

Autism and rain man

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In the movies things are portrayed in ways that are supposed to make the movie sell, which means that movies are not always accurate. The movie Rain Man was about a man and his brother, who happened to be an autistic savant. In Rain Man Dustin Hoffman played Raymond, who was a high-functioning autistic savant. In the movie Raymond had routines and rituals that he did; and when his routines were interrupted or he was afraid of something he had a temper tantrum where he would hit his head. He tended to babble and repeat himself, and when he was stressed he would recite "Who's on First?" by Abbott and Costello. Raymond had trouble interacting with people and had problems understanding certain concepts. Raymond doesn't like people touching him or his stuff. He also doesn't understand the concept of money. The question is, "Is this a realistic portrayal of an autistic savant?" The answer is that at least part of it is realistic. The character Dustin Hoffman played was based on a real life savant. The name of the savant that inspired the movie, and got the title of "real life Rain Man" was Kim Peek. Dustin Hoffman actually spent time with Kim Peek so he could more accurately play the character.

While he may have gotten the savant part of his role correct, Dustin Hoffman may not have necessarily gotten the autistic part of his role correct, since he didn't actually meet with an autistic like he did with Kim Peek. That means that to find out how accurate the movie was in portraying autism, you must first look into and get a better understanding of autism. People with autism usually experience onset prior to age three. It has been estimated that there are approximately two to five cases of autism per ten thousand individuals.

Males are four to five times more likely to have autism, but girls with autism are more likely to be more severely mentally retarded. Also, you are more likely to have autism if one of your siblings has autism. Autism has been shown to take a continuous course. It has been reported that some children with autism act abnormal from the time of birth. Their parents report being worried since the time they were born. With these kids, their parents notice a lack of interest in social interaction. In infancy, symptoms are harder to notice and define than those found after age two.

On the other hand, it has also been reported that other children with autism were developmentally normal for the first year or two of their life. Children with autism tend to have problems with pretend play, verbal and nonverbal communication, and social interactions. In school-aged children developmental gains are common in some areas. Behaviorally, some individuals deteriorate around adolescence while others improve. Only a small amount of autistic people are capable of living and working individually when they reach adulthood.

It is estimated that only about one-third of autistic people are capable of achieving any amount of partial independence. Even the highest-functioning adults with autism still have problems with social interactions and communication. The highest-functioning adults with autism will also still have a small range of hobbies and interests. People with autism may have unusual distress when routines are changed. They also may perform repeated body movements, show unusual attachments to objects, and be overly sensitive in sight, hearing, touch, smell, or taste.

People with autism will also have communicational issues, which may include the inability to start or maintain a social conversation, using gestures to communicate instead of words, having slow language development or no language development, not adjusting their gaze to focus on what others are looking at, not referring to themselves correctly (like by saying you instead of I when talking about themselves), not pointing to direct others' attention to objects, repeating memorized words, phrases, dialogs, and passages (like from books or movies), and using nonsense rhyming.

Autistic people are withdrawn. They do not make friends or participate in interactive games. When autistic people play, they don't imitate the actions of others. They prefer solitary or ritualistic play instead of group games. They engage in little or no pretend or imaginative play. Autistic people may not respond to eye contact or smiles, and may even avoid eye contact. They may treat others as objects instead of people and show a lack of empathy towards others. Autistic would rather spend time alone than with others. Autistic people may also have unusual responses to sensory information. For example, they may have heightened or low senses of sight, hearing, touch, smell, or taste. An autistic person would not jump when they heard a loud noise, although they may find normal noises painful and hold hands over ears. They may withdraw from physical contact because it is over stimulating or overwhelming. They may have heightened or lowered responses to pain. They may also rub surfaces and lick objects. Autistic people tend to "Act up" with intense tantrums when something they do not like happens (like not getting what they want). Autistic people may get stuck on a single topic or task.

They may also have a short attention span. Autistic people tend to have very narrow interests and may show a strong need for sameness. An autistic person may be either very overactive or very passive. They may also show aggression towards themselves or others. People with autism have specific neuropsychological deficits that produce many of the symptoms associated with autism. It has been identified that prefrontal impairments are present in autistic people that affect things like spatial working memory, attention shifting, and response inhibition.

Also, there have been impairments detected in the medial temporal lobe and in facial processing. It has also been shown that very young children with autism have abnormal ERP responses to faces, emotions, and speech. It has also been shown that people with autism have auditory processing abnormalities. There is no cure for autism, but the symptoms can be managed through therapy. Also, it has been shown that early, intensive behavioral programs can significantly improve learning and communication skills and reduce disturbed behaviors.

It has been proven that children that are better functioning at the start of treatment are more likely to gain more from the treatment. Biomedical treatments are limited to using medications to manage the disruptive behavior, self-injuring, and stereotyped behavior. According to *Abnormal Psychology In A Changing World (Seventh Edition)* “Autistic traits generally continue on into adulthood to some degree or another” (Nevid, Rathus & Green, 2008, p. 485). Even so, some autistic children go on to get college degrees and function independently.

Others need constant treatment throughout the duration of their lives and some even need institutionalized care. Now that we have enough information on autism we can make a judgment on how realistic the movie was in portraying Raymond Babbitt as an autistic savant. Because the actor met with Kim Peek, a real life savant, and studied his mannerisms and abilities, we can conclude that his depiction of savants is realistic. He did not though; meet with an autistic to learn what they are like, so we must look at his actions as Raymond Babbitt and judge their authenticity as the behaviors an autistic person would experience.

It has been pointed out that in the movie Raymond Babbitt had routines and rituals that he did; and when his routines were interrupted or he was afraid of something he had a temper tantrum where he would hit his head. He tended to babble and repeat himself, and when he was stressed he would recite “ Who’s on First? ” by Abbott and Costello. Raymond had trouble interacting with people and had problems understanding certain concepts. Raymond doesn’t like people touching him or his stuff. He also doesn’t understand the concept of money.

Apart from Raymond’s inability to understand the concept of money, all of the oddities about Raymond that are not accounted for by his savant nature are accounted for by autism. The only thing unaccounted for is his inability to understand the concept of money which played a fairly big part in the storyline of the movie. So, in conclusion we can say that Rain Man followed reality pretty well in its representation of autism.

References

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