

## Nine for IX Film Discussion Guide: *The '99ers*

### Key Concepts:

- Role Models
- Sport Media Coverage
- Social Construction Of Gender And Sport
- Gender Norms
- Elite Female Athletes
- Professional Women's Sport

### Discussion Questions:

1. Some argue the 99ers shifted the culture of women's sport for generations to come. What impact do you think the 99ers had on sport for girls and women? Discuss how the 99ers were pioneers and role models. What impact, if any, did it have on you personally?
2. Why do you think the 99ers were so popular, embraced by fans, and became role models? Scholars argue the popularity of the 1999 US Women's World Cup soccer team is related to the media's role in perpetuating a particularly narrow version of femininity that reinforced traditional notions of gender (feminine qualities such as modesty, selflessness and desire for harmony; motherhood, family, heterosexuality, All-American girls). Was there evidence of this in the film? What do you think of this critique? How might the 99ers have challenged traditional gender norms?
3. The 1999 US Women's World Cup soccer team and the Women's World Cup received unprecedented exposure and media coverage. Has that level of interest in and respect for soccer and women's sport been sustained? Why or why not?
4. In the film there was a scene where the team was teasing Brandi Chastain over a magazine image you briefly saw where Chastain is nude and crouched down from the side view with a soccer ball. Chastain is also the player who upon successfully making the final penalty kick ripped off her shirt exposing her muscled body and sports bra—a famous moment that was featured on the covers of [Newsweek \(July 19, 1999\)](#) and [Sports Illustrated \(July 19, 1999\)](#). View the images and discuss if you think the images increased interest in and respect for women's soccer specifically, and women's sport in general. Next, discuss the fact that sportswomen rarely (less than 5% in the last decade) appear on the cover of *Sports Illustrated* and when they do their athleticism and achievements are minimized by “sharing covers with male counterparts, featuring anonymous women not related directly to sports participation, sexually objectifying female athletes, and promoting women in more socially acceptable gender-neutral or feminine sports” (See below Weber & Carini, 2012). Does the Chastain 1999 *SI* cover challenge or reproduce marginalization of female athletes?

5. Who are some current female athlete role models? How are today's female athlete role models similar or different from the '99ers?
6. Can you think of examples in other sports or high profile athletes where the Key Concepts listed at the beginning of this guide are present?

**Additional Readings:**

Carty, V. (2005). Textual Portrayals of Female Athletes: Liberation or Nuanced Forms of Patriarchy? *Frontiers: A Journal of Women Studies*, 26(2), 132-172.

Christopherson, N., Janning, M., McConnell, E. (2002). Two kicks forward, one kick back: A content analysis of media discourses on the 1999 Women's World Cup Soccer Championship. *Sociology of Sport Journal*, 19(2), 170-188.

EXCERPT FROM READING: The 1999 Women's World Cup Soccer Championship serves as a particularly good site for examining both the social construction of gender and the structure of contradiction surrounding women's role in sport and society.

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.

Giuliano, T. A., Turner, K. L., Lundquist, J. C., & Knight, J. L. (2007). Gender and the Selection of Public Athletic Role Models. *Journal of Sport Behavior*, 30(2), 161-198.

Hendley, A., & Bielby, D. D. (2012). Freedom between the lines: clothing behavior and identity work among young female soccer players. *Sport, Education & Society*, 17(4), 515-533.

Longman, J. (2001). *The girls of summer. The U.S. women's soccer team and how it changed the world*. New York: Harper Collins.

Shugart, H.A. (2003). She shoots, she scores: Mediated constructions of contemporary female athletes in coverage of the 1999 US women's soccer team. *Western Journal of Communication*, 67(1), 1-31.

Vescio, J., Wilde, K., Crosswhite, J. J. (2005). Profiling Sport Role Models to Enhance Initiatives for Adolescent Girls in Physical Education and Sport. *European Physical Education Review*, 11(2), 153-170.

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. The highest amount of coverage for women's sport was in 1999. What is the current percentage of sport media coverage for women's sport?
2. Brandi Chastain was the only '99er to pose nude for Maxim magazine, an image you see briefly in the film. Based on what you heard in the film, why do you think Chastain and female athletes in other sports choose to pose nude and "sell sex"? How do you think female athletes would choose to be portrayed if they could make 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.

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