

Greg Sherman

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Critique Paper

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Is Hollywood's Version of a "Twister" reality or just "Twisted"?

In 1996, Hollywood decided to make a movie about storm chasing. That year, Warner Bros. Productions produced a movie called Twister, which was about two rival teams of storm chasers and scientists who are following a line of storm-producing-tornadoes moving through Oklahoma and Kansas. Their goal was to put a device in the path of one of the tornadoes so that the tornado would suck it up and the device would then return data about the tornado to the chasers. That data would lead to grant money from the government as a reward. Bill Harding (Bill Paxton) and his ex-wife/fellow chaser Jo (Helen Hunt) are the two main characters/storm chasers in this movie and are "the good team". Meanwhile, the other team, the "bad" team, is led by Dr. Jonas Miller (Cary Elwes).

After having several near misses during the movie, both teams find themselves chasing a mile-wide tornado with winds in the funnel of over 300 mph. Dr. Miller is killed by the tornado because the car he is in gets picked up by the tornado and explodes when it hits the ground. Meanwhile, Bill and Jo successfully plant their device into the path of the tornado, and the tornado subsequently sucks it up. But they become trapped when the tornado changes paths, causing them to be caught in the funnel itself; however, they survive and they end up getting back together as the movie ends.

Although the movie does a decent job of portraying storm chasers, it is laced with a bunch of fallacies. The first fallacy found in the movie is that there are two teams competing against each other to plant their devices into the tornado. In reality, although there are many

research teams out there that are chasing and studying tornadoes, they all work together because most of them are already being paid by government agencies, media outlets, and research groups. Those who aren't paid to chase them are out there just for the thrill of chasing a storm. There is no "competition" to see who can catch the storm first. The competition fallacy is just one of the constant fallacies in the movie.

Another thing that is constant during the movie is that Bill and Jo find themselves fighting for survival because they manage to drive themselves right into the tornado literally. They are actually caught in the funnel no less than three times during the movie; moreover, since this is only a movie, they survive each time when in real life they would be dead.

On the first occasion, they find themselves inside of a weak tornado (winds less than 75 mph). To not be sucked up in the first tornado is moderately unlikely; however, on the second occasion, they are in a car which is nearly sucked up by a moderate sized tornado (winds about 150 mph). To not be sucked up by the second tornado is completely impossible because a car is unanchored to anything solid; moreover, when a moderate sized tornado passes over anything that is unanchored, especially a car, it is always sucked up, thrown yards away, and destroyed. Ultimately, the occupants would either be severely injured, or killed. The fact that they survived this one is unbelievable and unusual. But if surviving the second one was unbelievable, then surviving the third tornado is simply Hollywood.

As stated earlier, the final tornado in the movie was a mile wide and had wind speeds of over 300 mph. When Bill and Jo find that they can't get out of the way of the storm, they anchor themselves to some lead piping with leather ropes, then the tornado passes right over them and they have to hold on to avoid being sucked up through the tornado. In reality, if someone found themselves in this situation, once the tornado even moved slightly over them, they would be sucked up. That is because with a 300 mph wind, either the rope would have given way long

before the maximum winds hit the person, debris would have struck and instantly killed anyone, or the more likely scenario would involve the tornado actually pulling the person's body apart. Wind gusts of only 150 mph would be more than enough to pull apart a person who was anchored to anything at all, but 300 mph winds would pull the person's body apart so fast that nothing would be left, death would obviously be instantaneous. So from the evidence presented, it looks like this movie is nothing more than a fallacy-laced Hollywood fantasy production of tornadoes and tornado chasers.

Although it might seem like this movie is nothing more than Hollywood fantasy, there are some parts of the movie that are accurate with what would happen in real life. First, nobody has been ever to accurately take scientific measurements inside of a tornado because nobody has ever been able to put a scientific device into it. For now, meteorologists have to rely on data from satellites and radars in order to determine measurements such as wind speed, pressure, and dew point temperature inside of a tornado. Another aspect of the movie that can be considered accurate is the reproduction of the tornadoes in the movie.

While it is obvious that all of the tornadoes in the movie are generated from computers, each of those tornadoes is an accurate scale model of a real tornado. Some of the tornadoes are very small with a circumference of only a few feet; meanwhile, the last tornado has a circumference of more than a mile wide! In reality, a few tornadoes, primarily in Oklahoma and Texas, have reached a circumference of almost two miles! So the producers did get the relative size of the tornado right; furthermore, there is a bit of truth to this movie.

But although this tornado does have plenty of truth to it, there are clearly many fallacies that are found in this movie that would never be true in real life. Therefore, this movie tells of a Hollywood fantasy about tornadoes and tornado storm chasers.