

The well known film “Bend it like Beckham” has a number of cultural and family expectations and beliefs that **influence gender identity for the main character, Jess [1]**. Firstly her mother wants a daughter who will learn to be an ideal wife to an Indian man. This means that she will be capable of cleaning, cooking traditional meals and following the wishes of her husband. Basically, to be able to meet every need of the husband and family that follows after (pre-marital sex is not accepted) and devote herself to pleasing them. Jess is a talented soccer player, but this is not accepted by her family, who expect her instead to be at home, learning how to cook. This may influence young girls living in a family like this to put their own interests, needs and wants second, while they put their energy into learning how to keep a household in order. This may influence young women not to pursue study or a career and to seek happiness from pleasing others. They may be expected to be submissive to their husband, which results in an unequal relationship. However, the expectations were not shared by others in the movie, as Jess’s soccer friends has different ideas about what it means to be a young woman. When this contradicts the family’s ideas, this can cause confusion and conflict within self and within the family.

The values of social justice are not being met because it is unfair that Jess is expected to give up soccer and be a housewife. These expectations on her do not give her the opportunity to explore who she is, and do what she enjoys and is good at. The movie has an example of the different expectations of girls and boys because the neighbourhood boys can play soccer openly and no-one discourages them; but Jess is not allowed to take part in this.

Society has well known stereotypes about homosexual and heterosexual men. For example, heterosexual men enjoy rugby, beer and cooking steak on the barbeque, while homosexual men dress well and are feminine in their mannerisms. This is the stereotype that Harry sees around him and has **influenced his personal attitude, values and beliefs about his sexual identity [2]**. Harry is confused by the restricted view of sexual orientation that he sees in movies and on TV. He considers himself pretty much a typical male in that he enjoys sports and spends his time skateboarding and hanging out with friends. He can’t understand how he could be attracted to the same sex because he is not like those gay males that he sees on TV. This is influencing him to doubt his true sexual identity because he believes he lacks the personal aspects that relate to him being gay. As a result, Harry has relationships with girls. Teenagers like Harry will be influenced by these sorts of attitudes, values and beliefs because they will feel unsure about who they are and what behaviour they should be involved in, as a gay male. They will also be influenced by the attitudes and beliefs of their families and friends, because it is important to feel accepted as a teenager. In Harry’s case, he is scared to come out to others, as he thinks he will be rejected. This sort of attitude is common and leads gay youth to deny who they are – sometimes to themselves as well as to others around them.

The values of social justice are not being met in Harry’s life in relation to his sexual identity. It is not fair on Harry or any other gay man who wishes to wear his true sexual identity freely if they can’t do this without it being a big issue. Heterosexuals do not have to declare their sexual orientation to anyone, so why is it that homosexuals must do so?

A societal strategy that a community could initiate could be as small as educational opportunities to dispel stereotypes and address discrimination towards people with diverse sexual identities/sexualities. If a group of students are provided with the information and guidance to help them understand about sexuality, difference, tolerance towards others and healthy relationships, then they are able to pass this knowledge on to others, and to more

effectively communicate with others. This is not only within Health classes, as this links to the idea in the scenario about Harry's English teacher choosing a novel with a gay character. This leads to an interpersonal strategy of interacting positively with others, and embracing their differences rather than rejecting people with differences. Instead of mocking others, teenagers can be more respectful in their communication with others, support those who are in the process of coming out or who are 'out' at school and treat others equally.

As an individual, trying to figure out his or her sexual identity, positive self-talk and building confidence and self-esteem is important. This involves someone giving positive, rather than negative messages to him or herself, which develops a more positive sense of self worth and confidence. By being more confident in who you are, you are more likely to be able to deal with coming out to family and friends and begin to think about having a relationship with someone of the same sex.

These strategies encourage social justice because if they are taken, they will lead to more respect between people. This reduces discrimination and intolerance of people who have different sexual identities to what is considered the norm. Teenagers who are discovering who they are, and who are thinking about coming out, will be more likely to be treated fairly and accepted by their family and friends.