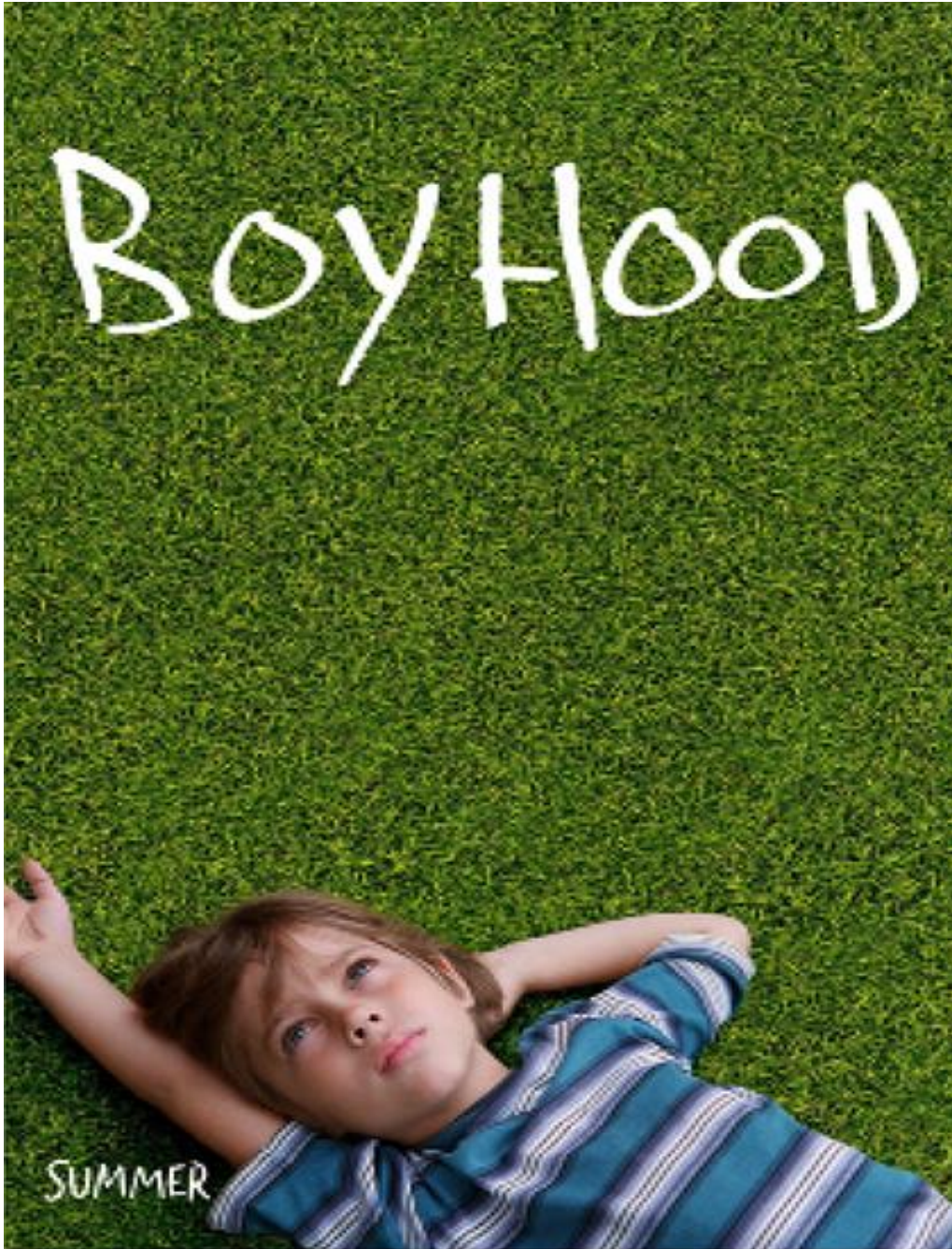


BOYHOOD: A COMPREHENSIVE MOVIE GUIDE FOR CHILD DEVELOPMENT



BOYHOOD (2014)

INTRODUCING *BOYHOOD*



RICHARD LINKLATER, U.S. writer and director, *BOYHOOD* (2014)



BOYHOOD (2014)

Boyhood (2014) is a longitudinal cinema film directed by Richard Linklater which tracks the bio-psychological development of a young boy named Mason from early childhood to adolescence. The film offers a unique perspective regarding the process of child development as they pertain to the average child. However, Mason faces a few hardships which defined how he developed into adulthood. This is primarily a result of unstable family structure which characterizes the young boy as a victim of divorce. Although single parent households are common, there are a few obstacles as a result that make the film highly empathizable and relatable. As such, young Mason experiences many things such as heartbreaks, family conflicts, and other phenomenon reminiscent of normal western experiences.

PURPOSE

This comprehensive movie guide will identify scenes of the film which are important for character development of Mason. Scenes will be evaluated in order to demonstrate elements of bioecological theory, the transactional model of development, developmental psychopathology, and psychoanalytic theories of attachment.

HUMBLE BEGINNINGS

The beginning of this film shows a six-year-old Mason who is in the crosshairs of custodial disputes between his mother and biological father. It is evident however, that his mother has reached a crossroads in her life and is in the works of finishing her college education. Just as Mason begins to settle down, he receives the news that he will be relocating to a new home closer to her University. It will take him a while to get used to the area, but eventually Mason will move once more. This is also when Mason's caring but somewhat immature father begins to leave his life, however, he will visit him on a monthly basis.



Did you know children who move more than twice are at high risk for developing poor self-esteem, delayed social skills, and other symptoms?
(Fields, 1997)

SINGLE MOTHERHOOD AND CHALLENGES

One thing *Boys n the Hood* did an excellent job portraying was the difficulties of single motherhood. Mason's mother often struggled to balance education, work alongside her various other responsibilities. This lifestyle was not portrayed as glamorous as some popular films might depict, rather it highlighted how truly difficult it was for Mason's mother to raise her children in the absence of a consistent father figure. The widespread beliefs of society on things such as single motherhood are a part of the "Macrosystem" according to the bioecological theory. Mason's step fathers were nothing short of abusive or despicable. In fact, the film almost leads you to feel optimistic about his biological father reentering his life. Unfortunately, Mason would have to put up with a constantly changing environment of father figures. The absence of father figures has been studied extensively, and many studies suggest an absence or inconsistent presence of a father-like figure may lead to various personality disorders or attachment issues (McLanahan et al., 2014; Levy et al., 2011). As depicted by the film, Mason has many conflicts with his step fathers and often appears self-conscious and rebellious. However, these behaviors are typical for developing children regardless of family structure. Yet, the film leads you to wonder if the trauma he experienced contributed negatively to his character development.



Did you know that 23% of American families identify as single-parent households? (Pew Research Center, 2020)

THE AWKWARDNESS OF ADOLESCENCE

Every child is unique in their own way and everyone is weird in their own way. That being said, Mason has a very unique personality that I believe is heavily affected by his upbringing. Since early adolescence, it is readily apparent that Mason is artistically inclined and a very explorative child. Mason also displays healthy social skills and reaches various milestones throughout his childhood. However, adolescence appears to display a different side of young Mason, one that is distrusting, awkward and gloomy. The negative sides of him become visible during his interactions with his soon-to-be-ex girlfriend, who doesn't seem to fully accept his personality. However, it's important to recognize these traits are completely normal for developing adolescents.



Above Mason experiences his first heartbreak; Below Mason's mother confronts him about his dabbling with Marijuana and alcohol.

Do you think Mason's personality is typical or atypical? Could childhood trauma and other factors be responsible for Mason's personality traits?

THE COLLEGE EXPERIENCE

The film concludes with Mason celebrating with family and making the move to college alone. One theme becomes readily apparent during the ending of this film: child development is a holistic process that requires many different resources to complete. Once Mason arrives at his university, it appears he was finally able to put aside his childhood trauma and insecurities away for the very first time. Regardless of your view on the development of Mason, the films conclusion leaves you optimistic about his future. The process of child development is complete by this point, but the many things he experienced during this period will affect him for the rest of his life. For better or for worse, Mason is no longer in boyhood and now steps into a new part of development: adulthood.



What are your thoughts on Boyhood as it pertains to child development?

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