
West South Central	-.152	-.320	-.044	-.270
South Atlantic	0 ^b	0 ^b	0 ^b	0 ^b
Nagelkerke R ²	.279		.286	

^a Reference category=Negative

^b *p<.05; **p<.01; ***p<.001



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