

## Nine for IX Films: *Let Them Wear Towels*

### Key Concepts:

- Sport Media
- Sport Journalism
- Gender Equality
- Sexism
- Sexual Harassment
- Locker Room Culture
- Gender Bias
- Contested Terrain
- Hegemony

### Discussion Questions:

1. What kinds of barriers (individual, family, organizational/structural, societal) have women sports writers faced in trying to enter or work in the sports media? Use social theory to explain why there are still so few women employed in the sports media industry.
2. The locker room is a place of work for sport journalists. In 1990 *Boston Herald* sports reporter Lisa Olson was sexually harassed and humiliated in the locker room of the New England Patriots. Why has women's presence in men's locker room been so resisted and debated? Using Michael Messner's (1990) concept of "contested terrain" discuss why women's presence in men's locker rooms was/is threatening to some men?
3. Who were some of the pioneering sports media women in the 1970's interviewed in the film? Who are some of the well-known female sport media columnists, writers, broadcasters, and editors today?
4. With the passage of Title IX in 1972 which led to a record number of girls and women participating in sport, how did this growing interest of sportswomen affect the number of women in sport journalism? What other social movements were occurring in the 1970's that influenced large numbers of women moving into the workplace?
5. Can you think of other workplaces in which women were, or currently are, denied access to a crucial space in which they do their work?
6. Can you think of examples in other sports where the Key Concepts listed at the beginning of this guide are present?

**Additional Readings:**

Baiocchi-Wagner, E. A., & Behm-Morawitz, E. (2010). Audience Perceptions of Female Sports Reporters: A Social-Identity Approach. *International Journal of Sport Communication*, 3(3), 261-274.

Curry, T.J. (1991). Fraternal bonding in the locker room. A profeminist analysis of talk about competition and women. *Sociology of Sport Journal*, 8, 119-135.

Hahn, D. A., & Cummins, R. (2014). Effects of Attractiveness, Gender, and Athlete--Reporter Congruence on Perceived Credibility of Sport Reporters. *International Journal of Sport Communication*, 7(1), 34-47.

Hardin, M., & Shain, S. (2005). Female sports journalists: Are we there yet? 'No.' *Newspaper Research Journal*, 26(4), 22-35.

Kane, M., & Disch, L. J. (1993). Sexual Violence and the Reproduction of Male Power in the Locker Room: The "Lisa Olson Incident". *Sociology of Sport Journal*, 10(4), 331-352.

Kane, M. J., & Parks, J. B. (1992). The social construction of gender difference and hierarchy in sport journalism - few new twists on very old themes. *Women in Sport & Physical Activity Journal*, 1(1), 49-83.

Messner, M.A. (1990). When bodies are weapons: Masculinity and violence in sport. *International Review of Sport Sociology*, 25(3), 203-220.

Ordman, V. L., & Zillmann, D. D. (1994). Women sports reporters: Have they caught up? *Journal of Sport & Social Issues*, 18(1), 66-75.

**Additional Activities:**

1. Go online and access [The 2012 Associated Press Sports Editors Racial and Gender Report Card](http://www.tidesport.org/RGRC/2012/2012_APSE_RGRC.pdf) on The Institute for Diversity and Ethics in Sport website [http://www.tidesport.org/RGRC/2012/2012\_APSE\_RGRC.pdf] (or the most recent version). What does the data say about the number of women who are employed in the sport media industry? What is your reaction to the data? Why do you think there are so few women in sports media?
2. Pick one of the female sport media pioneers and write a 2-3 page report on her and present three of the most interesting aspects of her story to the class.

3. For a more in depth discussion on how women sport journalists presence in men's locker rooms (a site central to male power and privilege) is highly contested, read the Curry (1991) and Kane & Disch (1993) articles from the Additional Reading list and discuss these articles in relation to the film.
4. Go online and learn more about the [Association for Women in Sports Media](http://awsmonline.org/) (AWSM, pronounced "awesome"). [<http://awsmonline.org/>]

**Join the conversation about *Let Them Wear Towels* 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).**