

Boyhood Film Assessment

Angelica Figueroa

University of Southern California

## Boyhood Film Assessment 2

Through examining the main character's life presented in the film, I believe the stages of development correspond with the theory of Erik Erikson's psychosocial development. From Erikson's psychosocial development, stage four Industry vs. Inferiority (6-12) explains, "a child needs to expand understanding of the world, continue to develop appropriate gender -role identity, and learn the basic skills required for school." (Corey, Gerald) (65). Over lunch, Olivia announces to Samantha and Mason that they will be moving to Houston, near their grandma, so that she can go back to college because she does not make enough money at the job she currently has. The kids are not thrilled about this. In this stage, children need to cope with new social and academic demands. Success leads to a sense of competence, while failure results in feelings of inferiority. Samantha is getting A's in her assignments and Mason is struggling and may need to be retained which may cause a lack of motivation. Mason's understanding of the world shifts when the family is reunited. Mason is eager for his parents to get back together. However, his father thinks that may not be a possibility, crushing Mason's hope. Later in the film, Mason's mother introduces him to her professor, Bill Welbrock. It is clear that they have more than a teacher- professor sort of relationship.

The fifth stage of Erikson's psychosocial development is identity vs. role confusion, and it occurs during adolescence. From about 12-18 years is the "time of testing limits, for breaking dependent ties, and for establishing new identity". (Gerald) (65). Mason and Samantha now have two new step- siblings and a new step- father. The step- father is very strict and runs the household. He makes up rules and chores for the kids to follow and becomes very upset when things do not go his way. Bill forces Mason to get a haircut so he will appear like a "real man, and not a little girl." Mason does not want to go to school because his hair does not represent him. Unfortunately, he was forced to attend anyway. As he walks into the classroom, all the kids

### Boyhood Film Assessment 3

laugh and make fun of his new haircut. Later, Bill becomes physical with Olivia. She quickly decides, and her children are not safe. Then, they quickly move leaving all their belongings behind. Mason starts to experiment with his appearance. For example, letting his hair grow out and allowing his classmates to paint his nails. One night, the family was having dinner when all of a sudden Olivia's war veteran boyfriend started to make fun of Mason's look accusing him of being too feminine. Mason is trying to find his identity as a result this may lead to role confusion. Throughout the film, Olivia's boyfriends have reacted negatively towards Mason's appearance which creates a hostile environment. Olivia, however, allows her children to express themselves and does not judge them for wanting to be unique. In high school, Mason is given a camera as a present and is inspired to be an artist. At this point, Mason experiences and becomes a story in which he starts to plan and act for himself in the world. He spends a lot of time in the darkroom and lets his schoolwork slip. This invites commentary from a teacher who, nonetheless, gives him the assignment of taking the pictures for a school football game. Later, Mason wins a silver medal in a photography competition, and soon afterwards he is making his way toward college.

### References

Corey, G. (2017). *Theory and practice of counseling and psychotherapy*. Boston, MA: Cengage Learning.

Lankes, M., Linklater, R., Hawke, E., Arquette, P., Coltrane, E., Linklater, L., & Sutherland, C. (2014). *Boyhood: Twelve years on film*.

Mcleod, S. (n.d.). Erik Erikson's Stages of Psychosocial Development. Retrieved from <https://www.simplypsychology.org/Erik-Erikson.html>