

Carrie Dunn on her Canada research

STEPH DOEHLER: You focused your own research on the 2015 Women's World Cup in Canada, and you were actually there for that event. So can you tell us a little bit about some of the key findings from your investigation?

CARRIE DUNN: Yeah. So when I was in Canada for the 2015 World Cup, I was there partly as a journalist, but also partly doing my research project. And the work that I do tends to be more qualitative. I'm interested in people's experiences rather than necessarily being able to nail down something that I can say is going to be empirically true across a broader supporter range.

But things that I found particularly interesting coming up repeatedly-- I spoke to mostly Anglophone fans, so it would be Canadians, Australians, Americans, and English fans who had travelled. And they were talking quite a lot about their engagement in terms of seeing their football fandom as political, almost. So we see with the USA team, particularly, I think they are a great example of this, being happy to talk up on various topics. So whether that's going to be equal marriage, Black Lives Matter, equal pay, all those kinds of things. And American fans talked quite eloquently about choosing to support the US women's national team was also a political choice of saying, I also support these values.

With the England travelling supporters, obviously, if you're taking time off to travel to Canada to follow the England women's team around there, particularly-- you know, Canada is really big. You're going from East Coast to West Coast as well throughout the tournament. It's a huge commitment. And a lot of the England fans were talking about-- they had some kind of traditional ideas about fandom in the loyalty, and going home and away, and that kind of thing.

But we also found some people who had started out as fans of men's football, and they had stepped away from it. They've become very disillusioned with the way that men's football operated with some of the scandals in the game as well, the money orientation of it.

And then they made a deliberate choice to support women's football instead. So it was their first time following the women's team and it was a huge and major experience. And so it was more of a refreshing change, I guess, for some of the English fans. So I found that quite interesting also.