

Sociology of sport film review

[Sociology](#), [Feminism](#)



Sociology in sport Film review: bend it like Beckham Bend it like beckham is based on Jess, a 17 year old British born, Sikh girl who has an undying passion for football, her favourite player is David Beckham and he is exactly who jess wants to be. But jess's parents have taken every effort to stay in touch with the families Indian heritage. Jess' father and mother are after their daughter to go to law school, learn to cook a traditional Indian dinner, and settle down with a nice Indian boy -- the latter of which is high on the agenda of her older sister Pinky, who is soon to wed her long-time beau Teetu. However, her family is unaware that Jess has a secret passion , football. Her parents don't know that in her spare time she likes to play a friendly game in the park with some of the boys in the neighbourhood. One day, while Jess and her pals kick the ball around, she meets Jules, who is quite impressed with Jess' skills. Jules plays with a local semi-pro women's football team, the Hounslow Harriers, and she thinks Jess has what it takes to make the team. Jess knows that her parents would never approve of their daughter playing football, so she doesn't tell them, and starts spinning an increasingly complex series of lies as she tries to keep up a double life as a student and a footballer. Jess soon discovers a number of her new friends have their own problems to overcome; Jules dreams of playing pro ball in America, but has to deal with her stubborn and disapproving mother, while Joe, Hounslow's Irish coach, still struggles with the disappointment of a career as a professional athlete which was dashed by a knee injury. Throughout Bend it like Beckham, clear sociological factors all appear, from stereotypical ideologies through to race, class and gender, bend it like Beckham is a enjoyable, funny film that can be used to explain more clearly

how ideologies, identity, power and social influences all have a part to play in everyone's lives. Ideologies are beliefs and ideas that people form to give meaning to their life experiences and make sense of the world, there are different types of ideologies, including class, race and gender ideologies and these ideologies form identities. ' Identity is about belonging, about what you have in common with some people and what differentiates you from others. At its most basic it gives you a sense of personal location, the stable core to your individuality. But it is also about your social relationships, your complex involvement with others' (Weeks 1990 p. 88 cited in Rutherford 1990 p. 88)

Class ideologies are the beliefs that people have to understand economic inequalities, identify them in terms of their class position and evaluate the manner in which economic inequalities are and how they should be integrated into the organization of social worlds. Class ideology is not an as important factor in the movie as the other forms of ideology but it picked up upon slightly when the father mentions that they are not rich, also the environment in which the movie is filmed portrayed her family as working class, however she is planning to go to university and wins a scholarship at the end so her education is pretty good. Racial ideology is one of the main ideologies depicted in the movie, it is a set of ideas and beliefs that people use to give meaning to skin colour and to evaluate people in terms of racial classifications. Racial ideologies vary around the world, but they are powerful when people use them to classify humans into racial categories. In the film, Jess is Sikh, this means the family generally follow strict cultural life preferences due to their religion and these preferences cause restrictions in Jess's freedom, she shouldn't even show as much skin as a football kit

reveals in general, let alone play football itself, with girls from other cultural backgrounds, she is seen as disgracing the family for her participation. Racism is touched upon in a scene during which she retaliates to a tackle and receives a red card, only to find out that she was called a 'paki'. The coach explains to her that he also received discrimination due to him being Irish. This informs us of the constraints of racial barriers still produced now, even in today's multi-cultural society. Another factor in the movie is that Jess and Joe (the Irish coach) end up falling for each other which is another racial barrier that is not regularly crossed due more to the beliefs and culture of Jess and her family's religion. Gender ideology is also a set of ideas and beliefs but that masculinity, femininity, and male-female relationships. It is the Basis for defining what it means to be a man or a woman, evaluating and judging people and relationships and determining what is natural and moral related to gender. The main issue relating the gender ideologies in this film relates to the race ideology and that is that she opposes the obvious stereotype of an Indian woman, An Indian woman's identity is created by the tradition's of an Indian woman, for example according to ideologies her job is to cook and look after the house and children. however her interest is not a family and learning how to cook, but to become a professional female footballer and attend university to study for a degree. By Jess opposing this gender ideology, she is creating her own identity as an Indian woman footballer, trying to keep her femininity by falling for the Irish coach, sticking to her Indian traditions by wearing the clothes and learning to cook, however she does this all and still able to play football up to a scholarship standard, doing the best job to define her own identity. She also defies the

stereotypical footballer, which for a start, is male, and is rarely Indian, in English society anyway., emphasising on her identity as a woman footballer, not a man. Jess opposes her parents and other groups of people with the same traditions and beliefs, who feel that women shouldn't play football, and this is a clear example of femininity, also during a scene where jess is involved in a match, the same is being watched by 4 of jess' male friends who shout sexist remarks at the team members, not in a malicious way but this still shows the males idea of women as an object, during this scene, jess's secret gay friend (who is also Indian and therefore causes another constraint in that homosexuality is frowned upon more than it is in other cultures) asks the boys, which are also his friends, as to why they can't see the woman as footballers, and they all just laugh, which emphasises peoples stereotypical thoughts of women. In the film they also talk about the opinion that even Indian boys should not play football, so for a female Sikh to play is deemed as even worse, Jess is completely contradicting two ideologies, her gender ideology, and her race ideology. But this way creating her own identity, its is a struggle for Jess to fight all the ideologies present to achieve her goal. Ideologies of women in sport mean that there are several gender barriers to overcome people still feel that sport is male dominant and there are certain sports that are for men, and certain sports that are for women, and bend it like Beckham contradicts this belief. Power is also noticeable in the movie and there are different power hierarchies, the football coach is male, so still portrays the male dominance in the sport as he is seem as the leader and the team of females still have to do as he says. Also the parents have different levels of parent, jess's mother seems to have influence over

the father, and they both have influence over their daughter. Jess feels that she is being constrained and sees the football team as a social structure; 'Identity is formed in the relationships between ' social structures' and an individual ' subjectivity' (Hughson et al 2005 p. 110). She feels she can use this social structure to assert her agency; Jess knows that sporting achievement is a sign of social mobility, therefore she knows that her constraints could decrease in society if she can achieve high in a football career, barriers would decline and she would exceed expectation due to the stereotypes she is grouped in and opportunities in life would come more easily. So Jess is taking her individualism as a Sikh female to create a relationship with a social structure, which is the football club. and she can achieve all this by the opportunity to play football. The film shows she achieving this to her best of her ability as she gets scouted and wins a scholarship to a top university to play football, where she can individually change peoples perception of Indian woman, and also influence other Indian females to start playing football. The one key moment in the movie that I felt best exhibits all the main sociological factors of identity, ideology and power comes on 6 minutes into the movie, jess is walking through the local park when her male friend sees her and asks her to join in, as soon as she starts playing to can see power and gender ideologies already, the group of men that she is playing have there tops off for a start, and being able to take there tops off to play football shows male dominance and masculinity, which shows power is present as the men believe they are in charge because they are male. Also they say sexist comments to jess about her football capabilities as a female for example, one of the men say " can you chest it

like Beckham, you know, give it some bounce (emphasising on her chest) , it wasn't malicious as they were all friends but it was another means so showing the gender ideology and male dominance, as well as gender discrimination. The movie continues and Jess gets hold of the ball and takes it round all the boys before scoring, unknowingly being watched by Jules, her soon to be football partner and best friend. Jules runs off and Jess continues to play football. The movie then continues into Jess's room where she talks to her poster of David Beckham, she says " it's not fair that the boys never have to come home and help" what she is saying is that because of her family's religion, there are rules that must be abided to and one of them is that the women are the ones in the home, for cooking and cleaning and the boys are the ones who work.. This is one of the main barriers to participation she has, her ethnicity means she is going against her family's beliefs by playing football. She also asks the question, of if she had an arranged marriage, would they let her play football? This emphasises on the constraint that her ethnicity causes for her participation in the sport. Her father then walks in the room and starts to moan about all the posters of ' a bald man' on her wall, the opposite of how a man should look like according to her religion. The clip carries on into the engagement party located at her house, and by the large amount of people in the house, which is small as it is, this can be looked upon as defining her class ideology of a working class family, as they may not be able to afford a bigger area of the night. Now Jess is dressed in all her traditional Indian clothing, a big contrast to her shorts and Manchester United top she wore down the park. Jess is handing out a plate of food and an old lady, says to her that it will be her turn soon to get married and does she

want a proper Sikh with a full beard and a turban, the direct opposite to David Beckham, this links to race ideology as saying that their religion has a typical man and that her marriage and Sikh life is inevitable, it also just hints on the barriers she must overcome to achieve her dream, she doesn't want the traditional normal life of a female Sikh, she wants to be a professional footballer. This key moment continues but now the scene is set back at the park, again she is playing football with the same group of topless men, whereas three girls who know Jess, are watching on, checking out the men. Jess makes this a stark contradiction to the stereotypical scenario because even though she is female, she is playing football, in her football shirt, with the lads, rather than sit with the girls. She contradicts her own stereotype by playing football, she is not the Sikh girl everyone wants her to be. Jess finds it easier to fit in with the girls by knowing the boys, she is very much a tomboy who would rather be out getting muddy than buying new clothes. Again contradicting her own gender ideology, she also comes across as gay to many of the Sikhs because of her unorthodox activities. While playing football Jules goes over to Jess, and in front of the lads asks her if she plays for any team, immediately afterwards one of the males says "yer like who, Southport United Sari Squad" this is a dig at her ethnicity not at her gender or sex, so this explains my point that she has to overcome two main barriers that are her gender and her ethnicity, both ideologies constrain her from participation, and also male dominance and masculinity also don't help with her problem of her being a female footballer either and the power influence can be seen underlying the movie. This is where my key moment ended. In summary, I have learnt that social identities and ideologies are formed from

sport societies, in today's world, Groups and societies are characterised by shared values and conflicts of interest and sports forms are culturally produced, reproduced and/or transformed, sports forms are social constructions that change as power relations change and as narratives and discourses change. In relation to identity, ideology and power, Bend it like Beckham touches on several key sociological dimensions, it mainly focuses on how her cultural identity constraints her from participating in the sport she loves as her parents strict beliefs and traditions and they feel that she should be a proper Sikh and learn to cook Indian food, not play football. She should be focusing on becoming a lawyer according to her parents. She also has to deal with the fact that she is a woman and football is a male dominated game, therefore, for an Indian female to wanting to play football, she must overcome social barriers and constraints to achieve her goal, and the film is based on her attempt to achieve this. Sport is a very important influence in everyone's social lives, it effects peoples participation, culture and social groups, is a reflection on peoples social life. References Coakley J (2006) — Sport in Society: Issues and Controversies, McGraw Hill, Boston Coakley J and Pike E (2009) — Sport in Society: Issues and Controversies, McGraw Hill, Boston Hargreaves J (1994) — Sporting Females — Routledge, London Horne et al (1999) — Understanding Sport: An Introduction to the Sociological and Cultural Analysis of Sport - E&FN Spon, London Houlihan B (2003) — Sport and Society: A Students Introduction - Sage, London Hylton K (2009) — ' Race' and Sport: Critical Race Theory - Routledge, London Edge Estates Jarvie G (2006) — Sport, Culture and Society: An Introduction — Routledge, London Slep M (1998) — Social Issues in Sport — MacMillan

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