

## Nine for IX Film Discussion Guide: *Branded*

### Key Concepts:

- Sport Marketing & Promotion
- Sport Sponsorship & Endorsement
- Elite Female Athletes
- Objectification
- Homophobia
- Social Construction Of Gender
- Sport Media Coverage
- Power
- Male Dominance
- Nationalism
- Capitalism
- Hegemony

### Discussion Questions:

1. What role did Billie Jean King have in gaining sponsorship for women's tennis and paving the way for endorsement and sponsorship opportunities for women's sport?
2. Chris Evert Lloyd, the first female tennis player and athlete to cross the \$1 million dollar endorsement mark says in the film, "Like or not, the feminine women athletes were the only ones who got the endorsements." Why is this statement problematic for female athletes?
3. Many individuals interviewed in *Branded* talked about themselves or female athletes that have/had "the total package" such as Lolo Jones, Chris Evert, Anna Kournikova, Danica Patrick and Gabby Reece. What do you think is meant by this descriptor in terms of gender, race, class, disability, and sexual orientation? Can all female athletes have the "the total package" and what are the implications of this for women who don't fit this narrow ideal? Use examples from the film to back up your contention.
4. Is it fair to blame women athletes for not drawing as many fans as their male counterparts and not having more "buzz", "interest" or "mass appeal" as a few individuals stated in the film? Why or why not? What is the role of media in creating interest?

5. In the film Brandi Chastain was interviewed about her famous “sports bra” incident which occurred when she successfully made the final penalty kick to win the 1999 World Cup and ripped off her shirt exposing her muscled body and sports bra. She stated in the film people talked more about the bra, than the game. Why do you think the primary focus became Chastain’s sports bra? Chastain also said celebrating is about women owning and accepting and feeling good about their achievements and there are not enough stages for young girls to see women have those moments. Why do we so seldomly see female athletes and women’s sport on TV or those stages? What message does this communicate to young girls? Use social theory to explain this phenomena.
6. In the film former pro beach volleyball star Gabrielle “Gabby” Reece felt that people get nervous when women exert their own agency and exploit themselves by capitalizing on her looks to make a living or to attract attention. Do you agree or disagree with Reece? Analyze her statement along with the statement made by former sports editor Sandra Rosenbush “it’s a White male world and we’re just living in it”?
7. Gabby Reece in the film strongly states “I don’t think selling sex is ever going to be outdated...breasts are never going to be out.” Do you agree with her statement? Does this statement hold true for everyone? Who benefits and who does not benefit when women are routinely asked to portray themselves in sexualized ways? How might selling sex or “breasts” help increase interest in and respect for women’s sport?
8. According to the filmmakers, the premise of the film is about branding female athletes. Who is ultimately responsible for branding female athletes and women’s sport? In the film, Olympic gymnast Mary Lou Retton stated in the process of her branding that she “lost [her] voice for a long time”. Using your [sociological imagination](#) (ability to see different perspectives in how individual behaviors, values and choices are influenced by society and the social world around them) and what you heard in the film to discuss to what degree female athletes have a choice about how they are branded? How has the Internet and digital media changed the marketing and promoting of women’s sport?
9. Use hegemony theory to analyze the film and the statement made at the end of the film that selling sex is a cultural issue and “that’s just the way it is.”
10. The filmmaker asks an interesting question in the film: *Have things gotten better for women in sports since Title IX?* How did the interviewees answer that question? What, if anything, has gotten better? What, if anything, has gotten worse? (To dive deeper see Additional Readings: Cooky & LaVoi, 2012)

11. Can you think of examples in other sports where the Key Concepts listed at the beginning of this guide are present?

**Additional Readings:**

Cooky, C. & LaVoi, N.M. (2012). Playing but Losing : Women's Sports after Title IX. *Contexts*, 11, 42-45.

Daniels, E. A. (2012). Sexy versus strong: What girls and women think of female athletes. *Journal of Applied Developmental Psychology*, 33(2), 79-90.

Daniels, E. A. (2009). Sex Objects, Athletes, and Sexy Athletes. How Media Representations of Women Athletes Can Impact Adolescent Girls and College Women. *Journal of Adolescent Research*, 24(4), 399-422.

Daniels, E. A., & LaVoi, N.M. (2013). Athletics as Solution and Problem: Sports Participation for Girls and the Sexualization of Female Athletes. In E.L. Zubriggen and T.A. Roberts (Eds.) *The Sexualization of Girls and Girlhood: Causes, Consequences and Resistance* (p. 63-83). New York: Oxford University Press.

Daniels, E. A., & Wartena, H. (2011). Athlete or Sex Symbol: What Boys Think of Media Representations of Female Athletes. *Sex Roles*, 65(7-8), 566-579.

LaVoi, N.M. & Calhoun, A.S. (2014). Digital Media and Female Athletes. In A. Billings and M. Hardin (Eds.) *Handbook of Sport and New Media* (pp. 320-330). New York, NY: Routledge.

Kane, M.J., LaVoi, N.M., Fink, J.S. (2013). Exploring Elite Female Athletes' Interpretations of Sport Media Images: A Window into the Construction of Social Identity and "Selling Sex" in Women's Sports. *Communication & Sport*, 1-31. doi: 0.1177/2167479512473585

Kane, M. J., & Maxwell, H. D. (2011). Expanding the boundaries of sport media research: Using critical theory to explore consumer responses to representations of women's sports. *Journal of Sport Management*. 25(3), 202-216.

Fink, J., Kane, M.J. & LaVoi, N.M. (2014). The Freedom to Choose: Elite Female Athletes' Preferred Representations within Endorsement Opportunities. *Journal of Sport Management*, 28, 207-219.

Weber, J. D., Carini, R. M. (2013). Where are the female athletes in *Sports Illustrated*? A content analysis of covers (2000-2011). *International Review for the Sociology of Sport*, 48(2), 196-203.

**Additional Activities:**

1. Read the [Gender and Televised Sport Report](#) (2010) to see what percentage of media coverage women's sport receives in the sport media and how they are portrayed when they do appear. What is the current percentage of televised sport media coverage for women's sport?
2. Based on what you heard from various stakeholders in the film, why do you female athletes choose to pose nude and "sell sex"? How do you think female athletes would choose to be portrayed if they were guaranteed the same amount of sponsorship/endorsement money and have the same amount of commercial exposure? Discuss this question and then read the Fink, Kane, & LaVoi (2014) article above to see what choices elite female athletes in their study made. If you are a female athlete, what would your preference be?
3. When female athletes are routinely portrayed in sexualized ways rather than as athletically competent, what do you think the potential effects are on A) girls, B) women, C) men and boys? To dive deeper into this topic read Daniels and colleagues works in the Additional Readings.
4. Watch [Media Coverage & Female Athletes: Women Play Sports, Just Not on TV](#) (2013) free online, a documentary co-produced by [The Tucker Center for Research on Girls & Women in Sport](#) at the University of Minnesota and Twin Cities Public Television. Compare and contrast the themes and Key Concepts in the two films. Using data and ways of knowing in both films, answer the following question: *Does sex sell women's sport?*
5. Using one print sport media source such as *ESPN The Magazine* or *Sports Illustrated* examine each major picture, do not include ads. Code each picture for: gender of athlete, sport type, level of sport, and whether the athlete is in action/posed, on/off the court, and in/not in uniform. Tally your data and report two key findings to the large group.

**Join the conversation about *Branded* in our [Nine for IX Knowledge Center Community](#) on Facebook. For our latest Nine for IX film series, visit [espnW.com/nine](http://espnW.com/nine).**