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Developmental Profile (Boyhood)

For my developmental profile, I decided to talk about the 2014 movie “Boyhood”. I chose this because it was a movie I have been wanting to watch for a while but never had the chance and so after watching this movie for this assignment for the first time I was thoroughly impressed. It was not what I was expecting at all and I honestly thought it was a documentary but I was happily surprised when I realised that this was actually a movie and so it made sense the longer I watched it that this was actually filmed over the course of over a decade with the same cast and it was like something I had never seen before.

The story of “Boyhood” follows a young boy named Mason who has an older sister named Samantha. Mason’s parents have gotten divorced and over the course of a few years, Mason’s mother, Olivia who has a habit of remarrying drunken, abusive men. After the last marriage ends up not working, Mason moves onto middle school, highschool and meets a girl who he falls in love with and breaks his heart. He then moves onto going to college and the movie ends. Obviously there are a lot more details I could explain, but that is the general gist of the plot of the movie. The reason that this movie is special is because all the actors are the same since the beginning and so we really do end up getting a sense of how Mason evolved and changed from a boy into a grown man. This movie allowed us to see some extremely intimate moments of a family and intimate relationships Mason had as well as friendships and life lessons.

Throughout the movie, there are about eight phases of Mason’s life we get to see and all of these years have an impact on the man he becomes at the end of the movie.

 The first major impact is his parents getting a divorce. He was at an age where it seemed like he did not understand the severity of the situation and so he was constantly asking when dad was coming back to live with them. Some of the risk factors that could happen because of this is Mason growing up to think that this is normal for people in relationships.

The next would be when his mother remarried a man named Bill. Bill was a good father at first however, as the marriage progressed, he became an alcoholic and abusive to Olivia's kids and his own kids from a previous marriage. One scene that stood out in particular to me was a scene where Mason and his stepbrother get home from school and see their mother laid down on the garage floor screaming and crying while Bill tells her to get back up because she's being a drama queen. This is up for interpretation but it could be assumed that Bill hit her or pushed her etc. Following this, there is a scene at the dinner table where Bill has clearly been drinking and throws a plate at both the boys in a fit of rage. This was a turning point for the marriage and pretty soon afterwards, Olivia leaves and they go live with their aunt or someone close to their mother. Some of the risk factors here are the fact that Mason may grow up to believe that this is the way that men are supposed to treat their kids and may end up thinking that drinking is the way to solve all problems. It can also cause him to think that there is a connection between love and abusing his significant other. In general, that is just a pretty traumatic thing to have to go through and would most likely stick with the boy for the rest of his life.

The next impactful moment in the movie I feel was the next time Olivia remarries and it turns out to be one of her former students at a college class she was teaching at which is already an odd concept to think about. He starts off as a really nice guy and then quickly turns into a controlling and just overall really mean guy. I think something that makes this relationship between Mason and the new stepfather, Jim, is that a lot of the reason that Jim treats Mason badly is because he does not think Mason is masculine enough. He makes fun of him for having long hair and painting his nails and hates the fact that when he talks he mumbles. Keep in mind, Mason is probably a freshman or sophomore in high school at this point in the movie and the hairstyle he had was pretty prominent at the time and his sister defends Mason and says that boys painting their nails makes them cool. This shows that there was an underlying level of resentment when it came to why Jim did not particularly like Mason all that much.

I think another really important part to touch on is when Mason found out that his girlfriend cheated on him with a college lacrosse player. I think the person you date in highschool always feels like you are going to be with this person for the rest of your life and when it eventually does come to an end like it does for most people it is a heartbreak that stays with you for life, at least I know that to be true for myself. They had a huge argument and things went sour and one of the biggest things that I related to in this part of the movie was the conversation he had with his biological dad about how this was something that was bound to happen and that he just needed to believe that girls are not the most important thing in his life and they do not need to be. This also took me back to a moment in the beginning of the movie where the dad took to the two kids bowling and was talking badly about their mum. I think that this shows a little bit of a sense of arrogance from the dad when it comes to not only women in general. The general risk factors from this situation include Mason believing that talking about women this way is normal and okay and it could also cause a subconscious resentment towards his mother for things that may not have really been her fault or things that were out of her control.

Overall, I felt like this movie was really well done considering it took twelve years to make and they used the same actors. Obviously people change over the course of the movie but people change in real life as well and so it probably made filming a little bit complicated or hot at times but I really do feel like this movie flowed extremely well. I have never seen a movie of this type of concept before and this concept is highly commendable. Some of the enhancements I feel could have been made to this movie is a little bit less of an age gap in between storytelling although I do understand this probably wasn't realistic for the director. I think that they also could have touched a little bit deeper on certain relationships in Mason's life, not particularly his parents or family, but friends because I feel like friends are a huge part of a developing child's life and so for the audience to not get a little bit more insight into how Mason was around his friends was a missed opportunity. The way that this could have helped engage the audience in regards to risk factors is it would have helped them understand a little bit more into why Mason became the man that he was at the end of the movie. I feel like at the very beginning of the movie Mason was an extremely different person than he was at the end of the movie in regards to his attitude and his confidence. Other than that I do not really believe that there was anything else the movie could have done in order to improve itself. I really do think this was a really good movie and allowing the audience to watch Mason grow up in real life was a special experience I think.