

**Negotiating Citizenship and National Belonging of Multi-National Soccer Players Representing
the United States Men's National Team (1990-2019)**

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Abstract

American soccer players with dual/multiple citizenships negotiate their feelings of national belonging through a triadic framework of the theoretical concepts of citizenship, migration, and national identity. Possessing formal U.S. citizenship is a prerequisite for eligibility and selection according to FIFA regulations governing national team representation. Migration to or from the United States or possessing multiple citizenships often present elite athletes with a difficult choice of which sporting nationality to represent in international soccer competitions. Negotiations of belonging are influenced by multiple factors for the World Cup-level athlete, including but not limited to player quality, playing time, or the chance to be a world champion. The role of family, coaches/teammates, media, soccer federations, and sports audiences in the establishment of feelings of belonging must be considered. Theoretical foundations of migration, citizenship, and national identity are essential in describing the thick to thin forms of citizenship and belonging that dual/multi-national soccer players occupy. The unique development of American soccer and its struggle to capture the “popular imagination” of the United States with the context of American exceptionalism is considered.

KEYWORDS: *Citizenship, Migration, National Identity, American Exceptionalism, Soccer, United States*

List of Abbreviations and Figures

FIFA: International Federation of Association Football (Original abbreviation in French: Fédération Internationale de Football Association)

USSF: United States Soccer Federation

Team USA: United States Men's National Soccer Team

IOC: International Olympic Committee

UEFA: Union of European Football Associations

KNVB: Royal Dutch Football Federation (Original abbreviation in Dutch: Koninklijke Nederlandse Voetbalbond)

CONCACAF: Confederation of North, Central American and Caribbean Football Associations

MLS: Major League Soccer

NASL: North American Soccer League

MISL: Major Indoor Soccer League

USCIS: United States Customs and Immigration Services

DFB: German Football Federation (Original in German: Deutscher Fußball-Bund)

FMF: Mexican Football Federation (Original in Spanish: Federación Mexicana de Fútbol Asociación)

Figure 1: Team USA: Birthplace & Citizenship, Page 25

Figure 2: Team USA: Thick, Thin, and In-Between Citizenships, Page 26

Figure 3: Team USA Multi-National Links By Tournament, Page 27

Figure 4: Team USA Multi-National Athletes By Tournament, Page 28

Table of Contents

Abstract and Keywords	Page 2
List of Abbreviations and Figures	Page 3
Chapter 1: Introduction	Page 5
1.1: Research Question	Page 6
1.2: Theoretical Concepts and Literature Review	Page 7
1.3: Sources and Methods	Page 17
1.4: Innovative Aspects and Conclusion	Page 21
Chapter 2: The United States Multi-National Team	Page 23
2.1: Team USA Player Database	Page 23
2.2: Multi-National Links	Page 24
2.3: Multi-National Squads	Page 28
2.4: Chapter 2 Conclusion	Page 30
Chapter 3: Team USA's Multi-National Identity	Page 31
3.1: Domestic Links	Page 31
3.2: European Links	Page 32
3.3: North American Links	Page 33
3.4: Chapter 3 Conclusion	Page 34
Chapter 4: American Soccer Discourse	Page 35
4.1: American Sports Culture	Page 35
4.2: American Soccer Identity	Page 36
4.3: Soccer's Subcultures	Page 40
4.4: Team USA Discourse Community	Page 42
Chapter 5: Conclusion	Page 43
Bibliography	Page 45
Appendix A: Master's Thesis Time Schedule	Page 49
Appendix B: Provisional Contents of Master's Thesis	Page 50
Appendix C: Team USA Player Database	Page 51
Appendix D: Team USA Squads	Page 51
Appendix E: Team USA Other Nationalities	Page 51

Chapter 1: Introduction

"A lot of people only want you when its going well," said 19 year-old professional soccer player Sergiño Dest, who was born in Almere, Netherlands, on November 3, 2000, to a Dutch mother and a Surinamese-American father.¹ Dest's father, born in Suriname, migrated to New York City, served in the United States military, and became a naturalized American citizen.² Dest's mother, born and raised in the Netherlands, met his father while he was stationed on military duty in the Netherlands. Dest grew up in Almere and participated in the youth academy of local soccer club Almere City, until he joined the youth system of one of Europe's most successful professional clubs, Ajax Amsterdam in 2012. In many countries like the Netherlands, the best age-group soccer players are often identified early in their development at local soccer clubs to play for their country's national teams in international soccer competitions against other national teams of similar age-groups. After being frustrated by narrowly missing out on selection for various Dutch youth national teams during his early years at Ajax, Dest was reminded by his father that he also has an American passport.³ Dest acquired American citizenship by birthright through his father and Dutch citizenship by birthright through his mother. Once officials of the United States Soccer Federation (USSF) learned of Dest's American citizenship, they closely followed his progress at Ajax.⁴ In 2016, Dest welcomed approaches by USSF officials to represent United States youth national teams at Under-17 year-old (U-17) and Under-20 year-old (U-20) levels in international competitions.⁵

Dest's development through Ajax's youth academy to the prestigious first team in 2019 was quite remarkable, considering only two percent of Ajax youth prospects make the transition from the academy.⁶ Competing at the highest levels of Dutch club soccer in Ajax's first team and participating in the Union of European Football Associations (UEFA) Champions League as a teenager in 2019, earned Dest widespread attention in the Netherlands and abroad. The visibility athletes receive playing in internationally broadcasted European soccer leagues and other major international soccer competitions opens them to praise and criticism from a larger public audience. Additionally, Europe's position as the core economy within world soccer makes it the most popular destination for the sport's elite athletes and attracts the most players from other continents.⁷ Dest's international visibility and performances only attracted the attention of the Royal Dutch Soccer Federation (KNVB) upon his promotion to the heights of the Ajax first team. His previous appearances for U.S. youth national teams raised concerns with the KNVB that his national team future at the adult men's (full international) level may lie with the United States. Elite soccer players with dual or multiple citizenships, like Dest, are sometimes subjected to difficult decisions of choosing one national team to represent, since FIFA regulations limit their

¹ Tom Hamilton, "Sergino Dest exclusive: Why he chose U.S. over Netherlands, the pride of playing for Ajax," *ESPN*, January 16, 2020, <https://www.espn.com/soccer/united-states-usa/story/4029502/sergino-dest-exclusive-why-he-chose-us-over-netherlands-the-pride-of-playing-for-ajax>.

² Brian Sciareta, "Sergino Dest, 16, Is Opening Eyes at the U-17 World Cup," *American Soccer Now*, October 19, 2017, <http://americansoccernow.com/articles/sergino-dest-16-is-opening-eyes-at-the-u-17-world-cup>.

³ Hamilton, "Sergino Dest exclusive."

⁴ Ryan Baldi, "Sergiño Dest: the accidental USA star aiming to become Ajax's Marcelo," *The Guardian*, July 18, 2019, <https://www.theguardian.com/football/2019/jul/18/sergino-dest-usa-ajax-soccer>.

⁵ Hamilton, "Sergino Dest exclusive."

⁶ Hamilton, "Sergino Dest exclusive."

⁷ Joseph Maguire and Robert Pearson, "Global Sport and the Migration Patterns of France '98 World Cup Finals Players: Some Preliminary Observations," *Soccer and Society* 1, no. 1 (Mar 1, 2000): 184.

representation to one national team throughout their sporting careers. In order to represent a national team of a FIFA-recognized soccer federation, a player must prove a clear connection to the country they wish to represent, usually by birth, descent, or residency. In 2019, Dest committed to the United States Men's National Team (Team USA), because officials of the USSF gave him a chance and helped him in the moments "when it didn't go well."⁸ Dest admitted that it was a difficult choice, but his heart told him the U.S. was the best option and that he felt "at home there."⁹ After his first appearance for Team USA in an official competition in the Confederation of North, Central America and Caribbean Association Football (CONCACAF) Nations League group stage match against Canada in 2019, Dest became cap-tied to the United States per FIFA regulations, committed to only representing Team USA in future international soccer competitions.

The case of Sergiño Dest raises unique questions concerning identity and the national representation of other Team USA athletes with dual and multiple citizenships. Public and private considerations of athletes' migration histories, citizenships, and national belonging are often negotiated in the context of deciding which country to represent in official FIFA competitions. Migration to or from the United States or having (grand)parents from different countries enables some Americans to have access to dual or multiple citizenships. For many of these individuals, categories of belonging are blurred and under constant negotiation.¹⁰ Although he possesses international links to the Netherlands, Suriname, and the United States, Dest's acquisition of American citizenship and commitment to Team USA is similar to many other dual and multi-nationals in the United States soccer program. This diversity of international links has contributed to the 'exceptional' development of soccer within American culture. Investigation into the influences of family, coaches/teammates, media, soccer federations, and sports audiences are essential in determining each athlete's sense of 'American' national belonging, with respect to their multi-national identities. Questions surrounding the 'representativeness' of dual and multi-national Team USA athletes and how they negotiate their international links are the focus of this thesis.

1.1: Research Question

The following main research question will be answered over the course of this thesis: **How do American soccer players with dual/multiple citizenships negotiate feelings of national belonging in their decisions to represent the United States Men's National Team between 1990 and 2019?**

The main research question will be answered through the analysis of the following three sub-questions in separate chapters of the thesis. Chapter 2 will discuss the first sub-question: **How many soccer players with dual/multiple citizenships represented the United States Men's National Soccer Team between 1990 and 2019, and how/why did this change over time?**

This initial sub-question will introduce the Team USA Player Database and identify the American soccer players with dual/multiple citizenships in this investigation. The Team USA Player Database, created for this study, consists of athletes selected for Team USA squads in major FIFA and CONCACAF

⁸ Hamilton, "Sergino Dest exclusive."

⁹ Hamilton, "Sergino Dest exclusive."

¹⁰ Gijsbert Oonk, "Sport and Nationality: Towards Thick and Thin Forms of Citizenship," *National Identities*, (October 8, 2020): 15.

international soccer tournaments between 1990 and 2019. Conceptual frameworks of citizenship, migration, and national identity will be applied to these athletes to evaluate their freedom of choice in nationality leading up to their decisions to represent Team USA. The years in the investigation (1990-2019) mark the first and last major international tournament appearances of Team USA's modern era. In 1988, FIFA announced the decision to host the 1994 World Cup in the United States. Participation in the 1990 World Cup was their first World Cup appearance in forty years. The composition and development of the Team USA squad from its first major tournament after being named 1994 World Cup hosts, from the 1990 World Cup to their most recent major tournament appearance at the North American regional CONCACAF Gold Cup in 2019 will be the backdrop of this investigation.

Chapter 3 will discuss the second sub-question of this thesis: **What were the major pathways of (inter)national links and migration patterns these athletes faced, and according to whom, between 1990 and 2019?**

American soccer players with dual/multiple citizenships may have additional opportunities and struggles that players with only American citizenship rarely experience. This sub-question will investigate commonalities and major domestic and international pathways negotiated by Team USA athletes with multi-national backgrounds. I will delve into selected athletes' life stories to evaluate the perspectives of players, coaches, the media, and others influencing an athlete's decision to represent the United States. I plan to use both common and exceptional cases to follow the motivations and experiences of athletes before, during, and after their careers in order to evaluate their sense of belonging to the United States and/or other nations.

Lastly, Chapter 4 will discuss the third sub-question of this thesis: **To what extent can we relate these findings within major discourses in the historical development of men's soccer in the United States and the debates about 'national identity' and who belongs to the 'American' nation between 1990 and 2019?**

This sub-question will address the larger connections between American national identity and its importance in sport by investigating the national and global forces influencing American soccer discourse. I will position men's soccer amongst other sports in the American sports landscape, discuss the relationship between American men's and women's soccer, and highlight American soccer's historical developments from 1990 until 2019. Overall, I hope to discuss the importance of player interactions with family, coaches/teammates, media, soccer federations, and sports audiences in the formulation of national belonging through sport.

1.2: Theoretical Concepts and Literature Review

Globalization has transformed sports into a major element of 'transnational' or 'global' culture designed for worldwide audiences. The Olympics and FIFA World Cup are the top international sporting competitions designed for athletes to represent their countries on a global stage. This study aims to contribute to the academic discourse surrounding athletes with migrant backgrounds and their negotiations of citizenship and national belonging. Joost Jansen's triadic framework of the concepts of migration, citizenship, and national identity guide this research by suggesting the use of mass-mediated

international sport as a prism for academic and sociological debate.¹¹ Global sporting mega-events like the World Cup and Olympic Games can be viewed as “strategic research sites” where sport is used as a lens to study issues of national identity, cultural identity, and mobility.¹² In this case, uncertainties and controversies over the eligibility and commitment of elite foreign-born and multi-national athletes representing Team USA in major international soccer competitions such as the World Cup, Gold Cup, and Confederations Cup, can lead to wider debates of national belonging. It is important to develop linkages in the triadic dimensions of migration, citizenship, and national identity to determine each athlete’s feelings of belonging. American exceptionalism provides an additional facet to this study, due to its ‘unique’ historical development and soccer’s position as an outsider to traditional American sports culture. The concepts and historiographies of citizenship, migration, national identity, and American exceptionalism will be reviewed in the sections below.

Citizenship:

According to Frederick Cooper, citizenship is a framework for debate and struggle over political belonging.¹³ He poses the critical question: “what is the relationship between the fact of ‘belonging’ to a political unit and the possibility of making claims on that unit and those who govern it?”¹⁴ Citizenship entails belonging to a political collectivity where citizens exist in relation to each other; citizens are connected “horizontally” to their fellow citizens, and “vertically” to people who have more/less wealth, power, or influence than them.¹⁵ To sustain the allegiance of its citizens, states may be constrained to provide security, order, and improvement in their lives.¹⁶ The origins of citizenship as a legal status can be traced back to the foundations of European nation-states following the Westphalian transformation of 1648.¹⁷ Civic and ethnic conceptions of citizenship distinguished French and German national self-understanding in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.¹⁸ The French conception of civic citizenship was based on the birthright principle of *jus soli*, which grants citizenship on the basis of birth within a state’s territory, whereas the German conception of ethnic citizenship was based on the blood descent of *jus sanguinis*, which grants citizenship based on the nationality of one of the (grand)parents.¹⁹ A third, more recent method of obtaining citizenship is based on the stakeholder principle of *jus nexi*, which grants citizenship based on a ‘genuine connection’ and ‘permanent interest in membership’ preceded by specific residency, income, or language requirements for people who have migrated to their new countries.²⁰ Most people acquire citizenship according to these three citizenship principles. Citizenship

¹¹ Joost Jansen, “Who Can Represent the Nation? Migration, Citizenship, and Nationhood in the Olympic Games,” *Sport and Nation*, (PhD diss., Erasmus University Rotterdam, 2020), 19.

¹² Jansen, “Who Can Represent,” 14.

¹³ Frederick Cooper, *Citizenship, Inequality, and Difference* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2018), 15.

¹⁴ Cooper, *Citizenship*, 16.

¹⁵ Cooper, *Citizenship*, 15.

¹⁶ Cooper, *Citizenship*, 16.

¹⁷ Oonk, “Sport and Nationality,” 2.

¹⁸ Gijsbert Oonk, “Who May Represent the Country? Football, Citizenship, Migration, and National Identity at the FIFA World Cup,” *The International Journal of the History of Sport*, 4.

¹⁹ Oonk, “Who May Represent,” 3-4.

²⁰ Oonk, “Who May Represent,” 4.

regimes of modern nation-states utilize these principles, often in overlapping ways, to establish formal political belonging.

Gijsbert Oonk describes the two historical models of *jus sanguinis* (blood ties) and *jus soli* (territorial birthright) as “well-known markers and symbols of national belonging and citizenship,”²¹ and the third, *jus nexi*, as a “real and effective” link to the community.²² This investigation will utilize Oonk’s ideal-type model of “thick,” “thin,” and “in-between” forms of citizenship to challenge the historical models of *jus sanguinis* and *jus soli*. Oonk’s model builds upon Baubock’s 1999 conceptions of thick and thin citizenship and highlights the complexities of the ‘in-between’ categories of citizenship that multi-national soccer players may occupy.²³ According to Oonk, thick citizenship is exemplified when an athlete and their parents and grandparents are born and raised in the same country they represent, while thin citizenship is exemplified when an athlete has no prior relationship with the country they represent.²⁴ The multifaceted ‘in-between’ citizenship perspective with dual or multiple citizenships “provides options for athletes to represent more than one country.”²⁵ The categories are not mutually exclusive and occasionally overlap.²⁶ The three areas for negotiating ‘in-between’ citizenship identified by Oonk include dual/multiple citizenships, colonial ties to territorial citizenship, and claims to *jus nexi* citizenship on permanent interest.²⁷ The ‘in-between’ categories of citizenship are difficult to define because categories of belonging are blurred, and athletes, sports federations, institutions, states, and audiences constantly negotiate them.²⁸ Citizenship regimes with birthright and naturalization have historically differed by country and changed over time to create a global imbalance of citizenship opportunities for migrants.²⁹

Countries have their own nationality laws in determining who belongs to their political collectivity. According to information from the Citizenship Resource Center of U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services, within the U.S. Department of Homeland Security, United States citizenship is described as follows:

Citizenship is the common thread that connects all Americans. We are a nation bound not by race or religion, but by the shared values of freedom, liberty, and equality.³⁰

Citizenship offers many benefits and equally important responsibilities. By applying, you are demonstrating your commitment to this country and our form of government. Citizenship is a unique bond that unites people around civic ideals and a belief in the rights and freedoms guaranteed by the U.S. Constitution.³¹

²¹ Oonk, “Sport and Nationality,” 1.

²² Oonk, “Sport and Nationality,” 3.

²³ Oonk, “Sport and Nationality,” 6.

²⁴ Oonk, “Sport and Nationality,” 1.

²⁵ Oonk, “Sport and Nationality,” 1.

²⁶ Oonk, “Sport and Nationality,” 14.

²⁷ Oonk, “Sport and Nationality,” 8.

²⁸ Oonk, “Sport and Nationality,” 15.

²⁹ Oonk, “Sport and Nationality,” 4.

³⁰ “Should I Consider U.S. Citizenship?,” Citizenship Resource Center, U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services, last modified July 5, 2020, <https://www.uscis.gov/citizenship/learn-about-citizenship/should-i-consider-us-citizenship>.

³¹ “Citizenship and Naturalization,” Citizenship Resource Center, U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services, last modified July 5, 2020, <https://www.uscis.gov/citizenship/learn-about-citizenship/citizenship-and-naturalization>.

They emphasize the common connections, shared values, and responsibilities that unite Americans, while making specific references to political belonging centered around the U.S. Constitution. Citizenship of the United States can be obtained by acquisition or naturalization. Acquisition of U.S. citizenship is obtained from at least one U.S. citizen parent at birth or after birth, but before the age of 18. U.S. citizenship by naturalization may be granted to lawful permanent residents after fulfilling legal requirements of the Immigration and Nationality Act (INA), enacted in 1952.³² After a period of legal residency requirements, for at least five years, along with a formal interview and civic exam, immigrants wishing to become citizens swear a public oath of allegiance to the United States at a naturalization ceremony.³³ Many migrants to the United States choose to become American citizens in this way, and by doing so they are entitled to the freedom, liberty, and equality guaranteed to citizens by the U.S. Constitution.

The USCIS published U.S. naturalization statistics from 2019 as their latest fiscal year on their website. They offer the following recent highlights of American naturalization details:

The number of U.S. naturalizations rose to 843,593 persons in 2019, up 11% from 761,901 in 2018. The number of applications for citizenship in 2019 was down to 830,560 from 837,168 applications in 2018. The number of naturalizations exceeds the number of applications due to previously adjudicated application denials and application processing times.

The top five countries of origin for naturalization were in the following descending order: Mexico (14.5%), India (7.7%), Philippines (5.2%), People's Republic of China (4.7%) and Cuba (4.3%).

About 70% of all naturalized citizens resided in 10 states (in descending order): California (17.6%), Texas (11.6%), Florida (11.4%), New York (10.1%), New Jersey (4.3%), Illinois (3.6%), Georgia (3.1%), Virginia (2.8%), Massachusetts (2.7%) and Pennsylvania (2.5%).

The leading metropolitan areas of residence were New York-Newark-Jersey City, NY-NJ-PA (12.8%), Miami-Fort Lauderdale -West Palm Beach, FL (7.2%) Los Angeles-Long Beach-Anaheim, CA (6.7%), and Houston-The Woodlands-Sugar Land, TX (6.7%).³⁴

The countries of origin for naturalization and states and metropolitan areas of U.S. residency will be useful to note in determining athletes' feelings of belonging. This thesis will determine how the birthright acquisition of U.S. citizenship and citizenship by naturalization are reflected in the composition of the United States Men's National Soccer Team.

In international sporting events like the World Cup, eligibility rules and organizing principles for (inter)national representation are formed by sport-institutions, in this case, FIFA, to rely on an athlete's formal citizenship and legal membership links to a nation-state.³⁵ Therefore, citizenship is a prerequisite for national team representation in official FIFA competitions. Athletes seeking the prestige of the international spotlight sometimes switch allegiances to ensure participation in major soccer tournaments, while others feel a deeper attachment to the country they choose to represent. The context of their citizenships influences the elite multi-national athlete in their decision of representation

³² U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services, "Citizenship and Naturalization."

³³ U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services, "Citizenship and Naturalization."

³⁴ "Naturalization Fact Sheet," News Releases, United States Citizenship and Immigration Services, last modified November 18, 2020, <https://www.uscis.gov/news/news-releases/naturalization-fact-sheet>.

³⁵ Jansen, "Who Can Represent," 13.

for a national team. Foreign-born athletes and those with migrant family backgrounds challenge the existing discourses of citizenship and who may represent the country.

Migration:

The diversity of athletes that represent the United States in international sporting events reflects the political, economic, and cultural developments of the United States as a 'nation of immigrants.' The United States experienced "waves" of transatlantic migration during the late 19th and early 20th centuries.³⁶ This led the United States to be considered a traditional country of settlement, and became a particularly attractive migrant destination after the Second World War.³⁷ Other 'nations of immigrants' like Canada, Australia, and New Zealand similarly include migrants as an active part of their historical consciousness and national identity, and attribute the diversity of their "current" people to histories of large-scale immigration.³⁸ Changing global migration trends and immigration and naturalization policies have given preference to certain migration corridors over different periods throughout history. The United States promoted the attractiveness of opportunities for migrants seeking to live the 'American dream,' but they have not always had welcoming policies.³⁹ For example, marginalized groups previously excluded from American citizenship such as Native-Americans, African-Americans, Asian-Americans, Latino-Americans, newly-arrived migrants, and others have struggled with feelings of 'American' belonging. American leadership of post-World War Two institutions during the Cold War assured American civilian and military presence (along with American conceptions of citizenship and national identity) in Europe and elsewhere throughout a world coming to terms with modern globalization. The establishment of these international links to civilian and military migration influenced the volume and diversity of American multi-national soccer players from 1990 to 2019.

Gijs van Campenhout, Jacco van Sterkenburg, and Gijsbert Oonk suggest that the immigration diversification of national teams seems to match the general tendencies of the globalization of migration.⁴⁰ True diversification of foreign-born players is mainly related to 'nations of immigrants' like the United States.⁴¹ The countries of origin of foreign-born players in national soccer teams are not random or part of a free market of choice, but are often guided, or constrained, by colonial relations, specific migration histories, local and international legislation, and national traditions.⁴² They also emphasize the current academic need to reflect on the term 'migrant' in order to answer the difficult question 'Who counts as a migrant footballer?' Previous sports studies classified migrant (World Cup-level) athletes using an "overly simplistic and problematic" foreign-born approach that emphasized an

³⁶ Gijs van Campenhout, Jacco van Sterkenburg, and Gijsbert Oonk, "Has the World Cup Become More Migratory? A Comparative History of Foreign-Born Players in National Football Teams, c. 1930-2018," *Comparative Migration Studies* 7, no. 1 (May 17, 2019): 3.

³⁷ Van Campenhout, Van Sterkenberg, and Oonk, "Has the World Cup Become More Migratory?," 3.

³⁸ Van Campenhout, Van Sterkenberg, and Oonk, "Has the World Cup Become More Migratory?," 3.

³⁹ Van Campenhout, Van Sterkenberg, and Oonk, "Has the World Cup Become More Migratory?," 3.

⁴⁰ Van Campenhout, Van Sterkenberg, and Oonk, "Has the World Cup Become More Migratory?," 12.

⁴¹ Van Campenhout, Van Sterkenberg, and Oonk, "Has the World Cup Become More Migratory?," 14.

⁴² Van Campenhout, Van Sterkenberg, and Oonk, "Has the World Cup Become More Migratory?," 12.

individual's place of birth relative to their current geopolitical situation.⁴³ Van Campenhout, Van Sterkenberg, and Oonk promote an alternative to the common foreign-born approach used in previous migration research to address the need to include the complexities of citizenship and nationality when gathering data of migrant footballers (in a database).⁴⁴ They suggest the 'contextual-nationality' approach described below as:

A historical contextualization of nationality through the use of territorial boundaries at the time of the World Cup; the influences of colonialism on nationality and citizenship; and by pleading that foreign-born footballers need to be considered nationals when they have a genuine link with the country they represent, will result in more accurate numbers of migrant footballers in a database.⁴⁵

They prefer this method because they believe it is more accurate in acknowledging historical contexts, power relations, and more flexible towards peoples' freedom of choice in nationality.⁴⁶ This approach is especially useful in dealing with athletes with dual or multiple nationalities, to determine the representation of migrant soccer players in their study throughout the history of the World Cup from 1930-2018.⁴⁷ Van Campenhout, Van Sterkenberg, and Oonk concluded that the World Cup has become more migratory throughout its history, and that future research could be directed toward athletes with different types of migration backgrounds in national teams, their 'representativeness' of the country, and which conditions these players have to meet to (morally) belong to the nation they represent on the field.⁴⁸ This investigation will utilize their contextual-nationality approach by applying the principles of citizenship to the biographical data and migration histories of Team USA soccer players from 1990-2019, thereby, historically contextualizing their citizenships and nationalities within the modern development of American soccer.

Insights into migration for sport labor purposes are equally important to address, since (inter)national migration often results from the transfers and contracts agreed upon between players and professional soccer clubs. The opening of the global soccer market in the mid-1990s made it easier for elite athletes to play professional soccer under the conditions they consider to be a personal fit.⁴⁹ Foreign players were attracted to the top European national soccer leagues for the quality of their competitions, but their movements were initially restricted by national governments and became more widely accepted over time.⁵⁰ The appeal of top European leagues such as the English Premier League, the Spanish La Liga, the Italian Serie A, the German Bundesliga, and the French Ligue 1 assist these highly-skilled migrants in actualizing their ambitions of playing at the highest level. American athletes' mobility to the top European leagues, especially those without citizenship to countries in the European Union are arguably becoming more visible. Typologies of sport migrants first introduced by Joseph

⁴³ Gijs van Campenhout, Jacco van Sterkenburg, and Gijsbert Oonk, "Who Counts as a Migrant Footballer? A Critical Reflection and Alternative Approach to Migrant Football Players on National Teams at the World Cup, 1930–2018," *International Journal of the History of Sport* 35, no. 11 (May 14, 2019): 1072.

⁴⁴ Van Campenhout, Van Sterkenberg, and Oonk, "Who Counts," 1072.

⁴⁵ Van Campenhout, Van Sterkenberg, and Oonk, "Who Counts," 1076.

⁴⁶ Van Campenhout, Van Sterkenberg, and Oonk, "Who Counts," 1072.

⁴⁷ Van Campenhout, Van Sterkenberg, and Oonk, "Who Counts," 1071.

⁴⁸ Van Campenhout, Van Sterkenberg, and Oonk, "Has the World Cup Become More Migratory?," 15.

⁴⁹ Van Campenhout, Van Sterkenberg, and Oonk, "Who Counts," 1087.

⁵⁰ Van Campenhout, Van Sterkenberg, and Oonk, "Who Counts," 1073.

Maguire in 1999, may be used to explain athletes' motivations to play abroad.⁵¹ Sociologists Maguire, Jonathan Magee, and John Sugden based their research almost exclusively on the lived experiences of professional athletes, by using interviews with male soccer, basketball, cricket and rugby players to gain "a more nuanced understanding of push and pull factors" that influences players to migrate.⁵² Three of Maguire's original classifications directly related to the motivations of professional soccer players selling their labor abroad, described as "mercenaries, settlers, and nomadic cosmopolitans" and Magee and Sugden added three further categories of "ambitious, exiles, and expelled."⁵³ These are not personality types, but rather represent a dominant storyline of the life narrative. These perspectives may also be useful to gain insight into the decisions of multi-national athletes' commitments to represent Team USA.

It should also be noted that presence of foreign-born and multi-national soccer players in national club soccer competitions has inevitably led to the inclusion of foreign-born and multi-national players in the composition of national soccer teams selected to represent the nation in major international competitions.⁵⁴ In addition to traditional family migrants, professional soccer migrants living abroad may also become eligible for state citizenship based on working and residing in another country over a specified period.⁵⁵ Migration to or from the United States or having a migrant family background permits many Americans to hold dual or multiple citizenships in this way. For many of these individuals, categories of belonging are blurred and under constant negotiation.⁵⁶ The inclusion of naturalized, dual, and multi-national citizens in Team USA squads from 1990 to 2019 reflects the complexities of national identity within the diversity of the United States.

National Identity:

Terms like citizenship, nation, and nationality contain different overlapping meanings of belonging and identity.⁵⁷ Oonk summarizes 'citizenship' as a formal reference to the membership of a state, 'nationhood' as a more informal reference to the membership of a community or 'nation,' and 'nationality' as a confusing reference that can mean both.⁵⁸ It is essential to include the analysis of power dynamics between state, sport-institution, and individuals in establishing connections between sport and national identity. Sports raise awareness of national identity and difference through emotional expression in public space and media coverage using language and images of national unity.⁵⁹ According to Van Campenhout and Henk van Hotum, representatives of national soccer teams are

⁵¹ Tatiana V. Ryba, Natalia B. Stambulova, Noora J. Ronkainen, Jens Bundgaard, and Harri Selänne, "Dual Career Pathways of Transnational Athletes," *Psychology of Sport and Exercise* 21, (Nov 2015): 127.

⁵² Ryba, Stambulova, Ronkainen, Bundgaard, and Selänne, "Dual Career Pathways," 127.

⁵³ Ryba, Stambulova, Ronkainen, Bundgaard, and Selänne, "Dual Career Pathways," 127.

⁵⁴ Van Campenhout, Van Sterkenberg, and Oonk, "Who Counts," 1073.

⁵⁵ Van Campenhout, Van Sterkenberg, and Oonk, "Who Counts," 1073-1074.

⁵⁶ Oonk, "Sport and Nationality," 15.

⁵⁷ Oonk, "Who May Represent," 3.

⁵⁸ Oonk, "Who May Represent," 3.

⁵⁹ Daniel Taylor Buffington, "Us and Them: U.S. Ambivalence Toward the World Cup and American Nationalism," *Journal of Sport and Social Issues* 36, no. 2 (2012): 137.

recognized as “conditionally and temporally” belonging to the nation.⁶⁰ As representatives of a deliberately selected national group, subjected to the formal citizenship regimes of states, World Cup-level athletes partake in the invented national traditions of sporting events, representing their national institutions with kits, flags, anthems, supporters, and often a unique national soccer style of play. How important is national identity in the sporting decisions of these soccer players to represent their country on the pitch?

Citizenship is indeed an important marker of formal political belonging to a state, but national belonging refers to the informal imaginary bonds forged between members of a national community that transcend political borders.⁶¹ National belonging encourages claims of collective similarities that members of a nation share, such as common history, traditions, sense of place, and other mutual experiences, and positions one nation as a unique separate entity from others.⁶² Since the 1990s, scholars have made serious attempts to understand the origins of ‘nation building’ and ‘nation-states.’ These ideas are similarly linked to the origins of French civic and German ethnic conceptions of citizenship developed in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries resulting from the Peace of Westphalia in 1648.⁶³ The French civic model was more inclusive in its invention of a national community, providing subjects within its political borders the formal political rights of citizenship and informal national belonging. The German ethnic model was more exclusive, providing formal citizenship rights only to individuals descended from other ethnic Germans, regardless of political borders or territoriality. National studies of Hobsbawm, Smith, Anderson, and Gellner are useful to consider.

Connections between sport and national identity are central to this investigation, but elite multi-national athletes are not the only public figures with stretched feelings of national belonging. In the case of the United States, American political leaders such as Henry Kissinger, Madeleine Albright, Barack Obama, and Kamala Harris represented the United States as government officials with multi-national identities. State representatives, national team athletes, and the media negotiate the terms of belonging and identity.⁶⁴ Regulations introduced by states and international sports federations contribute to the flexibility of athletes, sport-institutions, and states to develop ‘social citizenship capital,’ where *jus soli*, *jus sanguinis*, and *jus nexi* senses of belonging converge.⁶⁵ By highlighting the distinction of international sports: athletes represent the country on a widely publicized international stage, and because of their prestige, the connections with the country they represent are often part of public debate.⁶⁶ The idea of athletes as representatives of the nation is exemplified in Eric Hobsbawm’s quote: “The Imagined Community of Millions seems more real as a team of eleven named people. The individual, even the one who only cheers, becomes a symbol of his nation himself.”⁶⁷

⁶⁰ Gijs van Campenhout and Henk van Hotum, “I am German when we win, but I am an immigrant when we lose’. Theorising on the deservedness of migrants in international football, using the case of Mesut Özil,” *Sport in Society*, (Jan, 2021): 2.

⁶¹ Buffington, “Us and Them,” 135.

⁶² Buffington, “Us and Them,” 137.

⁶³ Oonk, “Who May Represent,” 4.

⁶⁴ Oonk, “Who May Represent,” 5.

⁶⁵ Oonk, “Sport and Nationality,” 7.

⁶⁶ Oonk, “Sport and Nationality,” 15.

⁶⁷ Oonk, “Sport and Nationality,” 7.

The emotional expression and interpersonal interaction of sports encourage strong feelings of affinity to the in-group.⁶⁸ In this context, support or participation in soccer enables the possibility to transcend negatives attitudes of race, social class, and migrant background to create a more inclusive representation of national identity. Elias and Scotson's established-outsider model is useful for analyzing moral negotiations around the acceptance and recognition of players with migration backgrounds as well as the position of soccer within American sports culture. Their research focused on the analyses of sharp divisions between an old-established group and a newer group of resident "outsiders" in a community. Their case represents a universal human theme applied to this investigation:

The more powerful groups look upon themselves as the "better" people, as endowed with a kind of group charisma, with a specific virtue shared by all its members and lacked by the others. What is more, in all these cases the "superior" people may make the less powerful people themselves feel that they lack virtue—that they are inferior in human terms.⁶⁹

The established-outsider model will be applied two-fold: with migrant athletes considered as 'outsiders' to/from the United States relative to the 'established' residents and with international soccer culture considered as an 'outsider' excluded by the 'established' American hegemonic sports culture of baseball, American football, basketball, and ice hockey.

In 2019, Van Campenhout, Van Sterkenberg, and Oonk emphasized the current academic and media claims that "countries are increasingly represented by players with a 'vague' connection to the countries whose jerseys they wear, which fuels debates on the representativeness of national teams and the belonging to the nation of these foreign-born players."⁷⁰ FIFA's eligibility regulations of 1962 attempted to ensure that national soccer teams would remain a symbol of nationalism. Additional FIFA rulings in 2004 obliged a 'clear connection' between soccer players and the country they represented. Although FIFA determines eligibility for international soccer competitions, they do not have a say in national citizenship procedures.⁷¹ Feelings of national belonging are often stretched for dual/multi-national athletes since institutional limitations often force athletes to represent only one sporting nationality over their careers. Athletes that are identified as a top talent and possess multiple citizenships often face a difficult personal choice of which nation to represent in international sporting competitions. Regulations introduced by states and international sports-institutions, such as FIFA and the International Olympic Committee (IOC), have allowed limited flexibility for athletes to change allegiances, but their inclusion on a national team leads to debates of how their selection reflects the culture of the nation.

American Exceptionalism:

Soccer in the United States has historically been known as "the immigrant's sport." Since hosting its first World Cup in 1994, soccer has grown exponentially, but initially failed to challenge American hegemonic sports culture. The concept of American exceptionalism can be attributed to multiple factors, but the most common denominator is the "bourgeois nature of America's objective development and subjective

⁶⁸ Buffington, "Us and Them," 137.

⁶⁹ Norbert Elias and John Scotson, *The Established and the Outsiders* (London: SAGE Publications, 1994), xvi.

⁷⁰ Van Campenhout, Van Sterkenberg, and Oonk, "Has the World Cup Become More Migratory?," 2.

⁷¹ Van Campenhout, Van Sterkenberg, and Oonk, "Has the World Cup Become More Migratory?," 5.

self-legitimation.”⁷² The U.S. prided itself on a new liberal identity of European origin, but also transcended the aristocratic frameworks of its origins with new republican virtue in the new world.⁷³ American national origins rooted in the ideals of U.S. Constitution address the common connections, shared values, and responsibilities of this unique American identity.

Soccer in the United States has often been considered the ‘foreign’ sport of migrants and was relatively marginalized in American culture, positioning it as an exception to mainstream American sports culture.⁷⁴ In the American sports landscape, public preferences for ‘The Big Three and One-Half’ sports of baseball, (American) football, basketball, and ice hockey have excluded soccer from the hegemonic sports culture of the United States.⁷⁵ Successes and dominance of the U.S. Women’s National Soccer Team have also left the men’s team in the shadows, but perhaps creates the greatest opportunity for soccer’s inroads into the acceptance of mainstream American sports culture. Political, economic, and cultural developments of the United States as a diverse ‘nation of immigrants’ appeared to be an ideal environment for soccer to flourish, but national and international narratives shaped public perceptions of American soccer as a sport of the ‘other.’ American exceptionalism has presented obstacles for soccer’s development and popularity within American sports space.

Hosting the FIFA Men’s World Cup in 1994 and FIFA Women’s World Cup in 1999 attracted a significant number of attendees, television viewers, and fans among the general public, including many with no previous interests in soccer or women’s sports.⁷⁶ Modernization and globalization have done much to influence the development of American soccer since. American youth are choosing soccer over other sports, while the U.S. Youth Soccer Association boasted the world’s largest coaching and volunteer network of 800,000 people in 2004.⁷⁷ The establishment of professional Major League Soccer (MLS), development of women’s soccer, soccer stars, long-term corporate sponsorships, and lucrative television deals have contributed to soccer’s increased visibility in the United States. Players and supporters of American soccer are now exposed to World Cup, Premiership, Italian, Spanish, German, and Champions League soccer almost daily on major American media outlets NBC, ABC, CBS, FOX, ESPN, and Univision.⁷⁸

However, in Sandra Collins’s 2006 article “National Sports and Other Myths: The Failure of US Soccer,” she reviews the recent history of soccer in the United States and analyzes cultural and economic factors to argue for a problematic future for the sport.⁷⁹ She states that America’s top three sports of baseball, basketball, and (American) football engage a sense of “self-contained nationalism”

⁷² Andrei S. Markovits and Steven L. Hellerman, *Offside: Soccer and American Exceptionalism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001), 9.

⁷³ Markovits and Hellerman, *Offside*, 9.

⁷⁴ Buffington, “Us and Them,” 136.

⁷⁵ Andrei S. Markovits and Steven L. Hellerman, “Women’s soccer in the United States: Yet another American ‘Exceptionalism’,” *Soccer and Society* 4, no. 2-3 (2003): 15.

⁷⁶ Markovits and Hellerman, “Women’s soccer,” 16.

⁷⁷ Sandra Collins, “National Sports and Other Myths: The Failure of US Soccer,” *Soccer and Society* 7, no. 2-3 (Apr 1, 2006): 353.

⁷⁸ Gary Hopkins, *Star-Spangled Soccer: The Selling, Marketing and Management of Soccer in the USA* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), 2.

⁷⁹ Collins, “National Sports,” 353.

that are uniquely hailed as American, while soccer is not.^{80,81} Collins suggests that the concepts of American exceptionalism and divisive globalization can provide insight into the struggles of American soccer and into anxieties of America in the global world of today.⁸² Globalization provides the subtext for the American cultural split of 2004 into the liberal and conservative worldviews that shape modern perspectives of American soccer.⁸³ Collins identifies class and race as the contemporary issues the United States needs to seriously address if soccer is to capture the American “popular imagination.”⁸⁴ Soccer is a diverse sport and represents a cross-section of America, but inclusiveness and diversity are difficult to define in a post-9/11 world.⁸⁵

American exceptionalism and ambivalence towards soccer initially delayed its organized development in the United States, but through the globalization of the sport and its increased visibility in the United States, important social issues such as inclusiveness and diversity can be addressed by its current administrators, participants, and supporters. Overall, the collective application of these theories and concepts will be the essential frameworks used to analyze the negotiations of citizenship and national belonging surrounding multi-national Team USA athletes from 1990 to 2019.

1.3: Sources and Methods

The primary sources for this investigation include archival databases of information on World Cup athletes, citizenship and nationality laws of the United States and other countries, FIFA/CONCACAF regulations and statutes, and the media discourse surrounding dual/multi-national soccer players and American soccer.

Team USA Player Database:

A database of male athletes who were selected in the United States Men’s National Soccer Team squads for FIFA World Cups, FIFA Confederations Cups, and CONCACAF Gold Cups between 1990 and 2019 has been compiled. The FIFA World Cup, held every four years, is the premier soccer tournament for national teams throughout the world to compete for the world championship. The FIFA Confederations Cup, also held every four years, precedes the World Cup by one year, and features a tournament consisting of the champions from FIFA’s six regional confederations. The Gold Cup, held every two years, is CONCACAF’s regional championship, consisting of national teams from North America, Central American, and the Caribbean region. The Team USA Player Database contains all American athletes that were selected for Team USA tournament squads from FIFA World Cups in 1990, 1994, 1998, 2002, 2006, 2010, and 2014; FIFA Confederations Cups in 1992, 1999, 2003, and 2009; and CONCACAF Gold Cups in 1991, 1993, 1996, 1998, 2000, 2002, 2003, 2005, 2007, 2009, 2011, 2013, 2015, 2017, and 2019. These are the highest levels of international soccer competitions that Team USA could possibly compete in during the period of 1990 to 2019. The logic behind the compilation of this player database suggests that these male athletes are the top soccer players with American citizenship and available for U.S.

⁸⁰ Collins, “National Sports,” 358.

⁸¹ Collins, “National Sports,” 356.

⁸² Collins, “National Sports,” 359.

⁸³ Collins, “National Sports,” 359.

⁸⁴ Collins, “National Sports,” 360.

⁸⁵ Collins, “National Sports,” 361.

national team selection. Players with dual/multiple citizenships were identified from this database as the focus of this investigation. Two FIFA World Cup datasets from Gijs van Campenhout provided most of the detailed player and nationality data for my research: "Has the FIFA World Cup become more migratory? A comparative history of foreign-born players in national football teams, c. 1930-2018" and "Two Approaches to Counting Migrant Football Players at the World Cup, 1930-2018." Additional tournament and match records from FIFA and the USSF were required to provide the missing data for Confederations Cup and Gold Cup squads.

Dual/Multiple Citizenship Laws:

Immigration and naturalization laws from the United States Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) and other countries will be reviewed to establish legal claims to American or additional citizenships for athletes in the Team USA database. According to the Immigration and Nationality Act (INA) in the Code of Laws of the United States, "the term 'national of the United States' means (A) a citizen of the United States, or (B) a person who, though not a citizen of the United States, owes permanent allegiance to the United States." Therefore, U.S. citizens are also U.S. nationals.⁸⁶ Dual or multiple nationalities exists when a person is considered a national of two or more countries at the same time. The concept of dual nationality applies to United States citizenship by automatic operation of different countries' nationality laws. The U.S. Department of State provides the following dual citizenship example:

A child born in a foreign country to U.S. national parents may be both a U.S. national and a national of the country of birth. Or, an individual having one nationality at birth may naturalize at a later date in another country and become a dual national.⁸⁷

Athletes born or naturalized with dual and multiple citizenships challenge the conceptions of national team representation and eligibility in international FIFA soccer competitions.

FIFA Regulations:

As the governing body of world soccer, FIFA statutes unify the laws of the game "to make it fair and clear for all players."⁸⁸ FIFA oversees the competitions of regional confederations and national soccer federations in order to promote the development of soccer throughout the world. FIFA World Cup competitions for men and women allow the opportunity for world-class soccer players to represent their nation in a competition against other national teams to determine a world champion every four years. The global popularity of soccer and the prominent visibility of World Cup-level athletes places them under the scrutiny of international media. Questions regarding an athlete's selection as a top talent and their 'representativeness' of a nation are often raised. It should be reiterated that citizenship is a prerequisite for national team representation. FIFA rule changes in 1962 and 2004 highlighted the

⁸⁶ "Dual Nationality," Legal Resources, U.S. Department of State – Bureau of Consular Affairs, <https://travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/legal/travel-legal-considerations/Advice-about-Possible-Loss-of-US-Nationality-Dual-Nationality/Dual-Nationality.html>.

⁸⁷ U.S. Department of State – Bureau of Consular Affairs, "Dual Nationality."

⁸⁸ "The story of FIFA," FIFA, Nov 20, 2014, <https://www.fifa.com/who-we-are/videos/the-story-of-fifa-2477121>.

importance of national soccer teams as symbols of nationalism, but still required athletes to demonstrate a “clear connection” to the country they decided to represent.⁸⁹

FIFA eligibility regulations of participation for representative teams in international competitions are aligned to the following Article 5 principles as of January 2021:

1. Any person holding a permanent nationality that is not dependent on residence in a certain country is eligible to play for the representative teams of the association of that country.
2. There is a distinction between holding a nationality and being eligible to obtain a nationality. A player holds a nationality, if, through the operation of a national law, they have:
 - a) automatically received a nationality (e.g. from birth) without being required to undertake any further administrative requirements (e.g. abandoning a separate nationality); or
 - b) acquired a nationality by undertaking a naturalisation process.
3. With the exception of the conditions specified in article 9 below, any player who has already participated in a match (either in full or in part) in an official competition of any category or any type of football for one association may not play an international match for a representative team of another association.
4. For the purposes of arts 6 to 9 below, the phrase “lived on the territory of the relevant association” shall mean a period of physical presence on the territory of that association. The period shall be for a defined period of time (in years) in accordance with the relevant provision.
 - a) The period of physical presence is not interrupted by:
 - i) short absences abroad for personal reasons;
 - ii) holidays abroad during the football off-season;
 - iii) medical treatment or rehabilitation abroad following injury or illness; or
 - iv) travel abroad as a result of football employment.
 - b) The period of physical presence is interrupted (and time requirement resets) where:
 - i) a player is transferred to a club affiliated to a different association; or
 - ii) a player is absent from a territory for any reason other than those set out in par. a) above.
5. Notwithstanding art. 5 par. 4 a), unless exceptional circumstances exist, a player must be physically present on the territory of an association for at least 183 days during a 12 month period to be considered to have “lived on the territory” of that association for that year.
6. For the purposes of arts 6 to 9 below, the Rules Governing the Procedures of the Players’ Status Committee and the Dispute Resolution Chamber shall govern any requests for eligibility or change of association.⁹⁰

⁸⁹ Van Campenhout, Van Sterkenberg, and Oonk, “Has the World Cup Become More Migratory?,” 2.

⁹⁰ FIFA, “Commentary on the Rules Governing Eligibility to Play for Representative Teams,” (January 2021): 7-8.

FIFA's conceptions of citizenship and nationality govern the eligibility of athletes to represent national soccer teams. However, FIFA are not the only stakeholders in the discourse surrounding multi-national athletes and their (inter)national representation.

Discourse Analysis:

By analyzing the common language and communication in the discourse between Team USA athletes and their families, coaches/teammates, American/international media, soccer federations, and sports audiences, common themes or narratives in the negotiations of American identity may be revealed. The stakeholders in Team USA discourse share a basic set of values, assumptions, goals, and purposes that use common language and communication to achieve said goals. Michel Foucault's work on discourse analysis is directly related to the language of knowledge, materiality, and power associated with the lived experiences of Team USA athletes. Foucault's conceptualization of discourse entails a focus on discourse-as-knowledge in the social, historical, and political contexts that language is shared.⁹¹ The language used by national media outlets is often the most easily accessible voice in sports discourse, therefore, their role in the debates regarding the representation of multi-national athletes should be critically reviewed. Media portrayals of Team USA athletes offer the most useful primary sources for studies into the personal decisions of dual/multi-national soccer players in the modern United States because official media credentials allow for direct personal access to the athletes for filming and interviews. However, it is important to recognize the power of the mass media in shaping public opinion around World Cup-level athletes and their identity. The evolution of sports journalism has led to shorter, more accessible, often 'click-bait' pieces. With a careful analysis of public discourse surrounding the media's portrayal of Team USA, one may be able to elicit a sense of American national belonging from the interviews and public interactions of American multi-national soccer players. Media portrayals of these athletes will be examined to determine the influence of family, coaches/teammates, soccer federations, and sports audiences on athletes' decisions of representation and their relative positions within American soccer discourse. The content of mainstream American and European media outlets is used in this research specifically for their portrayals of American multi-national athletes and their perceptions of American and world soccer.

Modern American mass media outlets such *USA Today*, *Sports Illustrated*, *ESPN*, *The New York Times*, *The Washington Post* and others will be the main primary sources used in this media discourse analysis. Additional publications from the United States Soccer Federation, other soccer federations, the U.S. National Soccer Team Players Association (the current labor organization for Team USA), and well-known sports blogs will also be analyzed to further explore the perspectives of sport-institutions, the media, and the public audience in shaping attitudes surrounding American soccer. Articles, interviews, broadcasts, and other footage will be viewed in this respect. Primary European and international media sources are limited to English-language publications and footage from *The Guardian*, *BBC Sport*, *Sky Sports*, Bundesliga, FIFA, and individual soccer club sources. The use of social media by these (inter)national media outlets and modern Team USA athletes should not be ignored, as social media is a vital connection in developing relationships to establish national belonging within today's globally

⁹¹ Derek Hook, "Discourse, knowledge, materiality, history: Foucault and discourse analysis," In: *Foucault, Psychology and the Analytics of Power. Critical Theory and Practice in Psychology and the Human Sciences*, (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007): 37.

connected digital culture. These various sources and methods are used in this research to determine the motivations of American dual/multi-national soccer players in their choice of representation for Team USA and to consider the negotiations of citizenship and national belonging that their identity entails.

1.4: Innovative Aspects and Conclusion

Considerations of athletes with dual or multiple citizenships are often overlooked in simplistic foreign-born approaches to academic studies of migrant and transnational athletes. Citizenships and nationalities of elite American soccer players in recent history may not be evident from their place of birth alone. Dual/multi-national soccer players occupy the ‘in-between’ categories of thick and thin citizenship where the athletes are provided with options to represent more than one country.⁹² There is a need to investigate further into the complex constructions of identity and national belonging of athletes in this category. By using Van Campenhout, Van Sterkenberg, and Oonk’s contextual-nationality approach, historically contextualizing the applications of *jus soli*, *jus sanguinis*, and *jus nexi* citizenship principles and their overlap in Oonk’s thick to thin ideal-type model may assist in explaining the negotiations of identity and belonging that multi-national athletes experience. Thus, ultimately addressing questions of commitment and criticism aimed at their types of citizenship and proving the ‘representativeness’ of Team USA athletes competing for the United States in international soccer tournaments. This research aims to contribute to the debates of national belonging in international sport through the creation of the Team USA Player Database to identify common pathways and migration patterns in the lived experiences of American dual/multi-national soccer players from 1990 to 2019.

Negotiations of belonging are influenced by multiple factors for the World Cup-level athlete, including but not limited to player quality, playing time, or the chance to be a world champion. The role of family, coaches/teammates, media, soccer federations, and sports audiences in the establishment of feelings of belonging must be considered. Theoretical foundations of citizenship, migration, and national identity are essential in describing the thick to thin forms of citizenship and belonging that dual/multi-national soccer players occupy. The World Cup and other mass-mediated international soccer tournaments offer contrasting cultural significance in the United States and abroad. Jansen’s triadic framework of citizenship, migration, and national identity are used as common threads to investigate the unique example of multi-national athletes representing the United States on an (inter)national level. The study of elite athletes and their negotiations of identity through sport is much different than the study of other national representatives such as political figures and has received less scholarly attention. The development of soccer as an outsider to American hegemonic sports culture places soccer on a list of American exceptionalisms deserving further analysis.⁹³

The unique development of American soccer and its struggle to capture the “popular imagination” of the United States with the context of American exceptionalism must be considered. As exhibited by Sergiño Dest in his 2019 decision to represent Team USA:

⁹² Oonk, “Sport and Nationality,” 1.

⁹³ Buffington, “Us and Them,” 136.

My heart told me the U.S. was the best option for me. I was raised in the Netherlands. I love it here. But in life, you have to make difficult decisions. I felt the U.S. was the best option. I had played in their youth teams, and I feel at home there. It's not as if the U.S. is bad at soccer, either. They play in World Cups -- and against a lot of the same teams as the Netherlands.⁹⁴

Overall, these considerations will be essential in determining the 'representativeness' of soccer players with dual or multiple citizenships for the United States Men's National Team and explaining their negotiations of citizenship and national belonging towards feelings of being at 'home' with the

⁹⁴ Hamilton, "Sergino Dest exclusive."

Chapter 2: The United States Multi-National Team

2.1: Team USA Player Database

Failure to qualify for every FIFA World Cup tournament in the period between 1950 and 1990 was a major setback for the growth of U.S. soccer. Forty years of World Cup absences highlighted the need for new approaches to talent identification, player/coach development, and the professionalization of the sport in the United States to become consistently competitive. Hosting the 1994 World Cup in the United States was an exceptional opportunity for the public to reconsider soccer's share of national sporting space. There was controversy following FIFA's 1988 announcement to award the World Cup to a country where soccer was not the most popular sport. The lack of a professional outdoor soccer league in the United States by the time of FIFA's announcement led to the creation of a new professional league, Major League Soccer (MLS) formed later in 1995, as one of FIFA's conditions for granting the World Cup to the U.S. As the chosen 1994 host nation, the United States received an automatic qualification berth for the tournament, without having to go through the CONCACAF confederation's regional World Cup qualifying process. Qualifying and preparations for the preceding 1990 World Cup in Italy would reintroduce Team USA to the global soccer stage, and better prepare them for their own international showcase in 1994. In the meantime, a pool of the top United States-eligible players had to be identified for inclusion in upcoming international competitions, establishing the beginning of this research with the Team USA squad selected for the 1990 FIFA World Cup and continuing with every major tournament squad until the 2019 CONCACAF Gold Cup.

Team USA participated in a total of 26 major international soccer tournaments during the period from 1990 to 2019. Tournament squad sizes averaged 23 players and were selected by the respective head coaches of Team USA. Squads were submitted by USSF officials to FIFA or CONCACAF one to two weeks before each tournament. In some tournaments, alternative player replacements were allowed midway through, leading to larger squad sizes above the standard 23. Seven different Team USA head coaches selected national team squads for major tournaments over this period: Bob Gansler, Bora Milutinović, Steve Sampson, Bruce Arena, Bob Bradley, Jürgen Klinsmann, and Gregg Berhalter. The individual players consisting each major international tournament squad between 1990 and 2019 were collected in a database and periodized for analysis. Using existing FIFA World Cup player databases containing biographical data of Team USA World Cup squad members from 1990-2014 created by Gijs van Campenout, and supplementing it with additional squad data of participants in CONCACAF Gold Cups and FIFA Confederations Cups between 1990 and 2019, allowed for the compilation of the Team USA Player Database consisting of the 201 male athletes in this investigation.

The logic behind the compilation of this database suggests that the aggregate collections of these Team USA squads represent the highest caliber men's soccer players with American citizenship that are available for U.S. national team selection between 1990 and 2019. FIFA's main organizing principle for national soccer teams utilizes formal citizenship regimes to determine national team eligibility. Players holding multiple citizenships are often eligible to represent different national teams, but FIFA limitations restrict these athletes to represent only one sporting nationality in their careers, unless through a one-time, FIFA-approved nationality switch. The players in this database possess U.S. citizenship, were identified and individually selected by Team USA coaches based on their talent and perceived role within each Team USA squad, and ultimately accepted their call-ups to represent the United States in at least one major international tournament between 1990 and 2019. With American

citizenship as a formal marker of American belonging, the simple act of accepting a Team USA call-up can be viewed as a deliberate confirmation of belonging. In this case, squad members share a collective temporal allegiance to the United States through sport, defining their own imagined community in relation to other regional and global soccer competitors, subject to international regulations and media attention.

Limitations to the breadth of this database do not account for the citizenship/nationality data of athlete's great-grandparents or athletes with United States citizenship that opted to represent or switched allegiance to other (non-U.S.) countries, thus becoming cap-tied or committed to represent other national teams in major international competitions. The database also omits elite American athletes that were prevented from participating in these major tournaments due to injuries, lack of form, or possible negative effects on team chemistry during the tournament. Additionally, athletes in recent Team USA squads selected after the 2019 CONCACAF Gold Cup are not included in the Team USA Player Database. Dual/multi-national athletes have indeed been named in recent Team USA squads for friendly matches and the CONCACAF Nations League in 2020 and 2021. Since the 2019 Gold Cup was the last major official competition Team USA participated in before this research began, the most recent commitments of American dual/multi-national athletes Sergiño Dest, Tim Weah, Yunus Musah, Jordan Siebatcheu, and several others are not included in the database.

Through analysis of the athletes' place of birth, nationalities of their (grand)parents, migration history, and citizenship principles of the United States, this investigation focuses on the citizenship and nationality links that enabled these 201 uniquely selected athletes to represent Team USA in major international soccer competitions. Initial analysis applies citizenship principles to the athletes in the Team USA Player Database to establish their individual feelings of belonging. Multi-national players born abroad and those with migrant family backgrounds largely contributed to the composition of these Team USA squads in the period since 1990 and will be investigated in further detail. Each multi-national athlete's negotiation of these additional citizenship and nationality links are the points of focus for this research into Team USA's multi-national representation.

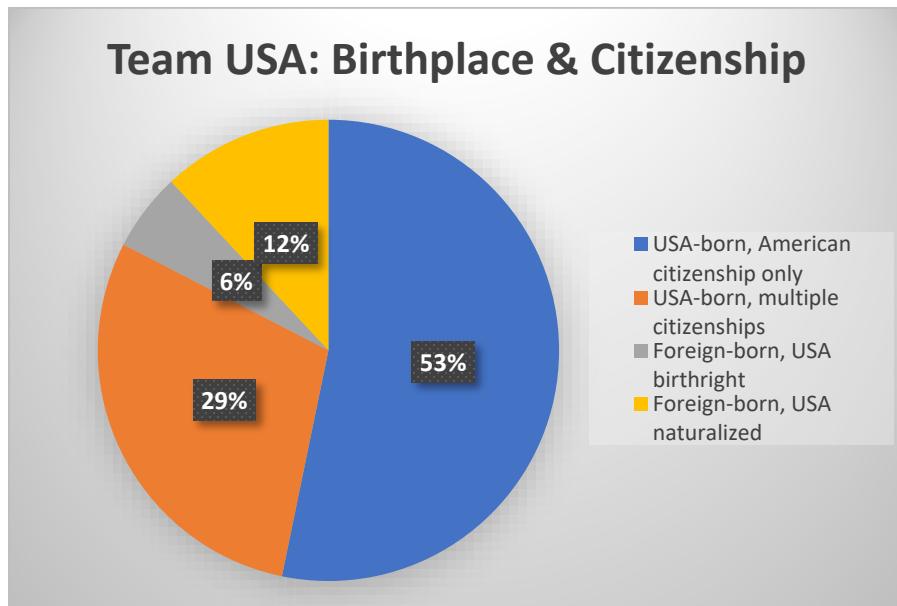
2.2: Multi-National Links

The 201 male soccer players in the Team USA Player Database were selected to represent the United States in major international soccer tournaments between 1990 and 2019. Ninety-four of those players possessed dual or multiple citizenships for considerations of personal identity formation and national belonging. Research into the migration backgrounds of these ninety-four American multi-national athletes revealed a total of fifty-one additional nations from six continental regions for potential negotiations of citizenship and belonging. Many of these fifty-one nations could be considered by these athletes as alternative choices for representation in their decisions to choose a FIFA-regulated sporting nationality. The identification of fifty-one unique nations of migrant origins supports previous academic claims that immigration is increasingly diversifying in today's globalizing world, especially in a 'nation of immigrants' like the United States.

Identifying the sources of dual and multi-national connections of Team USA is essential before any negotiations of national belonging can be determined. With respect to formal citizenship of the United States, ninety-four (forty-seven percent) of the 201 athletes in the Team USA Player Database

have been identified as 'multi-national', possessing two or more citizenships or nationalities. These ninety-four players with claims to dual/multiple citizenships or nationalities will be the primary focus of this investigation. Thirty-five players (seventeen percent) were born outside of the USA, of which eleven acquired U.S. citizenship by birthright (*jus sanguinis*) and twenty-four acquired U.S. citizenship by naturalization (*jus nexi* and *jus matrimonii*). Fifty-nine of the ninety-four dual/multi-national players (twenty-nine percent) were born in the United States (*jus soli*) to parents or grandparents with additional citizenships or nationalities.

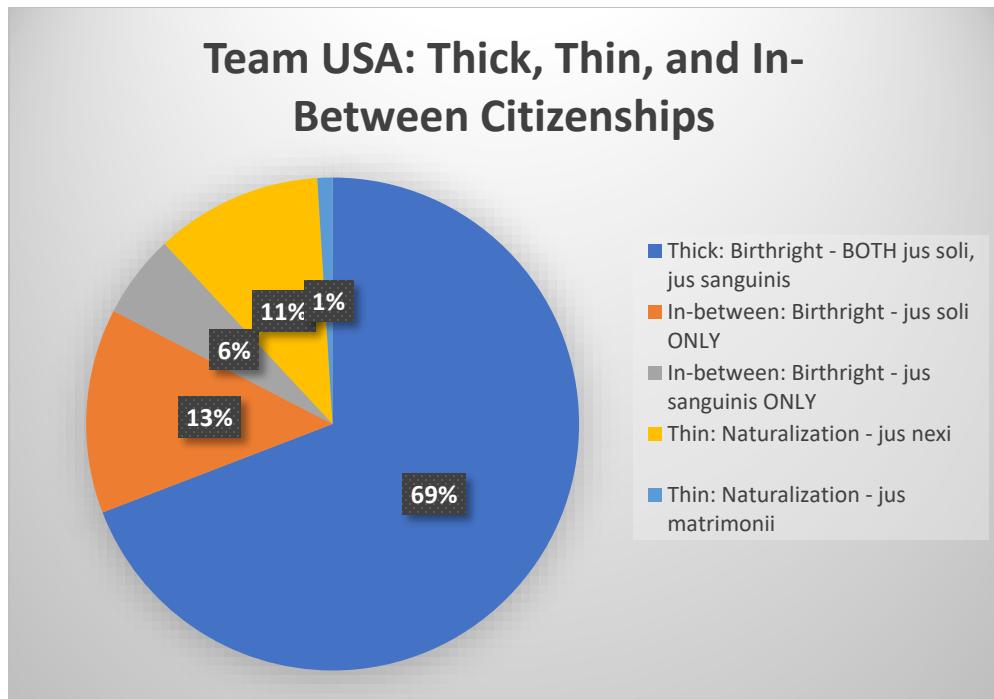
Figure 1: Team USA: Birthplace & Citizenship



Source: Team USA Player Database 1990-2019. Own calculations, see Appendix C.

Categorizing Team USA athletes by their birthplace and their type of American citizenship allows for a general perspective of American belonging. As visualized in Figure 1, fifty-three percent of athletes in the Team USA Player Database were born in the United States to parents and grandparents with exclusively American citizenship (USA-born, American citizenship only). Twenty-nine percent of athletes were born in the U.S. to parents and grandparents with at least one additional foreign citizenship (USA-born, multiple citizenships). Six percent of athletes were foreign-born and acquired U.S. citizenship by birthright through at least one American citizen parent (Foreign-born, USA birthright). Finally, twelve percent of athletes were foreign-born and obtained U.S. citizenship after a period of lawful permanent residency leading to naturalization (Foreign-born, USA naturalized).

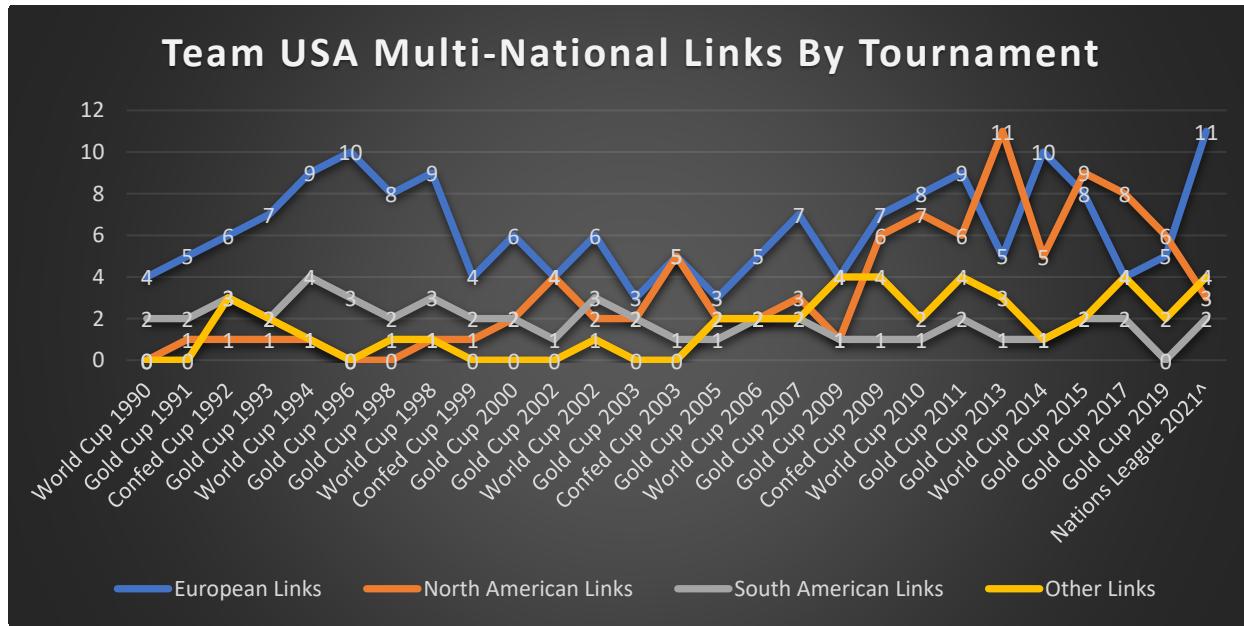
Figure 2: Team USA: Thick, Thin, and In-Between Citizenships



Source: Team USA Player Database 1990-2019. Own calculations, see Appendix C.

With conceptual frameworks of citizenship in mind, the Team USA Player Database contains a multitude of citizenship examples according to Oonk's ideal-type spectrum from 'thick' to 'thin', and 'in-between' forms of citizenship categories. The vast majority of the 201 total athletes possess the thickest form of U.S. citizenship: birthright acquisition via combined *jus soli* and *jus sanguinis* citizenship principles. As seen in Figure 2, these 139 players (sixty-nine percent) acquired U.S. birthright citizenship through both of the two birthright citizenship principles: by being born within the United States (*jus soli*) and by being born to one or more American citizen parents (*jus sanguinis*), identified as 'Thick: Birthright – BOTH *jus soli, jus sanguinis*'. The majority of these 'thick' U.S. athletes were born in the United States to parents and grandparents who were also born in the United States. Thirty-two of these 139 thick U.S. citizens inherited additional foreign citizenships/nationalities through their parents and grandparents. The 'in-between' forms of citizenship applied to formal United States citizenship examples consist of a single birthright principle such as *jus soli* only, or *jus sanguinis* only, referring to the thirty-eight athletes (thirteen percent) born in the U.S. to two foreign parents (In-between: Birthright – *jus soli ONLY*) or referring to the eleven athletes (six percent) born abroad to one or more American parents (In-between: Birthright – *jus sanguinis ONLY*). 'Thin' forms of U.S. citizenship in the database consist of obtaining citizenship by naturalization via *jus nexi* and *jus matrimonii* citizenship principles. Of the twenty-four athletes who acquired U.S. citizenship by naturalization, twenty-two obtained citizenship by means of the principle of *jus nexi* (Thin: Naturalization – *jus nexi*) and only two obtained it by *jus matrimonii* through marriage to an American citizen, representing the thinnest form of U.S. citizenship in the Team USA Player Database (Thin: Naturalization – *jus matrimonii*).

Figure 3: Team USA Multi-National Links By Tournament



Sources: Team USA Player Database 1990-2019, Team USA Squads 1990-2019. Own calculations, see Appendices C and D.

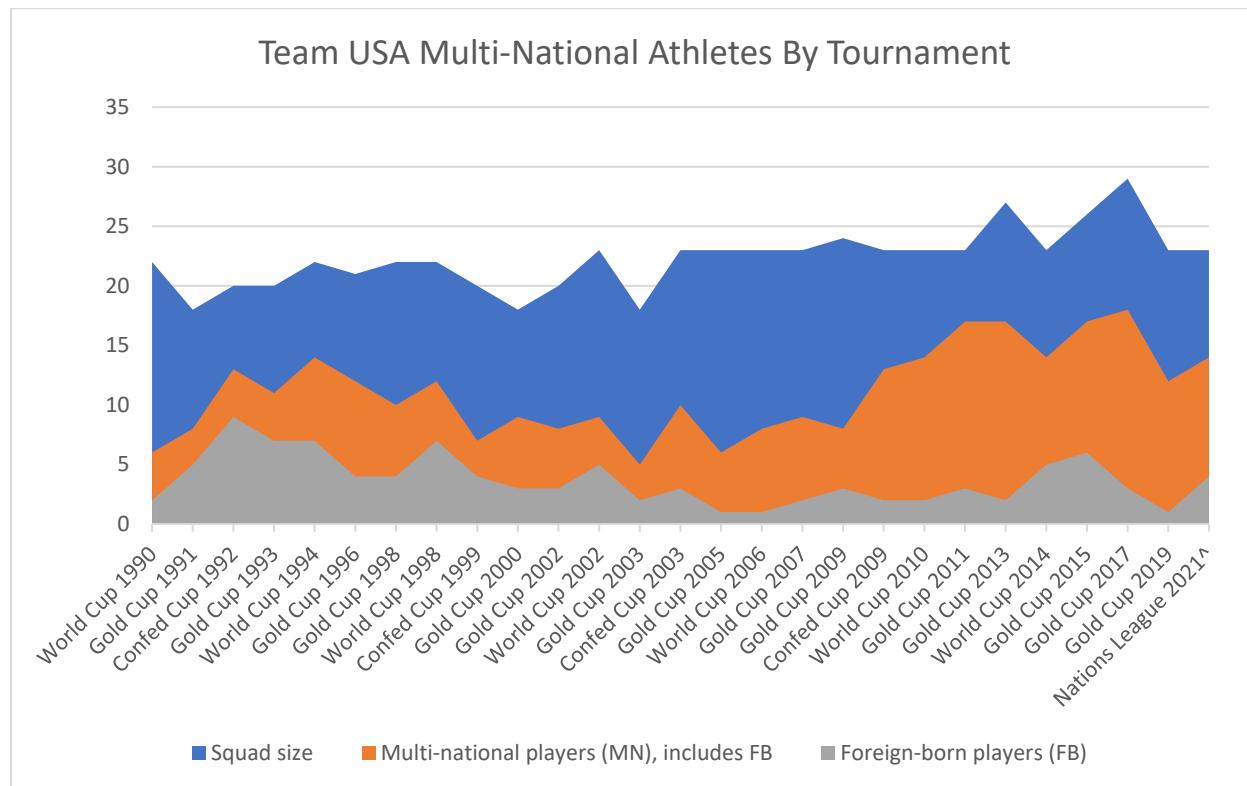
As seen in Figure 3, athletes in the Team USA Player Database have the largest amount of connections to the continental regions of Europe and North America through their place of birth, (grand)parents' nationalities, and naturalization. The forty-eight players that represented the United States between 1990 and 2019 were born in, descended from, or naturalized in twenty-four different European countries (European Links), the most common being Germany (11), Poland (4), and Scotland (4). Nine players have backgrounds originating in the collective nations of the British Isles and six players descended from the nations of former Yugoslavia. Thirty-two players representing Team USA were born or descended from ten other North American nations (North American Links), the most common being Mexico (16), Jamaica (6), Canada (3), and El Salvador (3). Two players have backgrounds originating in the American territory of Puerto Rico and one is a member of the Kiowa Native American tribe. In addition to having the most dual/multi-national links to Team USA squads, Mexico, Germany, and Jamaica are the three most common alternative national team choices of U.S. multi-national players between 1990 and 2019. Fourteen players were selected or appeared at various levels for other (non-U.S.) national soccer teams before committing to represent the United States.

Family migration histories and successful sporting careers merged to contribute to negotiations of national identity for many of these athletes between the United States and Mexico, Germany, Jamaica, the British Isles, former Yugoslavia, and many others. The continental regions of Europe and North America provide the most international links to Team USA, and therefore have considerable influences on feelings of national belonging in American multi-national soccer players. The inclusion of ninety-four multi-national athletes with connections to fifty-one unique nations on Team USA squads represents the diversity of American soccer's (inter)national links from 1990 to 2019.

2.3: Multi-National Squads

Team USA squads for twenty-six major international soccer tournaments from 1990 to 2019 have been analyzed for this research. Tournament squads were chosen by the seven respective head coaches of Team USA during this time, who ultimately decided which players to include or exclude from the squads. The number selected for each squad range from eighteen to twenty-nine athletes, depending on tournament requirements and alternative call-ups, but the standard World Cup squad limit is twenty-three players. 201 elite male soccer players were selected in twenty-six different tournament squads to represent the United States in World Cup, Confederations Cup, and Gold Cup soccer tournaments. Over the larger thirty-year period from the World Cup in 1990 to the Gold Cup in 2019, Team USA squads can be divided into three periods of multi-national representation. For the purposes of this section, a tournament squad is considered a 'multi-national squad' when over fifty percent of the players have genuine links to other nations. Out of twenty-six total squads included in the Team USA Player Database from 1990 to 2019, thirteen tournament squads can be classified as multi-national in this sense. These three major periods of multi-national representation are mainly characterized by the subjective squad selection policies of Team USA's head coaches and their perceptions of American national identity.

Figure 4: Team USA Multi-National Athletes By Tournament



Sources: Team USA Player Database 1990-2019, Team USA Squads 1990-2019. Own calculations, see Appendices C and D.

The first major period of Team USA multi-national representation was initiated by head coach, Bora Milutinović in 1991 and continued until 1998. The Serbia-born coach previously led Mexico and Costa Rica to World Cup knockout rounds in 1986 and 1990 respectively and was chosen to lead Team USA in their preparations as hosts of the 1994 World Cup. Beginning with his second major tournament, the 1992 Confederations Cup, Milutinović selected multi-national squads featuring up to a maximum of

fourteen multi-national players in his final tournament at the World Cup in 1994. Between 1991 and 1995, three of his four tournament squads were classified as multi-national, with those same three squads including more foreign-born players than any other squads in the Team USA database. As seen in Figure 4, nine foreign-born players were selected for the Confederations Cup in 1992, seven for the Gold Cup in 1993, and seven for the World Cup in 1994. After Milutinović's resignation in 1995, his former assistant Steve Sampson, was appointed full-time and continued a similar trend of selecting foreign-born multi-nationals: two of his three squads were multi-national, until a disastrous showing at the 1998 World Cup led to Sampson's resignation. Sampson's recruitment of Martinique-born, French-American David Regis, highlighted the urgency of the inclusion of multi-nationals in initial Team USA squads. Regis's marriage to an American citizen encouraged him to take his naturalization exam less than two months before appearing for the United States at the 1998 World Cup. Sampson commented on the topic:

Who am I to judge whether David Regis, the husband of an American wife, has less of a right to become an American than anyone else? He has every right to do that. We have worked within the system; we have done nothing illegal.⁹⁵

This initial period of national team representation was characterized by the selection of many foreign-born athletes with multi-national links.

The second major period of multi-national representation is defined by a lack thereof, under USA head coach Bruce Arena from 1998 to 2006. Arena took over after Sampson's resignation and reversed the trend of including players with multi-national links in the U.S. team. A significant decrease in multi-national representation occurred under his leadership between the 1999 FIFA Confederations Cup and the 2006 World Cup. Three of Arena's squads were among the four fewest with multi-national links in the Team USA database, with an inclusion of a record low of five multi-nationals in the 2003 Gold Cup squad and a record low of one foreign-born player in the 2005 Gold Cup and 2006 World Cup squads. After his tenure, Bruce Arena criticized Klinsmann's player selection policies with the following comment, "players on the national team should be-and this is my own feeling-they should be Americans. If they're all born in other countries, I don't think we can say we are making progress."⁹⁶ Arena's conceptions of citizenship and national team eligibility appeared to be limited to a conservative native-born approach. This second period of national team representation was characterized by the selection of mostly American-born athletes with very few multi-national links.

The third major period of multi-national Team USA squads began under USA coach Bob Bradley from 2006-2011 and continued under Jürgen Klinsmann from 2011-2016. Although these tournament squads have four of the record highest numbers of multi-national players per squad (upwards of seventeen to eighteen players per squad), the number of foreign-born athletes remained among the lowest (as few as one to two per squad). The inclusion of German-Americans and other foreign-born players in the 2014 U.S. World Cup team led to debates of how this teams' selection reflected the

⁹⁵ Jere Longman, "They All Come to Play for America; Regis Is the Newest Citizen on Polyglot U.S. World Cup Soccer Team," *The New York Times*, May 21, 1998, <https://www.nytimes.com/1998/05/21/sports/soccer-they-all-come-play-for-america-regis-newest-citizen-polyglot-us-world-cup.html>.

⁹⁶ Andrew Joseph, "Arena's thoughts on dual nationals a problem for USMNT," *USA Today*, November 21, 2016, <https://eu.usatoday.com/story/sports/ftw/2016/11/21/us-soccer-cant-ignore-bruce-arenas-questioning-of-foreignborn-usmnt-players/94244466/>.

culture of the United States. In this context, Klinsmann, and players Tim Howard and Landon Donovan negotiated stretching dual citizenship and national belonging to a larger national and global audience, from their own instrumental perspectives.⁹⁷ This third period of national team representation can be characterized by the selection of mostly American-born athletes with many multi-national links.

Following Klinsmann's departure in 2016 at the beginning of the 2018 World Cup qualification process, Bruce Arena returned to coach Team USA in an attempt to salvage their 2018 qualification hopes. Failure to qualify for the 2018 World Cup was the largest setback for the growth of American soccer during the overall period under investigation. The failure to qualify for the 2018 World Cup led to an inquest into player selection and development around the same time, U.S. youth international, Jonathan Gonzalez, formally switched to the Mexican national team. Current Team USA head coach Gregg Berhalter looks set to continue the Bradley-Klinsmann trend of selecting mostly American-born athletes with many multi-national links, following the release of recent 2021 CONCACAF Nations League squads. Berhalter has engaged in the active recruitment of dual/multi-nationals and encouraged all American players to compete at the highest level in Europe or MLS to increase their chances of selection for Team USA.

2.4: Chapter 2 Conclusion

The composition of 201 athletes in twenty-six Team USA tournament squads from 1990 to 2019 reflects the diversity and globalization of migration with respect to the United States. Team USA athletes were connected to fifty-one additional nations during this period. Athletes in the Team USA Player Database have the largest amount of connections to the continental regions of Europe and North America through their place of birth, (grand)parents' nationalities, and naturalization. Forty-eight players representing the United States between 1990 and 2019 were born in, descended from, or naturalized in twenty-four different European countries, while thirty-two players representing Team USA were born or descended from ten other North American nations. In addition to having the most dual/multi-national links to Team USA squads, Mexico, Germany, and Jamaica are the three most common alternative national team choices of U.S. multi-national players between 1990 and 2019. Fourteen players were selected or appeared at various levels for other (non-U.S.) national soccer teams before committing to represent the United States. The subjective squad selection policies of Team USA's head coaches can be categorized into three distinct phases of national team representation and identity. The first phase, mainly determined by the selection policies of Bora Milutinović, led to the selection of many foreign-born athletes with multi-national links. The second phase, overseen by Bruce Arena, led to the selection of mostly American-born athletes with very few multi-national links. Finally, the third phase mainly determined by Bob Bradley and Jürgen Klinsmann, led to the selection of mostly American-born athletes with many multi-national links.

⁹⁷ Van Campenhout, Van Sterkenberg, and Oonk, "Has the World Cup Become More Migratory?," 9.

Chapter 3: Team USA's Multi-National Identity

What were the major pathways of (inter)national links and migration patterns these athletes faced, and according to whom, between 1990 and 2019?

3.1: Domestic Links:

Between 1990 and 2019 American soccer experienced a formative transformation in talent identification, player/coach development, and the professionalization of the sport. For people living in the United States, the international soccer heritage of the NASL, the development of Major League Soccer (MLS), and hosting the 1994 and 1999 men's and women's World Cups ignited a boom in American soccer interest, peaking in media coverage surrounding Team USA's successes and final matches.⁹⁸ This exposure to soccer inspired youth participation for many young boys and girls in the United States over the following period. Preferred migrant destinations and large populations centers of California, New York, New Jersey, Texas, and Florida emerged as the major soccer hotbeds of the United States.⁹⁹ Whether by birth or family migration, Team USA athletes and coaches have more connections to these states than any others. However, additional commonalities exist amongst the domestic development of many Team USA players.

College soccer was once an important pathway for many top youth players until the recent expansion of MLS youth academies. Many Team USA coaches and athletes experienced the college recruitment process, and some competed against/alongside one another in NCAA competitions. Former national team coaches Bruce Arena and Bob Bradley made their names in coaching with successful stints as university soccer coaches at Virginia and Princeton respectively, and were quite familiar with the American college system. The Universities of Virginia, Indiana, UCLA, Akron, Stanford, Maryland, Clemson, and North Carolina achieved notable successes during the period under investigation. College soccer remains a major consideration of foreign student-athletes with the use of university scholarships as motivation for migration and legal residency in the United States. Three foreign-born scholar-athletes became naturalized U.S. citizens in the period following their student residency and later represented Team USA: Roy Wegerle, Jean Harbor, and Dom Dwyer. American college soccer players had no professional soccer pathways in the United States until the creation of Major League Soccer, established as the top professional soccer league in the US in 1995.

MLS became a viable professional soccer pathway when its first season began in 1996. MLS has expanded from ten teams in 1996 to twenty-seven teams in 2021 as a closed-league with significant franchise buy-in. MLS clubs select college soccer players in the annual MLS Superdraft. From 1999 to 2017, the IMG Academy residency program in Bradenton, Florida housed the top twenty age-group players for the United States U-17 youth national teams. This residency program attempted to replicate the daily training and educational regiments that top European youth academies employ to prepare athletes for potential professional soccer careers. Landon Donovan, Jozy Altidore, Freddy Adu,

⁹⁸ Markovits and Hellerman, *Offside*, 206.

⁹⁹ Alicia Rodriguez, "Why has the USMNT struggled? Start with how it selects players," *SB Nation/Vox Media*, January 29, 2019, <https://www.sbnation.com/2019/1/29/18199509/usmnt-roster-pool-demographics-latino-foreign-born-players>.

DaMarcus Beasley, Michael Bradley, and Christian Pulisic all spent time with IMG's residency program.¹⁰⁰ In 2007, USSF created the Development Academy (DA) following the IMG residency program's success to implement these advancements in player development at DA-affiliated youth clubs in communities throughout the country. Since 2008, the MLS homegrown player rule incentivized MLS clubs to create academies in the DA system and produce their own professionals. Between DA-affiliated youth clubs and MLS academies, top young soccer players are being identified and developed domestically as a result of this expanded youth academy network of the USSF. Athletes with thick, in-between, and thin citizenships negotiate these domestic links on an individual basis, since their feelings towards the United States or other countries can vary quite differently due to their unique family histories and life experiences.

3.2: European Links

Germany:

Germany is the most prominent European link of Team USA's multi-national connections from 1990 to 2019. Germany is consistently among the world's best national soccer teams, having won the World Cup four times: 1954, 1974, 1990, and 2014, and hosted the World Cup tournament in 1974 (as West Germany) and in 2006. The German Football Association (DFB) oversees their domestic league system, culminating in the top-tier Bundesliga. Eleven athletes in the Team USA Player Database are connected to Germany as their place of birth or through descent from their parents and grandparents. Like many other citizenships of European countries, German citizenship allows athletes the right to live and work anywhere in the European Union or European Economic Area (EU/EEA). Some athletes like Juergen Sommer, Marcus Hahnemann, and Jonathan Spector were born in the U.S. and used their German citizenship by descent (*jus sanguinis*) to circumvent labor restrictions on non-EU/EEA migrants in Germany and elsewhere throughout Europe. Athletes with only American citizenship are considered non-EU/EEA migrants and face potential issues securing legal work permits to play in Europe's top professional soccer leagues. Despite these obstacles, Germany's professional leagues provided a unique pathway for many American athletes to further their European soccer careers. Former Team USA defender Steve Cherundolo spent the majority of his professional career in Germany, despite never obtaining formal German citizenship. He even earned the nickname "Mayor of Hannover" for his contributions over fifteen years as a player, captain, and youth coach for German club Hannover 96.¹⁰¹

During former World Cup-winning German National Team striker Jürgen Klinsmann's term as Team USA head coach, he actively recruited German-Americans from the Bundesliga to expand the American player pool between 2011 and 2016, but the trend did not begin with him.¹⁰² German-American players with paternal ties to the U.S. military have increasingly contributed to Team USA's

¹⁰⁰ David Wilson and Jason Dill, "USA soccer closes U-17 residency program," *Bradenton Herald*, March 17, 2017, <https://www.bradenton.com/sports/article139261328.html>.

¹⁰¹ "Steve Cherundolo: The story of Hannover's real American hero," *Bundesliga*, April 22, 2019, <https://www.bundesliga.com/en/bundesliga/news/steve-cherundolo-hannover-s-real-american-hero-bundesliga-legends-network-5242>.

¹⁰² Alicia Rodriguez, "Why has the USMNT struggled? Start with how it selects players," *SB Nation/Vox Media*, January 29, 2019, <https://www.sbnation.com/2019/1/29/18199509/usmnt-roster-pool-demographics-latino-foreign-born-players>.

development since the early 1990s. Seven of the eleven athletes with links to Germany in the Team USA Player Database were born to American military servicemen fathers and German mothers. These players acquired *jus sanguinis* U.S. citizenship at birth but spent most of their lives and professional careers in the German community. Although their in-between form of citizenship consisting of German-American identity may have positioned them as outsiders to Germany's traditional construction of national identity, their soccer development in Germany was "partly cultural DNA."¹⁰³ Defender Thomas Dooley captained the 1994 World Cup squad, he was viewed as one of the pioneers of German-American soccer identity. Klinsmann's later recruits such as Jermaine Jones, Fabian Johnson, John Brooks, Timothy Chandler, and Julian Green were the sons of African-American servicemen and German mothers. American military traditions are a major source of American national pride. So much so, that midfielder Jermaine Jones's 'military salute' goal celebration was dedicated to this heritage of U.S. servicemen. Additionally, Team USA athletes Jermaine Jones, Fabian Johnson, John Brooks, and Julian Green appeared at various levels for the German national team.

Other European Links:

The collective nations of the British Isles and former Yugoslavia provide additional multi-national European links to Team USA. The English Premier League is arguably one the world's top leagues for American athletes to test their skills. Team USA athletes such as Brian Quinn, Dominic Kinnear, Stuart Holden, and Dom Dwyer were born in the British Isles, while John Harkes and Michael Parkhurst inherited their citizenships. The option of naturalization for Americans in the United Kingdom was a possibility for Brad Friedel, Kasey Keller, Geoff Cameron, and Tim Ream.

3.3: North American Links

Mexico:

Mexico is the most prominent North American link of Team USA's multi-national connections from 1990 to 2019. Mexico hosted the World Cup in 1970 and 1986 and is set to co-host the tournament with the United States and Canada in 2026. The Mexican Football Federation (FMF) oversees their domestic league system which culminates in the top-tier Liga MX. Mexico is considered as one of the region's best national soccer teams and is the main international soccer rival of the United States. Dominance of the USA-Mexico rivalry often determines the best team in North America's regional soccer confederation, CONCACAF. The two countries meet regularly in regional CONCACAF competitions and World Cup qualifying, resulting in passionate contests. Arguably the most famous encounter between the United States and Mexico occurred in a round-of-16 match at the 2002 World Cup in Korea/Japan, ending in a 2-0 victory for the United States and a quarterfinal berth against Germany, marking the furthest extent of Team USA's World Cup progress during the period from 1990 to 2019.

Strikingly, Mexico is also the most prominent link of all of Team USA's international connections, with sixteen athletes in the Team USA Player Database connected to Mexico as their place of birth or through descent from their parents and grandparents. Former Team USA defender Carlos Bocanegra

¹⁰³ Toshio Suzuki, "From Dooley to Jones, bases in Germany feed US soccer team's multicultural success," *Stars and Stripes*, December 17, 2013, <https://www.stripes.com/news/from-dooley-to-jones-bases-in-germany-feed-us-soccer-team-s-multicultural-success-1.257375>.

paved the way for others with Mexican-American cross-border heritage to represent the United States, since his first inclusion in a Team USA tournament squad in 2002. Connections between Mexican and American soccer and the inclusion of athletes with Mexican descent in Team USA squad selections has increased since 2009, specifically during the coaching tenures of Bob Bradley and Jürgen Klinsmann. Fifteen of the sixteen Mexican-American athletes acquired both United States *jus soli* citizenship and Mexican *jus sanguinis* citizenship at birth in the United States from at least one Mexican parent or grandparent. Players such as Bocanegra, Herculez Gomez, Jonathan Bornstein, Jose Francisco Torres, Omar Gonzalez, Edgar Castillo, Nick Rimando, and others acquired both U.S. and Mexican citizenship in this way. Fourteen players were born to families in U.S.-Mexico border states, almost exclusively limited to California and Texas, with one player from Arizona and one player from New Mexico. Goalkeeper William Yarbrough was the only player in the Team USA Player Database born in Mexico, although his parents migrated there before his birth and had no previous Mexican ancestry. This indicates a strong influence of birthplace in national team representation. Additionally, Team USA athletes Joe Corona, Edgar Castillo, Jesse Gonzalez appeared at various levels for the Mexican national team.

Other North American Links:

Jamaica: Jeff Cunningham, Robin Fraser, Sean Johnson, Jonathan Lewis; **Canada:** Landon Donovan, Joe Cannon, Mark Chung; **El Salvador:** Hugo Perez, Cristian Roldan

South American Links:

Argentina: Claudio Reyna, Pablo Mastroeni; **Colombia:** Carlos Llamosa, Alejandro Bedoya; **Uruguay:** Fernando Clavijo, Tab Ramos; **Peru:** Alfredo Morales

3.4: Conclusion

Between 1990 and 2019, Team USA athletes faced similar career pathways, migration patterns, and (inter)national links. Domestic links available to athletes in the U.S. include the youth, collegiate, and the professional MLS levels of soccer. Major League Soccer has grown exponentially in its talent identification practices and in the size of its league since its introduction, to become a viable career pathway for American (and other) professional soccer players. The most prominent European links to American soccer are with countries like Germany, the collective British Isles, and former Yugoslavia, while the USA's most prominent North American links are with Mexico and Jamaica. South America and Africa have also significantly influenced the composition of Team USA squads since 1990, but not to the overall influence of Europe and North America. American soccer's historical links to Germany and Mexico provide the most connections and the greatest foreign influence of any other countries to the development to U.S. soccer.

Chapter 4: American Soccer Discourse

4.1: American Sports Culture

Sport is major contributor to American national identity. In order to better understand the feelings of national belonging of Team USA athletes with dual and multiple citizenships, it is necessary to examine the perspectives of the institutions and individuals shaping these attitudes. Since major debates regarding the national identity of athletes and their participation in international sporting events have only occurred in more recent decades, the historical developments of soccer within American hegemonic sports culture should be reviewed. The sport's low cultural valence and marginalized status within American sports culture positions it as an "American exceptionalism," uniquely understood as "an emblem of difference that sets it apart from the rest of the world."¹⁰⁴

Prior to FIFA's July 4, 1988 announcement, Team USA had not appeared in a men's World Cup tournament since 1950. Participation in the 1930, 1934, and 1950 World Cups were evidence that soccer was indeed part of American "national sporting space," but had become "crowded out" by the institutionalization of baseball, American football, basketball, and ice hockey ('The Big Three and One-Half') during the period between 1870 and 1930.¹⁰⁵ Since then, American-controlled sports-institutions such as Major League Baseball (MLB), the National Football League (NFL), the National Basketball Association (NBA) conducted their business to attract the top male athletes in what they considered the 'world' in that sport, even going so far as calling their league winners the 'World Champions' without being overseen by regulations of an international sports-institution like FIFA or the IOC. The lure of these 'American' professional sports often attract the country's top young and collegiate athletes, unlike many other countries where soccer is the most popular professional sport. Major American media outlets such as NBC, CBS, ABC, ESPN, FOX, and others regularly televise the most popular American Big Three and One-Half sports at both the collegiate and professional levels. In this sense, it can be argued that feelings of American national belonging were more strongly connected to 'American' sports and their traditions, over the 'foreign' sport of soccer.

Even with early World Cup successes such as a third-place finish in Uruguay 1930 and a major upset victory against England in Brazil 1950, soccer failed to permanently capture the American public's attention. As the most popular sport in many countries throughout the world, soccer offers a viable professional career pathway for elite athletes and potentially global media attention. A professional soccer pathway did not exist in the United States until the establishment of professional leagues such as the NASL in 1968, MISL in 1978, and MLS in 1995. Initially, wealthy owners relied optimistically on so-called "ethnic" support to sustain their investments in these professional leagues, provided that they "offered a product of excellent quality."¹⁰⁶ American professional soccer leagues competed directly with the attention, viewership, and hegemony of the American 'Big Three and One-Half' sports. To Americans, the 'foreign' sport of soccer with its governing body FIFA, based in Switzerland, positioned soccer as an 'exception' and an 'outsider' to the traditional hegemonic sports culture of the United States. The foreign origins of the sport and the fragmented development of U.S. soccer institutions

¹⁰⁴ Buffington, "Us and Them," 136, 183.

¹⁰⁵ Buffington, "Us and Them," 138.

¹⁰⁶ Markovits and Hellerman, *Offside*, 164.

created a negative public perception around its development in the United States in the late twentieth century.

4.2: American Soccer Identity

Limitations to the study of American soccer history include a significant gap in World Cup and Gold Cup tournament appearances after 1950 that characterized the period until Team USA's first appearance in a major CONCACAF tournament in 1985. Prior to the World Cup in 1990, top American soccer players faced limited professional opportunities to further their development after high school or college. Some athletes were offered minimal individual contracts to train and play exclusively for the United States Soccer Federation in preparation for the 1990 World Cup, while athletes with connections to other countries considered their opportunities domestically and abroad.¹⁰⁷

Before the creation of the NASL in 1968, opportunities for top American soccer players in the United States were limited to local amateur and semi-professional leagues, established by communities of people with migrant origins and strong soccer traditions. Many migrants arrived in the United States looking for job opportunities and brought with them "a will to work and a love of soccer."¹⁰⁸ They settled in major cities like New York, Philadelphia, Cleveland, Chicago, and other cities with people of similar migrant multi-national backgrounds.¹⁰⁹ Locations of soccer fields such as the Metropolitan Oval in Queens, New York and the massive Giants Stadium in East Rutherford, New Jersey became cultural centers of multi-national identity and represented feelings of 'home' for many of these individuals.¹¹⁰ The cultural experience of animated cheering in different languages, children playing soccer in the periphery, and drinking beer at a match, elicited feelings of nostalgia and belonging for individuals with strong cultural connections to the sport. In this sense, 'home' can be viewed as a complex multi-sensory experience linked to the emotional belonging of a unique cultural group that transcends physical and temporal locations. Individuals may experience the informal emotional belonging of 'home' in other locations where similar members of the cultural group interact. Early community-based soccer leagues in the United States mostly consisted of clubs organized according to local cultural identity, and often attempted to recruit the top players from the area. These passionate homes of soccer culture were later incorporated into fragmented regional soccer leagues in the 1960s and 70s, but the leagues were mainly ignored by mainstream American sports culture. However, the grassroots soccer heritage of these multi-national communities contributed directly to the development of Team USA athletes in the tournament squads of the Team USA Player Database.

The small working-class town of Kearny, New Jersey, affectionately known as "Soccer Town USA," is a quintessential example of the complexities of national belonging exhibited in a diverse American community. Kearny is a suburb of Newark, New Jersey, where Scottish and Irish immigrants

¹⁰⁷ Les Carpenter, "An oral history of USA at Italia '90: the World Cup that changed US soccer," *The Guardian*, June 10, 2015, <https://www.theguardian.com/football/2015/jun/10/usa-world-cup-italia-90-oral-history>.

¹⁰⁸ David Felsen, "Met Oval: New York's Soccer Shrine," History of Metropolitan Oval, accessed April 10, 2021, <https://www.metropolitanoval.org/history-of-metropolitan-oval>.

¹⁰⁹ Felsen, "Met Oval."

¹¹⁰ Felsen, "Met Oval."

established strong soccer traditions in the 1870s that continue to the present day.¹¹¹ Immigrants from predominantly Europe and South America migrated to Kearny over multiple generations, and these new New Jersey residents instilled a love of soccer and the New Jersey “work ethic” in their children.¹¹² Not only is Kearny considered to be “a melting pot within the melting pot of the country,” but this multi-national community played a large role in the early development of multi-national Team USA athletes Tab Ramos, John Harkes, and Tony Meola.¹¹³ The three of them grew up playing youth and high school soccer together in Kearny, before moving away to play college soccer and to pursue impressive professional careers. There is no doubt over their love of soccer or work ethic in their pursuits of competing at the highest level. This passion and determination manifested in their soccer careers, so much so that the three of them were reunited by Team USA call-ups and they were selected together for representation in four major tournament squads including the 1990 and 1994 World Cups. According to the (U.S.) National Soccer Hall of Fame, formally recognized by the USSF, all three athletes have earned recognition as “Hall of Famers” for their contributions to American soccer during and after their playing careers.

Tab Ramos was born in Uruguay in 1966, migrated to New Jersey with his family when he was 11 in 1977, and became a naturalized U.S. citizen in 1982. He left Kearny to attend North Carolina State University as a student-athlete in 1984 and pursued a professional soccer career immediately afterwards. Ramos went on to earn 81 caps as a midfielder for the United States between 1988 and 2000, represented the United States in three World Cups in 1990, 1994, and 1998, and was one of the pioneering American professionals in Europe, where he played several seasons in Spain in the early 1990s.¹¹⁴ John Harkes was born in New Jersey in 1967 to two Scottish parents who migrated there before his birth. Harkes left Kearny to attend the University of Virginia as a student-athlete in 1985 and pursued a professional soccer career immediately afterwards. Harkes went on to earn 90 caps as a midfielder, represented the United States in two World Cups in 1990 and 1994, and was among the first Americans to succeed in Europe as a player for Sheffield Wednesday in England during the early 1990s. Harkes was also considered one of the stars of the D.C. United team that won three championships in the first four seasons of MLS.¹¹⁵ Former goalkeeper Tony Meola was born in New Jersey in 1969 to two Italian parents who migrated there before his birth. Meola left Kearny to attend the University of Virginia as a student-athlete in 1988 and left after two years to pursue a professional career with the U.S. Men’s National Team, under which the USSF offered minimal professional club-like contracts.¹¹⁶ Meola went on to earn 100 caps as a goalkeeper for the U.S. between 1988 and 2000, represented the United States in two World Cups, and is most recognized for his notable 11-year MLS career including a

¹¹¹ Jane Havsy, “‘There’s no ball that’s not saveable’: Legacy of great NJ soccer goalkeepers is still being written,” *Morristown Daily Record*, March 8, 2021, <https://eu.dailyrecord.com/story/sports/soccer/2021/03/08/new-jersey-soccer-legacy-great-goalkeepers-still-being-written/6808046002/>.

¹¹² Jane Havsy, “There’s no ball that’s not saveable.”

¹¹³ Jane Havsy, “There’s no ball that’s not saveable.”

¹¹⁴ “Player Bios,” Hall of Famers, *United States Soccer Federation*, archived July 9, 2013, <https://web.archive.org/web/20130709184953/http://www.ussoccer.com/about/history/hall-of-fame/hall-of-famers/player-bio.aspx>.

¹¹⁵ “Player Bios.”

¹¹⁶ Carpenter, “An oral history.”

league title and an MLS most valuable player award with the Kansas City Wizards (now Sporting Kansas City) in 2000.¹¹⁷

The establishment of an American professional soccer league was the subject of interest of wealthy American businessmen and corporations in the late 1960s, most of whom were successful owners of Big Three and One-Half professional sports teams.¹¹⁸ Creation of the North American Soccer League (NASL) in 1968 formally reintroduced the sport to the greater American public and attempted to address its contemporary untapped market in the United States. Owners of the NASL's club franchises invested heavily in the recruitment of international soccer stars such as Pele, Franz Beckenbauer, Johan Cruyff, Gerd Muller, and George Best, to bring "respectable, if not world-class, professional soccer" to America's urban and suburban markets.¹¹⁹ Some owners wanted to capitalize on the popularity of soccer with so-called "ethnics" of Latin American and European backgrounds and hoped to attract large crowds while their football or baseball teams were out of town or out of season, while some owners "simply liked the game" themselves.¹²⁰ Soccer's attention and credibility in the United States practically transformed overnight. NASL attendance peaked on August 14, 1977 with 77,691 fans in Giants Stadium in East Rutherford, New Jersey flocking to see iconic teams such as the New York Cosmos and Tampa Bay Rowdies compete in a play-off match en route to the Soccer Bowl, the league's championship.¹²¹ New York media devoted the same amount of coverage to the Cosmos as to the other Big Three and One-Half New York professional sports teams.¹²² This is notable because New York media covers a large metropolitan area, and the *New York Times* specifically sets the tone of coverage for other media in the United States, exerting its influence domestically and globally.¹²³ The introduction of the Major Indoor Soccer League (MISL) in 1978, itself an exceptionalism of sorts, played in American basketball arenas, created additional professional opportunities in the sport for American and international athletes.¹²⁴ Soccer's status in the United States appeared to be improving. With the attention and engagement of so many different American communities, soccer could not be ignored. While the leagues themselves were short-lived and criticized for their lack of development for American players, the passion and soccer heritage these leagues and clubs established contributed to the overall growth of American soccer during the forty-year gap in World Cup appearances.

In the late 1980s and early 1990s, soccer returned to the general American public's vernacular.¹²⁵ On July 4, 1988, the United States was chosen as the host nation for the 1994 World Cup international soccer tournament, considered by many as the world's premier sporting event.¹²⁶ The executive committee of FIFA, world soccer's governing body, ultimately selected the United States over Morocco and Brazil after a 15-month campaign led by the United States Soccer Federation. FIFA officials toured the United States, Morocco, and Brazil and were impressed by the economic power, marketing

¹¹⁷ "Player Bios."

¹¹⁸ Markovits and Hellerman, *Offside*, 164.

¹¹⁹ Markovits and Hellerman, *Offside*, 166-167.

¹²⁰ Markovits and Hellerman, *Offside*, 164.

¹²¹ Markovits and Hellerman, *Offside*, 167.

¹²² Markovits and Hellerman, *Offside*, 167.

¹²³ Buffington, "Us and Them," 138-139.

¹²⁴ Markovits and Hellerman, *Offside*, 163.

¹²⁵ Markovits and Hellerman, *Offside*, 162.

¹²⁶ Michael Janofsky, "U.S. Awarded '94 World Cup Tourney in Soccer," *The New York Times*, July 5, 1988, <https://www.nytimes.com/1988/07/05/sports/us-awarded-94-world-cup-tourney-in-soccer.html>.

potential, and abundance of athletic facilities in the United States.¹²⁷ However, interest in other sports and the U.S.'s lack of soccer tradition were weaknesses in the American bid, and led to mixed opinions. Guimaraes Octavio Pinto, of the Brazilian delegation, told reporters that "taking the World Cup to the United States is like taking the World Series to Brazil," while another delegate of Brazil, Peter Pullen, claimed "the United States is the only unconquered continent in the soccer set."¹²⁸ USSF president Werner Fricker, head of the U.S. delegation, pointed out a growing interest in soccer among children and young people, that more than enough stadiums were available, and that the U.S. government stood ready to help.¹²⁹ Matches were to be played in American football stadiums only, as baseball stadiums were not considered, and stadiums with artificial turf were required to convert their playing fields to natural grass for the World Cup tournament.¹³⁰ Fricker also stated the "monumental task" ahead during the six year lead time and that this duration appropriately reflected the volume of work required in preparation for hosting the World Cup.¹³¹ After FIFA's vote in 1988, the *New York Times* briefly summarized Team USA's limited history of participation in the FIFA World Cup:

As the host, the United States automatically qualifies for the month-long, 52-match tournament, which began in 1930. An American team has participated only three times, the last in 1950. Through the last tournament, in 1986, American teams have failed to advance beyond the regional qualifying rounds.¹³²

This pessimistic perspective of *The New York Times* was also reflected in their uncertain perceptions of public opinion surrounding FIFA's recent announcement: "still, the issue of interest in soccer by the general American public hung over the decision."¹³³

As a host nation for the 1994 World Cup, latent soccer growth began to manifest in the United States and proved the doubters wrong. The 1994 World Cup was considered successful by the American public due to its record attendance figures, television ratings, and extensive American media coverage.¹³⁴ Most games sold out with attendance ranging from sixty to over ninety thousand.¹³⁵ There was clear evidence that suggested Americans and international "soccer tourists" wanted to watch World Cup matches in person regardless of the specific match or the quality of its competitors.¹³⁶ This was best exemplified when a near-capacity crowd of over 72,000 witnessed Morocco versus Saudi Arabia on a Wednesday afternoon in June.¹³⁷ It can be questioned if previous World Cup host countries like Italy in 1990 or Mexico in 1986 could attract these numbers of supporters for such a match in their countries.

The emergence of Major League Soccer in 1996 was "a directly mandated legacy" of the 1994 World Cup.¹³⁸ In 1988, Fricker and the USSF began developing plans for a national soccer league to operate at three levels based on player ability to produce an "ideal environment for America to develop

¹²⁷ Janofsky, "U.S. Awarded '94."

¹²⁸ Janofsky, "U.S. Awarded '94."

¹²⁹ Janofsky, "U.S. Awarded '94."

¹³⁰ Janofsky, "U.S. Awarded '94."

¹³¹ Janofsky, "U.S. Awarded '94."

¹³² Janofsky, "U.S. Awarded '94."

¹³³ Janofsky, "U.S. Awarded '94."

¹³⁴ Markovits and Hellerman, *Offside*, 203.

¹³⁵ Markovits and Hellerman, *Offside*, 203.

¹³⁶ Markovits and Hellerman, *Offside*, 203.

¹³⁷ Markovits and Hellerman, *Offside*, 203.

¹³⁸ Markovits and Hellerman, *Offside*, 202.

highly skilled players.”¹³⁹ *The New York Times* logically presumed that the league’s “best players will win positions on the American team,” but talent identification and squad selection processes are not so simple.¹⁴⁰ Andrei S. Markovits and Steven L. Hellerman, authors of *Offside: Soccer and American Exceptionalism* argued that Major League Soccer was both the first successful professional soccer league in the United States and the last possible attempt at “eliminating soccer’s marginalization” in American sport space.¹⁴¹ The league’s name itself, ‘Major League Soccer,’ was an attempt at ‘Americanizing’ the sport with direct reference to the naming of other American sports-institutions such as ‘Major League Baseball.’

In 1998, *The New York Times* reported, “one issue seems clear enough: with MLS in only its third year, the United States cannot yet challenge the best teams in the world solely with players born here.”¹⁴² Foreign-born players such as Thomas Dooley, Roy Wegerle, and Preki Radosavljevic were praised for their crucial roles in 1998 World Cup qualifying. Uruguayan-born midfielder Tab Ramos gave his views on their inclusion: “These guys made the team better in a short period. The next World Cup will probably have a lot of MLS products. Right now, we have to do the best we can with what's available.”¹⁴³ American youth clubs and MLS academies continued their expansion since, investing in ‘social citizenship capital’ towards the growth of their own clubs, communities, and the competitiveness of U.S. soccer. The social citizenship capital available in American soccer, such as the MLS, has become an attractive destination for top soccer players from around North America and an attractive market for top European professional clubs to recruit players.

The appointments of Team USA head coaches Bradley, Klinsmann, and Berhalter signaled an emphasis to encourage American players to test and improve their abilities in Europe’s top professional soccer leagues if conditions allowed it. Head coaches had to balance European and MLS club schedules to arrange sufficient training camps for Team USA squad identification and development. Players with multi-national backgrounds contributed greatly to composition of these squads, but they also reflected the diversity of American migration. A return to Bruce Arena’s leadership for the 2017 Gold Cup and 2018 World Cup qualifying also brought back his conservative conceptions of American national representation. Failure to qualify for the 2018 World Cup seemingly symbolized the failure of Arena’s misguided conceptions of American identity, which led to a new, more inclusive conception under Gregg Berhalter.

4.3: Soccer’s Subcultures

Soccer is a diverse sport and represents a cross-section of America, but the sport also has the potential to promote inclusiveness and diversity with respect to gender, race, and socio-cultural background.¹⁴⁴ Soccer’s appeal to American women and the continued successes of the U.S. Women’s National Team offer another example of American exceptionalism and a potential path for soccer’s entry into

¹³⁹ Janofsky, “U.S. Awarded ‘94.”

¹⁴⁰ Janofsky, “U.S. Awarded ‘94.”

¹⁴¹ Markovits and Hellerman, *Offside*, 163.

¹⁴² Longman, “They All Come to Play.”

¹⁴³ Longman, “They All Come to Play.”

¹⁴⁴ Collins, “National Sports,” 361.

mainstream American sports culture.¹⁴⁵ By including so many women in participation of the sport at the youth, college, and professional level, unprecedented anywhere else in the world, the United States became a dominant force in world soccer, earning four World Cup championships from 1991 to 2019.¹⁴⁶ Consistent impressive performances from the U.S. women in World Cup and Olympic soccer competitions since 1991 positioned the 1999 Women's World Cup, hosted in the United States, as "the most popular and successful event in the entire history of women's team sports."¹⁴⁷ Many of these women went on to become international symbols of feminism and promoted LGBTQ equality. Historically, the United States is the most successful women's national team, therefore it can be argued that feelings of American national belonging were more strongly attached to American women's soccer traditions, instead of the marginal men's contributions. This could potentially lead to a similar study into the negotiations of national belonging in the U.S. Women's National Team.

Following the ascendance of the U.S. women's soccer team, and considering the Islamophobic and xenophobic feelings of post-9/11 America, the American cultural split of 2004 into liberal and conservative worldviews largely defined contemporary perspectives of American men's soccer.¹⁴⁸ Generally simplified along these lines, American liberals welcomed the inclusion, diversity, and globalization of soccer, while American conservatives were skeptical of its foreign origins and preferred the 'American' sports of the Big Three and One-Half. Addressing additional American political and social issues related to race and socio-cultural background is still essential if soccer is to capture the American "popular imagination."¹⁴⁹ As a metaphorical cultural 'melting pot' still dominated by white Euro-American culture, the talent of many Latino-American and African-American soccer players have been ignored by the USSF. Soccer's general pay-to-play model in the United States involves too many travel and club expenses for people of lower income statuses. The failure of qualifying for the 2018 World Cup and the loss of Mexican-American midfielder Jonathan Gonzalez to represent the Mexican national team led to a critical internal review of the 'arrogance' of the U.S. soccer program.¹⁵⁰ The Sueno Alianza is a free-to-enter talent contest aimed at Hispanic players in the U.S. that is heavily scouted by Liga MX clubs, but the USSF often turns a blind eye.¹⁵¹ It should also be noted that the impact of African-American and black athletes in the United States has extended through the Black Lives Matter movement and expanded throughout the world, which is honored in soccer by kneeling silently on the pitch before matches, out of respect to raise awareness of major social issues such as racism and discrimination. African-American servicemen stationed in Germany and the Netherlands extended American citizenship to their children born abroad. Former Team USA defender Oguchi Onyewu and former midfielder Maurice Edu use their positions as African-American soccer broadcasters to encourage further diversity in the sport. Additionally, the newly restructured United States Soccer Federation is a major participant in the discourse of the American soccer community.

¹⁴⁵ Markovits and Hellerman, *Offside*, 163.

¹⁴⁶ Markovits and Hellerman, *Offside*, 174.

¹⁴⁷ Markovits and Hellerman, *Offside*, 174.

¹⁴⁸ Collins, "National Sports," 359.

¹⁴⁹ Collins, "National Sports," 360.

¹⁵⁰ Matthew Hall, "Did US Soccer's 'arrogance' drive Jonathan González to switch to Mexico?," *The Guardian*, January 19, 2018, <https://www.theguardian.com/football/2018/jan/19/jonathan-gonzalez-usa-mexico-switch-soccer>.

¹⁵¹ Hall, "Did US Soccer's 'arrogance'."

4.4: Team USA Discourse Community

Team USA is an example of a discourse community that shares common goals and mechanisms of communication between the U.S. Soccer Federation, coaches/players, and the public audience. The USSF has a large influence over this discourse through the promotion of their vision: “One Nation. One Team,” to utilize the “power of soccer to unify the nation.”¹⁵² They claim that soccer can help inspire and generate change, and that they are committed to addressing important social issues to “foster a community of belonging.”¹⁵³ The USSF also aims for their stakeholders of staff, players, coaches, referees, member organizations, and fans “to support, engage, educate, and promote diversity and inclusion.”¹⁵⁴

The discourse community surrounding Team USA directly engages feelings of national belonging due to athletes’ positions of (inter)national representation in World Cup, Gold Cup, and Confederations Cup soccer matches. Team USA athletes negotiate their identity through the discourse of their families, coaches/teammates, American/international media, soccer federations, and sports audiences in determining their unique sense of belonging and shaping their attitudes. Colombian-American midfielder Alejandro Bedoya eloquently explains the convergence of identity within Team USA discourse in an interview with *The Guardian*:

It’s nice to have all these different, multicultural backgrounds. It’s America. We’re the United States. That’s what we are: a melting pot. It’s not a problem at all, it actually brings some personality to the team. Globalisation is just part of our society. We might be a good example for that. Look at where our players are coming from – from Icelandic-Americans to German-Americans to Norwegian-Americans to Colombian-Americans to Mexican-Americans – we have all sorts in our group. Me personally, I embrace it. I love to get these guys together and work it out and find a common ground (and then) push each other to the highest level possible. We can’t hide it anymore ... it’s part of our society.¹⁵⁵

The common connections, shared values, and responsibilities of the Team USA discourse community mirror significant markers of formal and informal belonging. Over the period of 1990 to 2019, the discourses of American sports culture, American soccer identity, and American soccer’s subcultures played foundational roles in the historical development of men’s soccer in the United States. Formal citizenship and informal national identity encourage this imagined community to seek soccer as the unifying factor for belonging to the ‘American’ nation.

¹⁵² “About One Nation,” United States Soccer Federation, accessed April 10, 2021, <https://www.ussoccer.com/onenation>.

¹⁵³ United States Soccer Federation, “About One Nation.”

¹⁵⁴ United States Soccer Federation, “About One Nation.”

¹⁵⁵ Jack Kerr, “USA v Switzerland exposed the hostility towards foreign-born internationals,” *The Guardian*, April 9, 2015, <https://www.theguardian.com/football/2015/apr/09/usa-v-switzerland-exposed-the-hostility-towards-foreign-born-internationals>.

Chapter 5: Conclusion

American soccer players with dual/multiple citizenships negotiate their feelings of national belonging through a triadic framework of the theoretical concepts of citizenship, migration, and national identity. Possessing formal U.S. citizenship is a prerequisite for eligibility and selection according FIFA regulations governing national team representation. Migration to or from the United States, and the informal belonging of multiple national identities often present athletes with a difficult choice of which sporting nationality to represent in international soccer competitions. Accepting a Team USA squad call-up signifies an athlete's own willingness to belong to the imagined 'American' nation, and to belong to a country where soccer is not the most popular sport.

The Team USA Player Database was compiled based on the logic that the top soccer players with American citizenship represented the United States at the top level of major international soccer competitions. The composition of 201 athletes in twenty-six Team USA tournament squads from 1990 to 2019 reflects the diversity and globalization of migration with respect to the United States. In addition to the U.S., Team USA athletes were connected to fifty-one additional nations during this period. Through analysis of the athletes' place of birth, nationalities of their (grand)parents, migration history, and citizenship principles of the United States, insight into feelings of belonging can be gained. Historical French and German conceptions of civic and ethnic citizenship created the principles of *jus soli*, *jus sanguinis*, and *jus nexi* that largely define citizenship regimes today. The selection of thirteen multi-national squads during various periods of U.S. soccer history, including its most recent trend, highlights the importance of multi-national athletes in the growth and successes of U.S. soccer. The squad selection policies and perceptions of 'American' national identity of Team USA coaches Bora Milutinović, Bruce Arena, Jürgen Klinsmann, and Gregg Berhalter instrumentally determined which athletes to include or exclude from Team USA. The influence of coaches and other stakeholders may be further contextualized for additional studies into their perceptions of national identity and the development of a national style of play.

Team USA athletes encountered common pathways regarding their domestic and international links. Athletes with thick, in-between, and thin citizenships negotiate these links differently. Domestic links available to athletes in the U.S. include the youth, collegiate, and the professional MLS levels of soccer. Major League Soccer has grown exponentially in its talent identification practices and in the size of its league since its introduction, to become a viable career pathway for American (and other) professional soccer players. The most prominent European links to American soccer are with countries like Germany, the collective British Isles, and former Yugoslavia, while the USA's most prominent North American links are with Mexico and Jamaica. South America and Africa have also significantly influenced the composition of Team USA squads since 1990, but not to the overall influence of Europe and North America.

American hegemonic sports culture has been historically dominated by public preferences for the Big Three and One-Half 'American' sports of baseball, American football, basketball, and ice hockey since the early 20th century. Soccer in the United States was labeled as the sport of immigrants and foreigners until the creation of professional soccer leagues like the NASL and MLS enabled the development of American soccer players within the United States. The importance of working-class migrant communities like Kearny, New Jersey, on the outskirts of major metropolitan areas, cannot be understated in their support and passion for soccer. Hosting the 1994 Men's World Cup and 1999

Women's World Cup gained soccer additional public attention. Attendance, viewership, and media coverage as a host nation were considered a success and is something the U.S. can look forward to again in 2026. Latino-Americans, African-Americans, and low-income families still face obstacles to entry in being identified for development by the USSF. Recent changes within the U.S. Soccer Federation have caused them to directly address social issues related to diversity and inclusion. The surrounding Team USA discourse community reinforces the language, attitudes, and behavior of the imagined group. Team USA athletes and their families, coaches/teammates, American/international media, soccer federations, and sports audiences partake in this discourse. Feelings of belonging are attached to both formal citizenship regimes and informal national identity that can transcend physical locations, but players still feel at 'home' with Team USA. As promoted in the updated national vision of the USSF, "we are stronger together, and together, we are One Nation. One Team."¹⁵⁶

¹⁵⁶ United States Soccer Federation, "About One Nation."

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Appendix A: Master's Thesis Time Schedule

February 2021:

- Finalize Chapter 1: Introduction
- Source Analysis – Chapter 2

March 2021:

- Draft Chapter 2 due
- Source Analysis – Chapter 3

April 2021:

- Draft Chapter 2: The United States Multi-National Team due
- Source Analysis – Chapter 3

May 2021:

- Draft Chapter 3: Multi-National Identity due
- Source Analysis – Chapter 4
- **May 4th, 1pm: Research Workshop Peer Review**
- Draft Chapter 4: American Soccer Discourse due
- **May 25th, 1pm: Research Workshop Practice Presentation**

June 2021:

- Draft Chapter 5: Conclusion due
- **June 1st, 5pm: Master's Thesis Draft Version Submission**
- **June 9th, 1pm: Final Thesis Presentation** - PowerPoint Presentation of Thesis for Master's Conference
- Finalize Chapters 1-4
- Finalize Chapter 5: Conclusion
- **June 28th, 5pm: Master's Thesis Final Version Submission**

Appendix B: Provisional Contents of Master's Thesis

Chapter 1: Introduction

- 1.1: Research Question
- 1.2: Theoretical Concepts and Literature Review
- 1.3: Sources and Methods
- 1.4: Innovative Aspects and Conclusion

Chapter 2: The United States Multi-National Team

- 2.1: Team USA Player Database
- 2.2: Multi-National Links
- 2.3: Multi-National Squads
- 2.4: Chapter 2 Conclusion

Chapter 3: Team USA's Multi-National Identity

- 3.1: Domestic Links
- 3.2: European Links
- 3.3: North American Links
- 3.4: South American Links
- 3.5: Chapter 3 Conclusion

Chapter 4: American Soccer Discourse

- 4.1: American Sports Culture
- 4.2: American Soccer Identity
- 4.3: Soccer's Subcultures
- 4.4: Team USA Discourse Community

Chapter 5: Conclusion

Bibliography

- Appendix A: Master's Thesis Time Schedule
- Appendix B: Provisional Contents of Master's Thesis
- Appendix C: Team USA Player Database
- Appendix D: Team USA Squads
- Appendix E: Team USA Other Nationalities

Appendix C: Team USA Player Database

Team USA Player Database 1990-2019.xlsx (File attached in email)

Appendix D: Team USA Squads

Team USA Squads 1990-2019.xlsx (File attached in email)

Appendix E: Team USA Other Nationalities

Team USA Other Nationalities.xlsx (File attached in email)