Psychological disorders in good will hunting movie

Entertainment, Movie

II. INTRODUCTION

The film " Good Will Hunting" follows the story of Will Hunting (Matt Damon) a self-taught genius who works at one of the most prestigious technology schools; MIT, as a janitor. Will is an orphan with a criminal record of Assault, grand theft auto, assaulting a police officer, etc. Will solves a complex math problem, which leads to him being discovered by professor Lambeau (Stellan Skarsgard) as a genius. Professor Lambeau makes a deal with the judge when Will is incarcerated to be on parole under Lambeau's supervision and Will is ordered to see a therapist once a week. Will Outsmarts many of the therapists, which forces Lambeau to go to his last resort, college friend and psychology teacher Sean Macguire (Robin Williams). Macguire and Will begin to bond due to their similar troubled past. Will Hunting had a troubled past, his foster parents didn't care for him and physically abused him, which left him physically and emotionally scarred. Due to the physical abuse, while it is never directly told to the viewer what is the exact disorder Will Hunting has, due to his behaviour and actions it seems that Will developed many psychological disorders straining from mood disorders to personality disorders. Will incorporates many of Freud's defense mechanisms to cope with his anxiety and fear. Many psychological concepts apply to the film " Good Will Hunting" such as Freud's Defense Mechanisms, Ainsworth's Attachment Theory, and Erikson's theory of Psychosocial Stages of Development.

III. ANALYSIS

Erik Erikson's theory says that as individuals we progress through eight psychosocial stages, we as individuals must overcome the conflicts in each

stage during our lifespan; failure to do so delays development. (Erikson, 1980) Erikson's psychosocial stages of development theory are in my opinion one of the best ways to look at Will Hunting's changing personality and behaviour in the movie. Will's avoidant and defensive personality is due to his abusive foster parents, he never received sympathy from his foster parents which made him accept the abuse as well as him becoming the abuser, as we see in the film when Will fights a former classmate that bullied him in kindergarten years ago. Another example of abuse is in the form of psychological abuse towards the marriage of Macguire and his deceased wife in which Will continually insults. Will seems to fluctuate stages throughout the movie, due to being an orphan and abuse from his foster parents he is fluctuating between the stages of basic trust vs. mistrust, and Initiative vs. guilt. Then when he meets Skylar (Minnie Driver) his development shifts to intimacy vs. isolation. (Erikson, 1980)

Another concept that applies to the film " Good Will Hunting" is Freud's defense mechanism. Will Hunting uses many defense mechanisms to cope with his stress, anxiety, anger, and fear some example of these defense mechanisms are denial, because Will blocks his true genius potential from entering his consciousness. A second example would be sublimation, due to him satisfying his anger and stress by smoking cigarettes, which Will does frequently throughout the movie. The third example is probably one of the most common defense mechanisms, repression, Will represses the memories of his foster parent not caring about him, showing no sympathy towards him and using him as a scapegoat and abusing him physically and psychologically. We see the result of Will's repressed memories burst into his

consciousness when he sees the pictures of his bruised body, then he bursts into tears showing a lot of emotion, which from that point on, lets him begin to heal from his traumatic past.

The third and final concept that applies to the film is Ainsworth's theory of attachment. Having a secure attachment as a child is very important because it builds on trust, the first stage of Erikson's theory, and overall will have a better relationship between the child and the caregiver in the future as well as any people in the child's life. Will does not have a secure attachment due to him being an orphan and abandoned at such a young age and also due to his abusive foster parents, which damaged him. Will is most likely at an attachment level of insecure avoidant, due to all of his caregivers rejecting him and his needs, as well as being physically and emotionally damaged because of his caregivers. Due to will having an avoidant attachment level, as an adult he will most likely be unavailable and distant towards someone he loves, as we see in the movie with Skylar.

In my opinion I believe that the film had an accurate portrayal of what psychoanalysis therapists would do cure someone like Will. In this case Macguire uses transference to connect with Will, therefore Macguire becomes the caregiver that Will never had, this is evident from one of the first meeting spots he takes Will, a public park in Boston, a place where parents take their children to play, explore, etc.

III. SUMMARY
In order to gain a complete understanding of the film " Good Will Hunting" and the disorders of Will Hunting, it is necessary to understand the many

concepts and psychological theories that apply to Will's condition such as Erik Erikson's theory of stages of psychosocial development, Sigmund Freud's defense mechanisms to cope with stress, anger, and fear, and finally Mary Ainsworth's attachment theory. It is important to apply these theories and concepts to Will Hunting and certain points of his life so we can better understand his condition so we can apply it to future patients with the same disorders.