

good will hunting movie paper essay sample

[War](#), [Intelligence](#)



Movies are meant to have to audience feel the emotions the director wants them to feel. Good Will Hunting is one movie where it makes the audience relate in some way, whether it is the romantic scenes, therapy scenes, etc. It strongly represents psychological concepts that current research studies can be related to. So in the movie Good Will Hunting, Will Hunting displays the psychological concepts intelligence, abuse, depression, defense mechanism, and self-actualization smoothly throughout the movie. In the beginning of the movie, Will Hunting demonstrates how different he is from the rest. Being a simple janitor working in Harvard University, he keeps to himself and just does his job but when given an opportunity, he listens in classes. When the professor gives out his first challenge to his students to figure out a theorem, Will Hunting, in secret but quickly, proves it without hesitation by writing it on the chalkboard out in the hallway where the professor told the students where to answer it.

When the professor saw it was answered within a short amount of time, he creates a second challenge to see if the anonymous genius would answer it again. According to the professor, it took about 2 years to figure it out but Will, as soon as he saw it, figured it out within minutes and accidentally had the professor see him write the last of the answer so Will was no longer anonymous. This segment of the movie clearly shows how gifted and intelligent Will Hunting is. According to American Psychological Association on intelligence, "Intelligence refers to intellectual functioning ... [but intelligence] tests don't measure all kinds of intelligence." Another common word used for intelligence is gifted, where described as a "naturally endowed with a high degree of general mental ability or extraordinary ability

in a specific sphere of activity or knowledge,” by Britannica Academic Edition.

This psychological concept is represented in the film accurately from the very beginning until the end. Will astounds all those who hear him with the way he delivers facts and information as if it was common knowledge. Because Will Hunting made a deal to go to therapy so he won't end up doing time, the therapist, Sean, takes him under his wing after seeing that five previous therapists viewed him as a hopeless case or a lunatic. These reactions were derived from the way Will spoke to them, including mocking of their different forms of treatment and cruel humor. During a session, Sean talks about Will's file that had pictures and descriptions of his past childhood abuse. After Sean reveals his own childhood abuse story to get a mutual openness present, Will verbally shares that his foster dad would ask him, “pick one,” of a belt or wrench to be beaten with and said he picked a wrench. As he tells that story, the movie shows Will having a flashback memory of seeing his foster dad walk up the stairs and the movie then shows Will's nonverbal of a clenching jaw due to anger.

This specific scene perfectly describes childhood physical abuse and emotional trauma. To define abuse, it is “the result of extraordinarily stressful events that shatter your sense of security, making you feel helpless and vulnerable,” according to HelpGuide. Org on Emotional and Psychological Trauma. For example, emotional and physical trauma can result from an unstable or unsafe environment, separation from a parent, physical abuse, and neglect. Any or a combination leads to shock and denial,

anger, self-blame, and withdrawing from others. In this specific scene of the movie, the foster home, the physical abuse by the foster dad, the removal of his own biological parents, and emotional neglect while growing up proved to be very detrimental to Will's views on reality, accurately portraying this psychological concept.

In addition to the other concepts, depression is also portrayed in the movie through Will Hunting. Depression is more than just an overwhelming sadness but stated in JAMA Neurology online, it causes the person dealing with it to experience "lack of interest and pleasure in daily activities...feelings of worthlessness or excessive guilt." In the movie, there was a scene where he was with the professor and the professor asked if Will accepted the job offers that were coming at him left and right because word spread about his natural talents and Will responded saying no. He wasn't interested in any of the jobs with the thousands to million dollar salaries and that he had no motivation to work and use his talents. He continues to take the most recent papers he worked on for the professor and lit it on fire and the professor ran to save what was left of the documents. Shocked and saddened by all this, the professor tells him he is wasting his abilities and that he is throwing his life away. In response to this, Will just doesn't seem to care and is numb to the whole situation and walks off. In this scene, it is more in the nonverbal messages that Will shows signs of depression, not in the verbal communication.

His facial expressions, his lack of enthusiasm for a high paying salary that would set him on a right path for a good living, and having no sympathy for

the professor's work and burning it shows that he has signs of depression. Yes, the movie overall proved Will Hunting is depressed but could have used more scenes of him barely sleeping and possibly considering suicide to more directly show that the main character is depressed. But if looking in-between the lines, a research study help explain the nonverbal of depression Will Hunting gives off. The study's objective was to assess cognitive readings of depression between retired professional football players who've had major injuries versus retired football players with little injuries. The results of this show that those who have received a lot of trauma, especially in the head, overtime, mostly develop a mental problem such as dementia or depression.

Relating this to Will's depression, his childhood development involved major physical trauma. Overtime and in addition to other factors, the abuse he received played a role in his mental state being mildly depressive. One of the top psychological concepts heavily seen throughout the movie is the defense mechanism by the main character. The defense mechanism was originally introduced by Sigmund Freud, who believed that the unconscious level tried to ward off any unwanted feelings or emotions to keep the conscious level protected. The unwanted memories and emotions are sent to unconscious but don't disappear so the unconscious powerfully influences behaviors to keep the painful thoughts and memories away. This is a primitive and one of the basic ways human beings try to protect themselves. Probably one of the most powerful moments that the audience can see Will Hunting naturally use the defense mechanism is when Skylar, his love interest, asks him to move to California with her when she leaves for medical school.

The actual message she was trying to send was that she wants to not leave his side and is very serious about him and he understood that message loud and clear. His reaction, without hesitation, was all negative - starting with what if scenarios leading up to him yelling at her about her being crazy. She then asks why is he so scared to open up to her when all she wants to do is be there and try to help when he needs it and asks for it. She then says she love him. He refuses to say he's scared, briefly mentions his childhood past, and physically pushes her against the wall telling her to stop lying to him that she doesn't love him. She then told him that all he has to do is say he doesn't love her and she will exit his life for good and he does that and leaves her room. This emotionally charged scene displays him refusing to believe that she is actually there for him and wouldn't leave him when an obstacle would come along. The level of deep, personal, romantic intimacy she is trying to show him automatically has his heart and mind trace back to remembering everyone he ever loved walking out on him and caused him to refuse any obvious truths Skylar is trying to prove.

Based off his childhood experiences of losing his parents, losing his emotional attachment to his foster parent through abuse, and losing the safety and stability of a home resulted in Will Hunting fearing abandonment because every significant person in his life has abandoned him in the past. His fears of abandonment resurfaces and his natural defense mechanism is to deny any possibility of depending and needing someone else, to rationalize weak excuses saying his past will scare her away, and project his emotion of fear onto her and scare her. This scene perfectly executes a defense mechanism used to protect him emotionally from being hurt again.

Not only that one particular scene shows how Will uses defense mechanisms to protect himself, but in other situations he has as well. In the beginning of the movie when being showed to different therapists, Will intelligently mocks each one, using each of their own methods against them.

Yes, this shows how intelligent he actually is to quickly figure out the meaning of each method and easily throw it back at the therapists with humor involved as well. A research study done in 2006 studied how advanced cognitive skills may offer protection against PTSD. The study had veterans who had low and high IQ scores with some who had PTSD go through cognitive tests. The results suggest that the ones with lower IQ scores already had a higher chance at developing the disorder compared to a veteran who had a high IQ. But the more interesting part of the research study was the conclusion that there was a way to lessen PTSD - to try and increase the person's IQ and work at increasing other cognitive skills. So the more intelligent a veteran with PTSD can become, overtime, then the less emotional trauma he or she would feel. This might be because the mind is preoccupied with new information and knowledge one enjoys to learn so the emotional and thought process is focused away from the unwanted memories and feelings.

To relate this back to Will Hunting, he might have known that the more he understood and learned, the more his mind wouldn't go back to the past. Perhaps this is why he chose to be a janitor at Harvard than anywhere else to fully use his gifted learning and comprehensive abilities to further his knowledge on his level because other colleges are not as challenging. This

specific kind of defense mechanism would be repression. And because he is using repression most of his life, Will bottled up his emotions, resulting in him removing himself from any situation that may lead to “opening up the bottle” of emotions. Having negative psychological concepts being shown, a positive psychological concept has also been introduced to the main character to smoothly tie up and end the movie. This final psychological concept is self-actualization, which originated from Abraham Maslow. Summarizing his ideology, he defines self-actualization as the desire for self-fulfillment to realize his or her true potential and capability.

According to Psychology. About. com on Self-Actualization, “Acceptance and Realism...Problem-centering...Spontaneity...Autonomy and Solitude...Continued Freshness of Appreciation...,” are the characteristics of self-actualized people. The final scene where Will, by the help of Sean, finally accepts that it wasn’t his fault for the things he’d gone through as a child growing up and that he has a truly remarkable gift and can use it to help not only himself, but to those he cares about as well. He shows spontaneity by not taking the government job and choosing to drive from the Harvard campus to California to win back Skylar, after realizing he loves her and that she would never hurt him.

The solo drive going to Skylar represents his need to have some privacy to focus and develop his own true potential now that he finally accepts his gifted ability. The end of the movie shows that he started to touch some of the characteristics of reaching self-actualization. In conclusion, Will successfully portrays the five psychological concepts throughout the movie.

With all five concepts tie together in different ways, it shows how a resulted behavior can source from multiple factors. With future research, the negative psychological concepts portrayed in the movie will most-likely have better treatment options to prevent a dysfunctional development of the mind from a child growing into an adult.

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