

A beautiful mind and paranoid schizophrenia research papers examples

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The movie A Beautiful Mind is about Nobel laureate John Nash, who suffered from paranoid schizophrenia. In this movie, directed by Ron Howard, the viewer follows the life of a brilliant mathematician and economist. The movie shows many symptoms of this condition, especially the positive ones. On display are also the difficulties that this illness represents both at a personal and at a social level, including for the family. Last, one may see possible treatments for this disease, including electroshock therapy and disability management techniques and their effects. This film, while entertaining and being aesthetically pleasing, also shows the symptoms of paranoid schizophrenia, its effects at a personal and social level, possible treatments and what recuperation implies.

A Beautiful Mind is a movie directed by Ron Howard and starred by Russell Crowe and Jennifer Connelly. It was a blockbuster and won four Academy Awards: Best Picture, Best Director, Best Adapted Screenplay and Best Supporting Actress. The film was very well-received by critics and audiences alike, the negative remarks mostly being made due to discrepancies between Nash's real life and the one that was depicted on the screen.

Nevertheless, many others, including renowned psychiatrists and mental-illness patients, acclaimed the manner in which paranoid schizophrenia was shown. The viewer follows Nash from his experiences in college, getting married, having a child, getting treatment for this imbalance and winning the Nobel Prize for Economics. Basically all this man's life is on display, with some artistic licenses, which expresses not just the more sensationalistic aspects of schizophrenia, like most movies, but also the more demure and poignant parts associated to it.

While the word schizophrenia is of common employment, it serves to scientifically denominate and categorize certain people that manifest a specific rupture with reality. Like many psychological notions, schizophrenia has become frequently used to categorize anyone that behaves crazy, abnormally or wild. However, it has been used with precision by mental health experts since the end of the nineteenth century. While there has been some controversy in the diagnosis, most agree that it is a life-long disease characterized by a separation from reality, which includes both positive and negative symptoms. The former include deliriums and hallucinations, the hallmark of popular notions of this disease, but disorganized speech and/or behavior is also taken into account. Negative symptoms include a lack or a decline of affect, speech or motivation.

In the movie, we can see both of these aspects of the mental condition at hand, but positive symptoms are more prevalent. For example, the first hallucination that the viewer perceives is the appearance of Charles, a friend that is a figment of his imagination, after suffering stress which lead to an emotional withdrawal of a social situation in a bar during his college years. This shows that the symptoms of schizophrenia usually appear after a period of stress and their early onset is in the patient's third decade of life. One may also see that the symptom serves as a sort of mechanism of compensation, as it allows Nash to divert his thoughts from the painful reality, and be able to cope with it in a way that makes him suffer less; Charles many times takes him away from the library and helps him embark in social situations. The viewer also subsequently watches the development of a delusion of grandeur, where Nash believes that his professors and

textbooks are mere mortals in comparison to his problem-solving capacities. The fact that Nash actually does possess extraordinary intelligence allowed the diagnosis to be more difficult than normal: the way that he is able to perceive patterns in everyday life is both astonishing intellectually and a sign of mental disease. At first, one only perceives the way that he is different from his colleagues, who think of him as merely bizarre, not as having a mental disease. Negative symptoms set in like the diminishment of cognitive and executive functioning, as can be seen in the bar scene where he has difficulty speaking, his absence from classes and the fact that he has not published any papers. However, as Nash's life progresses, these symptoms aggravate, leading to persecutory delusions and him breaking ever more with reality, including almost drowning his child.

As one may see, this disease is not only difficult for the patient, but for his immediate social environment too. While Nash even contemplates suicide at one point, his friends and family also suffer with him in this disease. In particular, Nash's wife is seen suffering almost as much as him, trying to hold up a family against his constant impulses to destroy it. The rupture that schizophrenia entails is with the common, shared reality. As such, the integration into social norms and patterns, dictated by a particular culture, is made more difficult. It is also important to note that many times the symptoms appear, they are due to stress instigated by social situations. Therefore, the turbulence is mutual: his social environment both breaks his stability and has its equilibrium broken by him. While some could think that this is a one-way street, or that the source of the disease is biological, as Krabbendam, Hooker and Aleman have written, "genetic research has linked

specific risk genes to abnormalities in neural circuits influenced by the social environment". Therefore, one can see that schizophrenia is a complex disease, where many different aspects must be taken into account, both when studying it and when treating it.

Finally, while this is a lifelong illness, many types of therapy have been developed that can counter its symptoms and effects, some of which are portrayed in the movie. The most notable of these, probably because of its dramatic and cultural connotations, is electroshock therapy, where electrodes are placed on the patient's head and electricity is made to enter the central nervous system in an attempt to force it into normal functioning. Pharmaceutical treatment is also shown, along with the side effects that accompany it. Both of these treatments, while somewhat effective, also put more stress on the family. Psychotherapeutic and skill management procedures also help in Nash's rehabilitation. At the end of the story, after these different treatments, one can see his functioning to be almost normal, which is achievable in schizophrenic patients.

In conclusion, Ron Howard's *A Beautiful Mind* is an excellent movie that may serve as a starting point for the discussion of mental disease both for scientists and for laypeople. This critically- and popularly-acclaimed movie follows the life of John Nash, a mathematician who suffered from paranoid schizophrenia. The film shows that symptoms, especially positive ones, usually appear after a period of stress as a way to deal with this and other sufferings. However, this affects not only the patient but the social environment as a whole. The movie shows the effect of different treatments for this disease, which allow Nash to live a relatively normal life. If more

movies like this were made, people could be made more aware of how mental disease works and what its prospects are, leading to a change in the public perception of this condition.

Reference List

Krabbendam, Lydia, Christine I. Hooker and André Aleman. “ Neural Effects of the Social Environment”. Oxford Journals: Schizophrenia Bulletin 40. 2 (2014): 248-251. Web. 01 March 2014.