

Wrestling With Identity: The Search for Self in *Dangal*, the Film

Commented [p1]: Session title does not need to begin with the film title, but should include it.

Objectives

Define the concept of "tiger parenting" and its theoretical versus measured impacts on child achievement.

Identify similarities and differences in the role of mothers versus fathers in developing a daughter's sense of agency and power in a world where femaleness tends to be devalued

Specify at least two ways in which increased participation of girls in sports may help promote gender equality

Identify at least two factors associated with resilience in children who face bullying for breaking gender norms

Abstract

This media lab will examine the 2016 film *Dangal*, which has broken box office records in both India and China, and created a sensation in many Asian communities in the United States and around the world. *Dangal* depicts the true story of a once-promising wrestler from rural India who pursues the gold medal he never won by coaching his daughters with single-minded ferocity to compete as world-class wrestlers in the Commonwealth Games. As the girls face social censure and ridicule for pursuing this male-dominated sport, they move through phases of fear, confusion, rebellion, and reconciliation in their search for agency and an authentic identity. In India and China, films such as *Dangal* may encourage greater participation of girls in sport, and the United Nations asserts such participation to be a vehicle for promoting gender equality. Yet, the film has stirred passionate debate about whether it depicts female empowerment when the girls break out of gender stereotypes to wrestle, or whether it is actually a male-centric narrative in which the achievements of the obedient daughters are not primarily their own, but a testament to their father's single-minded ambition and will. A related debate focuses on whether the father's harsh "tiger parenting" is a form of emotional abuse that destroys the joys and imaginative self-exploration of childhood, or whether such parenting is integral to his daughters' ability to overcome gender barriers and self-doubt to become confident young women capable of success in both wrestling and a male-dominated world at large.

Commented [p2]: Abstract describes the impact and background of the film and why it is important to study.

Agenda

0:00 Introductions

0:05 Video clip screening I

0:35 Discussion/Analysis: The role of "tiger parenting": might the vicarious ambitions of "tiger" moms and dads undermine their children's ability to connect with innate strengths, or actually help their children to recognize and develop such strengths?

1:00 Video clip screening II

1:30 Discussion/Analysis: Within traditional patriarchal family structures, what is the role of fathers (versus mothers) in empowering their daughters to challenge gender and cultural stereotypes?

1:55 Video clip screening III

2:25 Discussion/Analysis: What factors may help children to develop resilience and self-esteem in the face of bullying and social censure for breaking gender norms?

2:50 Audience Q&A

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